

**CONSTITUTION**

**of**

**CORNERSTONE**

**CHURCH**

Adopted January 25, 2009

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1. **Name and Affiliation** – This organization, known as Cornerstone Church, was founded in 1915 and incorporated under the laws of the State of New York on June 13, 1974. This church is affiliated with the North American Baptist Conference and its Eastern Association.
2. **Beliefs** – We acknowledge, affirm and believe the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. We also acknowledge and affirm as our statement of faith the North American Baptist Conference’s Statement of Beliefs (as adopted by the North American Baptist Conference in August 1982) as a guide to our teaching and conduct.
3. **Purpose and Commitment**
  - 3.1. Our purpose as a fellowship of believers is to encourage people to discover and grow in a personal, loving relationship with God by trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation. We will endeavor to be a people who are:
    - Winning people to Christ. (Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 5:17-20)
    - Building each other up in the faith. (I Cor. 14:12; Eph. 3:16-19)
    - Equipping each other for effective service. (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:11-13)
    - Sending committed servants into full and part time ministry and missions. (Matt. 28:18-20)
  - 3.2. We commit ourselves to the life-long adventure of following Jesus Christ's example in loving obedience to His Word as we learn to love God and love people. (Matt. 22:37-40, John 13:34-35, John 14:15, 21)
4. **Membership**
  - 4.1. Qualifications - Any person who meets the following criteria is eligible to become a member:
    - 4.1.1. Professes to have received by faith Jesus Christ as Savior. (John 1:12, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Rom. 10:9-10, Eph. 2:8-9)
    - 4.1.2. Has been baptized by immersion upon profession of that faith. (Acts 8:38, Acts 16:31-34)
    - 4.1.3. Supports the church's statement of faith. (II Tim. 1:12-14, II Tim. 3:14-17)
    - 4.1.4. Has dedicated themselves to love and serve Him. (Titus 2:11-14, I Peter 1:8, I John 5:3)
  - 4.2. Admission - Individuals may be received into membership by any of the following methods subject to the recommendation of the Elders and the affirmation of the church:
    - 4.2.1. By immersion baptism, upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
    - 4.2.2. By statement of Christian experience, if previously baptized by immersion, on confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
    - 4.2.3. By reinstatement, upon request and satisfactorily clearing cause for termination of membership.

- 4.3. Status – A member’s status is active, inactive, or terminated.
- 4.4. Responsibilities of active members - The Word of God calls the Christian to walk worthy of the high calling in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:27, Col. 1:10) Active members are expected to be involved with the life and ministry of the church to the extent that God has gifted them. (I Cor. 12) This includes:
  - 4.4.1. Praying for the church, its members and its ministries. (Col. 1:9, Eph. 1:15-16, Eph. 6:18-20)
  - 4.4.2. Participating in the public worship and business meetings of the church. (Col. 3:16, Heb. 10:24-25)
  - 4.4.3. Serving through Christian ministry. (Matt. 20:26-27)
  - 4.4.4. Giving (stewardship) in support of the church and its ministries. (I Cor. 16:2, II Cor. 9:6-8)
  - 4.4.5. Supporting the leadership of the church. (Heb. 13:17)
  - 4.4.6. Agreeing to be governed by this constitution.
  - 4.4.7. Participating in the governing of the church.
    - 4.4.7.1. Members may be appointed or elected to positions of ministry and leadership.
  - 4.4.8. Maintaining the unity of the church. Members shall make every effort to maintain the unity of the body and shall not act independently on any matter which affects the church as a whole. (Matt. 18:15-17, I Cor. 1:9-10, Eph.4:3, Col. 3:12-14)
- 4.5. Inactivation – The Elders may move a member to inactive status if a member ceases to regularly attend the public worship or business meetings.
- 4.6. Termination – Termination of membership, aside from the death of the member, occurs by the decision of the Elders. Grounds for that decision are as follows:
  - 4.6.1. By personal request.
  - 4.6.2. By absence – A member, who has not attended its services and / or contributed to the ministries of the church for a period of one (1) year, and who has been communicated with by the Elders without making a response for six (6) months may have their membership terminated.
  - 4.6.3. By discipline – A member who brings reproach upon the cause of Christ by teaching or insisting on holding false doctrine, or persistently conducting himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching, or persisting in disturbing the unity or peace of the church shall be subject to discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18 and as determined by the Elders. Only after efforts by the Elders have been made to bring about repentance and amendment should such action be taken. (II Thess. 3:14-15)
- 4.7. Reinstatement – An inactive or terminated member can be reinstated to membership upon review and decision by the Elders.

## 5. Meetings

5.1. Public Worship Meetings – Public worship shall be held as deemed necessary for the spiritual growth of the church and its members. (Heb. 10:24-25).  
Communion, the Lord's Supper, shall be held regularly. (I Cor. 11:23-26)

### 5.2. Business Meetings

#### 5.2.1. Types

5.2.1.1. Budget – This annual meeting is held as early as possible in the new fiscal year. The purpose of this meeting is to review the prior year finances and approve the next year's budget as recommended by the finance committee and the Elders.

