**Constitution of Altoga Baptist Church**

**6594 FM 1827**

**McKinney, Texas 75071**

**Preamble**

We declare and establish this constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and so that this body may be governed in an orderly manner. This church shall be known as the Altoga Baptist Church.

**Articles of Faith**

The charter members of Altoga Baptist Church (originally called the Missionary Baptist Church of Christ at Stiff’s Chapel) adopted this Statement of Faith on May 14, 1892.

1. We believe the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is full of unmixed truth, and is a perfect rule of faith and practice. (II Timothy 3:16)
2. We believe in one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)
3. We believe that man, once holy, fell by voluntary transgression from that happy state, and is now utterly void of holiness. (Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 3:20, 24)
4. We believe sinners are saved by grace alone through faith. (Romans 4:16; Galatians 15-16)
5. We believe that men are justified by faith, without a deed of law, in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)
6. We believe that salvation is free to all who will accept the gospel. (John 3:15-16)
7. We believe that except a man be renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is not qualified for the kingdom of Christ on earth, or to enjoy his glory hereafter. (John 3:3; I Corinthians 15:50)
8. We believe that repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are the duties of everyone who hears the gospel. (Acts 20:21)
9. We believe election is the purpose of God, by which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners through faith in Christ. (I Peter 1:2)
10. We believe that sanctification, beginning in regeneration, and ever progressive, is the process by which we are made partakers in God’s holiness. (I Peter 1:2; II Peter 1:5; I Corinthians 1:30)
11. We believe in the preservation of the saints; that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (I Peter 1:5; Psalm 37:28)
12. We believe that God’s law is the only, the external and unchangeable rule of his church and moral governments. (Matthew 7:12)
13. We believe that a church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, united in faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the ordinances, and obeying the laws of Christ; and that its officers are pastors and deacons. (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:46-47; John 3:5)
14. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in Christ, by a properly qualified administrator, in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)
15. We believe that only such as have been properly baptized in water and received into the fellowship of a regularly organized Baptist church should partake of the Lord’s Supper. (Acts 2:46; I Corinthians 11:2)
16. We believe that the Lord’s Day or Christian Sabbath should be devoutly observed and sacredly devoted to religious services. (Genesis 2:3; Hebrews 10:25)
17. We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, and that the governors of states and nations should be obeyed when the laws they seek to enforce are not in conflict with the gospel. (Matthew 22:17-21)
18. We believe in the future resurrection of the dead: the righteous to everlasting life, and the wicked to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)
19. We believe in the final judgment; and that in that day the righteous and wicked will be separated forever. (Revelation 22:1-22)
20. We believe that the righteous will be made happy forever, and the wicked miserable forever in hell. (Revelation 21:1-27)

In addition to these Articles of Faith, the Altoga Baptist Church affirms the 1963 and 2000 editions of *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

**Church Covenant**

**Adopted by Altoga Baptist Church, May, 1892**

Thanking God for the light we have received, and for the revelation of Jesus which we now enjoy; and hoping that God, for Christ’s sake, has pardoned our sins; and having been baptized on a profession of our faith in Christ Jesus into the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we do, this day, before God and the world, with deep joy and great solemnity, enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We therefore covenant and agree that by the aid of the Holy Spirit we will walk together in love and Christian fellowship. We promise to labor for the advancement and final triumph of the Church; to sustain her worship by attending the house of God and supporting the ministry; to guard her ordinances, enforce her discipline, and defend her doctrine.

We also pledge ourselves to walk circumspectly in the world; to be honest, just, and faithful in our business relations; and, as God may give us help, we promise to live righteous and holy lives.

We further promise to watch over each other in brotherly love; to visit the sick; to pray for each other and the world, to aid the poor and needy, and to perform such other kind offices as may be well-pleasing in the sight of God.

**Polity**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who make up its membership. The church will meet in conference on the second Sunday of each month, moderated by a person designated by the congregation, usually the pastor. Special conferences may be called by consent of the church, and the special meeting must be announced at least one week in advance. All conferences will follow *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

While affirming the autonomy of the local church, this congregation recognizes the benefit of mutual counsel, fellowship, and cooperation with Southern Baptist churches of like faith and practice. Insofar as Scripture and conscience allows, this church will cooperate with the Collin Baptist Association, Southern Baptists of Texas, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Amendments to this Constitution**

Changes in this constitution may be made at a regularly scheduled church conference meeting, providing each proposed amendment be presented in writing at a previous church conference and distributed to all members present. Amendments to the constitution require a three-fourths majority vote of members present at the church conference.

**Church Membership**

The Scriptures teach that when a person becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ, that individual also becomes part of the kingdom of God or the universal church. In accordance with the New Testament, Christians must identify with a local body of believers for mutual instruction, fellowship, correction, service, and encouragement.

A disciple of Christ may join Altoga Baptist Church in one of three ways.

1. By Baptism: This church affirms that only those with a credible profession of faith in Christ may seek baptism, by immersion, as a public testimony of the person’s union with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Baptism has no saving effect, but serves as an essential and initial act of obedience to the Lordship of Christ.
2. By Promise of Letter: Believers, previously baptized in a church of like faith and practice, may request church membership by a transfer of letter to Altoga Baptist Church.
3. By Statement: A believer may request church membership upon statement of baptism in a church of like faith and practice.

All persons requesting church membership must generally affirm the Confession of Faith and Church Covenant of the Altoga Baptist Church. Should any church member dissent at the membership request of a candidate, the pastor and deacons will investigate the concern and make a recommendation to the church within thirty days. A majority vote of the congregation, in regular church conference, is required to affirm acceptance of a candidate for membership.