5.2.1.2. Election – General elections shall be held in November, every second year. Terms of elected officers begin on January 1.

5.2.1.3. Special – Special meetings shall be called when deemed necessary by the Elders or by written request of at least ten (10) active members.

5.2.2. Notification – All business meetings shall be announced during public worship meetings and posted in a prominent place in the church at least fifteen (15) days prior to the meeting.

5.2.3. Protocol – Business meetings shall be conducted according to the latest revision of Robert's Rules of Order. The moderator shall choose a minimum of two (2) members to count the ballots.

#### 5.2.4. Voting

5.2.4.1. Active members that are at least sixteen (16) years of age may vote.

5.2.4.2. Voting by the membership is required for the following: calling or dismissing a Lead Pastor or Elder, revising the constitution, approving or revising the budget, electing and dismissing other officers, which includes the designation of trustees, purchasing or disposing of real property, and consolidating with another church. The minimum quorum shall be six (6) members.

5.2.4.2.1. Regular business items are decided by a 1/3 voting quorum of the active membership and a simple majority.

5.2.4.2.2. Calling or dismissing a Lead Pastor or Elder, revising the constitution, and consolidation with another church are extraordinary business items and require a voting quorum of 2/3 of the active membership and an 80% affirmative to pass.

## 6. Government

### 6.1. Vacancies

- 6.1.1. Open trustee positions shall be filled as soon as possible by the same process as the original trustee was chosen. Special elections shall be held at any regular business meeting to fill a vacancy.
- 6.1.2. Any other vacancy occurring during an officer's term, except Elder and Lead Pastor, may be filled by elder appointment upon recommendation of the nominating committee until the next general election.

### 6.2. Removal

- 6.2.1. Resignation – An officer may resign his office at any time if he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.
- 6.2.2. Dismissal – Upon recommendation of the elders and a vote of the church members, an officer may be dismissed if he is not fulfilling the responsibilities of that office or continuing to meet the qualifications of that office if specified herein. For dismissal of a Lead Pastor, refer to the Lead Pastor section.

### 6.3. Trustees – The trustees are the legal representatives of the church. They shall be of legal age. Two (2) elders (the chairman and one chosen by the elders) and the treasurer are the trustees of the church.

### 6.4. Elders

- 6.4.1. Qualifications – Candidates shall meet the Biblical qualifications. (I Timothy 3:1-6, Titus 1:6-9) Candidates shall be members in good standing for at least two (2) years.
- 6.4.2. Selection – Candidates for Elder, which may come from member recommendation, are nominated by the current Elders and elected by a vote of the membership. The Lead Pastor is automatically an Elder.
- 6.4.3. Number and Term – There shall be at least six (6) elders. As much as possible half of the elders shall be elected at each general election. They shall be elected to a four (4) year term.
- 6.4.4. Responsibilities
  - 6.4.4.1. General – The Elders shall appoint a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary. The Elders shall meet regularly. They are accountable to one another to insure that each meets his qualifications and fulfills his responsibilities.
  - 6.4.4.2. To the church – The Elders are the overseers (leaders) of the church. They provide for the spiritual care of the congregation. They shall comprise the governing body of the church and shall have authority to act on behalf of the church except as limited herein. All matters that require a congregational vote shall first be presented to the Elders for review. The recommendation of the Elders will then be presented to the church membership for final decision. The Elders shall appoint a church member to act as moderator for church business meetings. The Elders are responsible for establishing and maintaining the policies and procedures of the church.
  - 6.4.4.3. To the Lead Pastor – The Elders are responsible to oversee the Lead Pastor. In the absence or incapacity of the Lead Pastor, the Elders

shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which may be delegated.

6.4.4.4. To committees – The Elders establish and oversee all committees and select appointed committee members.

6.4.5. Voting – Voting within the eldership is preferably unanimous, however, a 2/3 majority shall decide any question.

6.4.6. Replacement – Elders that have resigned or been dismissed may be replaced at the discretion of the Elders as set forth herein.

#### 6.5. Lead Pastor

6.5.1. Qualifications – The Lead Pastor shall meet the qualifications of an elder and shall be gifted primarily as a preacher/teacher and leader. (Eph. 4:11, I Tim. 5:17)

#### 6.5.2. Responsibilities

6.5.2.1. To the church membership – The Lead Pastor is the spiritual leader of the church and is responsible for the public worship services, the ordinances, and the spiritual welfare of the church.

6.5.2.2. To the other Elders – As an Elder, the Lead Pastor is responsible to the other elders for the discharge of his ministry.

6.5.2.3. To the Staff – The Lead Pastor supervises, directly or indirectly, the work of the staff.

6.5.2.3.1. To the Pastoral Staff - He hires and dismisses the Pastoral staff with the mutual agreement of the other Elders.

6.5.2.3.2. To the Non-Pastoral Staff - He hires and dismisses the non-pastoral staff with the consultation of the other Elders.

6.5.3. Selection – The Lead Pastor shall be called by the church through election upon recommendation of the Search committee and the other Elders.

6.5.4. Term – The term is for an indefinite period and it may be ended upon sixty (60) days notice on the part of the Lead Pastor, the church, or by mutual consent.

6.5.5. Dismissal – Upon recommendation of the other Elders and a vote of the church members, the Lead Pastor may be dismissed if he is not fulfilling his responsibilities as a Lead Pastor or continuing to meet the qualifications of an Elder.

#### 6.6. Staff – Qualifications and responsibilities shall be determined by the Elders.

6.6.1. Pastoral – Pastoral staff provides leadership to the ministries of the church.

6.6.2. Non-Pastoral – Non-pastoral staff provides support to the ministries of the church with direction from the Pastors.

#### 6.7. Deacons

6.7.1. Qualifications – Candidates shall meet the Biblical qualifications. (I Tim. 3:8-13) Candidates shall be members in good standing for at least one (1) year.

6.7.2. Selection – Candidates for the Deacons are nominated by the nominating committee and elected by a vote of the membership.

6.7.3. Number and Term – There shall be at least six (6) deacons. As much as possible half of the deacons shall be elected at each general election. They shall be elected to a four (4) year term.



- 6.7.4. Responsibilities
- 6.7.4.1. Deacons shall be responsible for the care for the practical needs of the congregation and perform other duties as assigned by the Elders.
  - 6.7.4.2. They are responsible for administering a fund for benevolence.
  - 6.7.4.3. Deacons report to the Elders.
- 6.8. Clerk – The church clerk records minutes of all business meetings. The clerk shall, in the name of the church, take care of official correspondence. The clerk reports to the Elders. The clerk shall be nominated by the nominating committee and elected at each general election for a two (2) year term.
- 6.9. Treasurer – The treasurer is responsible for the recording, reporting, and dispersing the finances of the church. The treasurer is nominated by the nominating committee and elected at each general election for a two (2) year term.
- 6.10. Head Usher – The Head Usher recruits, trains and oversees the ushers. The head usher reports to the Elders. The head usher is nominated by the nominating committee and elected at each general election for a two (2) year term.
- 6.11. Committees – Committees may be formed or disbanded as the need arises to assist with the implementation of church function. All committees report to the Elders. The Lead Pastor is an ex-officio member of all committees. Decisions are made by majority vote. There are two (2) types of committees, permanent committees and temporary committees.
- 6.11.1. Permanent committees
- 6.11.1.1. Nominating committee – The nominating committee’s responsibility is to receive recommendations, which may come from church members, and to select nominees for elected positions (except for Elders and Lead Pastor). The nominating committee shall consist of the Lead Pastor, one representative from the Elders, and a minimum of three other members nominated by the elders and elected by the church membership.
  - 6.11.1.2. Finance committee – The finance committee oversees the finances of the church. It coordinates the development of the budget, monitors the use and status of financial resources, determines discretionary spending and oversees the receipt and recording of the income of the church. The committee has discretionary spending authority (unbudgeted) of up to 3% of the year’s budget without congregational approval. There shall be at least five (5) members. Committee members are appointed by the Elders. The treasurer is the chairman of the committee.
  - 6.11.1.3. Facilities committee – The facilities committee is responsible for the care of the facilities of the church (physical plant and grounds). Committee members are appointed by the Elders.
  - 6.11.1.4. Missions Committee – Responsible for promoting missions and administering the missions budget. Committee members are appointed by the Elders.

- 6.11.2. Temporary committees – Temporary committees may be formed or disbanded as the need arises to assist with the implementation of church function.
  - 6.11.2.1. Search committee – Upon the resignation or dismissal of the Lead Pastor a search committee shall be formed. The committee shall be appointed by the Elders and shall be representative of the congregation at large.
7. **Disposition** – Disposition of the church property shall conform to current New York state law.
  - 7.1. If consolidation with another church is approved, the disposal shall be negotiated by the legal trustees for presentation to the Elders and the subsequent approval of the membership of the church.
  - 7.2. In cases of organizational division among the church membership, the church property shall belong to those members who abide by this constitution. Should differences of opinion arise, the Executive Committee of the Eastern Association of North American Baptist Conference, Inc. shall make the final determination as to which members are abiding by the constitution. In cases of dissolution, the real property ownership after satisfaction of all indebtedness shall pass to the Eastern Association of North American Baptist Conference, Inc.
8. **Amendment and Revision** – Amendments to this constitution shall be proposed in writing to the Elders. As needed, the Elders shall appoint a constitution committee to review proposals and make appropriate recommendations.
9. **Policies and Procedures** – The church shall have a set of operating guidelines by which to conduct its operation. This shall be originated and administered by the Elders. It shall contain lists of the duties and responsibilities of all officers, committees, and staff, as well as the administrative policies and procedures of the church. The congregation shall be notified of any major changes at annual business meetings.