Church membership may be terminated in the following ways.

1. Death
2. Transfer of letter to another Baptist church
3. Exclusion upon becoming a member of a church of another faith
4. Erasure upon the request of the member
5. Church discipline for failure to repent of serious offense against the peace and unity of the church. Should a member become an offense to the Lord Jesus Christ and the church, by reason of unchristian conduct, serious doctrinal error, divisiveness, or non-attendance and support of the church, the congregation may terminate his/her membership by majority vote. The church must make faithful efforts to restore the church member in question through repentance and amendment of life. Any excluded member may be restored by vote of the church upon evidence of repentance.

**Ordinances**

The New Testament prescribes two ordinances for the reverent observance of the local church: baptism and communion (Please see the church’s Statement of Faith and *The Baptist Faith and Message*). This church will practice open communion, welcoming not only her members, but visitors who are active members from churches of like faith and practice. The Altoga Baptist Church will observe the Lord’s Supper on the first Sunday of each quarter and on other public occasions of church life, as the congregation may determine appropriate.

**Biblical Church Officers**

The New Testament affirms two church officers: pastors and deacons (Please see the Statement of Faith and *The Baptist Faith and Message* 1963 and 2000).

1. Pastors: Called “overseers, bishops, or pastors” in the New Testament, the pastor will generally lead the congregation, preach, teach, and provide pastoral counseling and care. The church will call a pastor whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place during a special church conference called for the purpose of choosing a pastor, a meeting announced at least one week in advance. The church will appoint a search committee to find a suitable pastor, and their recommendation will constitute a nomination to the congregation. Election shall be by ballot, an affirmative three fourths majority is necessary for a call of the pastor. The pastor, so elected, will serve until the relationship is terminated by his resignation or the church’s request to vacate the pulpit.
2. Deacons: The deacons will assist the pastor with the practical affairs of the church, preserving the pastor’s energies for prayer and the ministry of the word. They shall be chosen to serve by a vote of the church. In addition to practical ministry, deacons will oversee the financial affairs of the church, especially benevolence work to people in need. At church discretion, the deacons may serve as trustees to sign important documents for the congregation.

**Other Church Officers**

Though the New Testament does not affirm these offices, church experience demonstrates the usefulness of these servants of Christ.

1. Church Clerk: The church clerk will be elected annually by vote of the church. He/she will keep a suitable record of all official actions of the church which includes minutes from all church conferences. In addition, the church clerk will maintain a record of the names of church members, dates of admission, dismissal, or death, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall request letters for membership candidates and send letters for those moving membership from Altoga Baptist Church.
2. Church Treasurer: The church treasurer will be elected annually by vote for the church. He/she will preserve, record, and account for the financial dealings of the church. Offerings will be deposited in a timely manner, and an account of church finances will be submitted to the church, by the treasurer, at the monthly church conference. The treasurer will preserve all financial records of the church.
3. Sunday School Director: The Sunday School director will be elected annually by vote of the church. He/she will order Sunday School, materials, conduct the Sunday School general assembly, and preserve the attendance records of the Sunday School.
4. Worship Leaders: By annual vote, the church will select a music director and pianist for public worship.

**Standing Committees**

The membership of these committees will be nominated for service by the Nominating Committee and approved by church vote in the July church conference, each year.

1. Nominating Committee: The church will elect five members to nominate officers (except for pastor and deacons) for the new church year: music leaders, Sunday School director and teachers, church clerk and treasurer, and members of other standing committees.
2. Hospitality Committee: This group will plan and organize church fellowships, celebrations, and bereavement ministry.
3. Youth Committee: Working with the pastor and youth Sunday School teacher, this committee will plan and organize youth activities.
4. Ushers: The ushers will greet visitors and collect the church offerings.

**Church Facilities Use Policies**

The members of Altoga Baptist Church regard all church facilities as the Lord’s and should be used in accordance with the highest standards of Christian conduct. The faithful members of this congregation, for many generations, have given sacrificially to provide these facilities for the glory of God; therefore, the use of these buildings and grounds should reflect the testimony of past and present members, according to the Scriptures.

The church facilities will not be used by any group that holds, advances, or advocates any beliefs or practices that conflict with the church’s faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000).

1. Alcohol and Drug Policy: No group may serve alcohol at any function held on church property. Illicit drugs are explicitly forbidden on church grounds, as well. Any person found in violation of this policy will be required to leave the premises immediately.
2. Smoking Policy: Smoking in any indoor church facility is prohibited.
3. Food and Beverage Policy: Food and beverages (except for water) may be consumed only in the fellowship hall or specially designated areas.
4. Church Equipment: Church equipment (i.e. tables and chairs) may be used for worship or fellowship purposes, but all equipment should be returned to its original location after use. Church members may borrow equipment upon the approval of the church in regular church conference, or, on rare occasions, by the deacons and pastor.
5. Use of Church Facilities by Non-Members: Upon approval in church conference, the facilities may be used by non-church members at no fee. Non-members who use these facilities must abide by all provisions of this constitution. The church building and grounds are generally not available to the public; rather, the facilities may normally be used only by members and their extended families.

**Wedding Policies**

*The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) states the convictions of Altoga Baptist Church in regard to marriage and weddings; therefore, the church will not allow any weddings that do not reflect the following statement.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means of procreation of the human race.

The pastor of Altoga Baptist Church, under the authority of this congregation, will not perform any weddings that do not meet the above standards of Christian belief and conduct. If the pastor agrees to marry any couple, he must receive approval from the church even if the wedding does not take place at Altoga Baptist Church.