

BY-LAWS AND ORGANIZATION

CHURCH COVENANT

Having been brought, as we believe, by the divine grace to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and Preserver, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant and agree, by God's help, to walk in brotherly love. We, therefore, enter into this covenant as members of this church and as Christians that we will watch over each other in love, sharing together each other's joys and sorrows, that we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor omit the great duty of prayer for ourselves and others; that by divine assistance we will endeavor to bring up those under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that in all things we will strive to exemplify our profession by a corresponding practice, to abstain from all sinful conformity to the world, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in all our deportment; that we will abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage; that we will sustain the worship, ordinance, discipline and doctrine of the church; that we will contribute cheerfully, according to our ability, to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor and the general spread of the Gospel. In keeping this solemn Covenant may we ever enjoy the blessings and presence of the great Head of the Church.

THE ORGANIZATION OF A CHURCH

1. When any number of believers desire to be organized into a Freewill Baptist Church, they are examined by one or more regular ordained Freewill Baptist ministers from a conference in the John-Thomas Association in reference to their Christian character, doctrine and ability to sustain a church, and to determine if the members or ministers left another church to form this church, were they members in good standing. If the examination is satisfactory, the applicants are organized into the church as follow:

- a) The Bible (Authorized King James 1611 version translated out of the original tongues with subsequent translations diligently compared and revised) is presented as the only rule of faith and practice.
- b) The John-Thomas Association Church covenant shall be adopted.
- c) A prayer of consecration offered.
- d) The hand of fellowship is given.
- e) The officers are elected. (See officers and their duties).

2. There shall be male members enough to fill the public offices in the church except the clerk and treasurer, in order that a regular discipline is kept up.

3. After being thus constituted, they shall be at liberty, out of the number of ordained ministers, to choose a pastor who shall preside over them. We recommend that the church elect their pastor by secret ballot and this annually.

MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH

The times of celebrating the Lord's Supper, washing feet, and of business meetings are arranged by each local church to suit its own convenience.

Each church is required to observe this ordinance. Feet washing follow the Lord's Supper.

Conference or business meetings are opened and closed with suitable devotional exercises. The pastor acts as moderator for business meetings of the church. In the absence of the pastor, the church may meet when necessary and attend to ordinary business; but no member is excluded in the absence of the pastor.

RECEPTION OF MEMBERS

Any person who gives evidence of a change of heart, professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and has been immersed by a proper administrator, church covenant read, explained and accepted, is received into membership by a vote of the church. After members accept the Bible as their rule of faith and practice, then the right hand of fellowship shall be given, which is the door to the church.

From other churches immersed persons are received by letter. No one against whom any valid objection is made is received to membership. When any member objects to the reception of the applicant, the matter is deferred until the church can ascertain the nature of the objection. If in the opinion of the church, the objection is not a valid one, the applicant may be received. Excluded members are received again only when they confess their errors and give evidence of repentance. Persons excluded from other churches are not received; unless it is made evident they were excluded upon unjustifiable grounds. The right hand of fellowship is extended to all who are received into the membership of the church.

The John-Thomas Association of Freewill Baptists or any Conference or Church belonging to the Association will not accept into its membership any known Homosexual.

DISMISSION OF MEMBERS

Only members in good standing are dismissed from the church and this for no other reason than to unite with some other church. Such members are granted letters of honorable dismissal and commendation, (to be mailed from the church which granted the letter to the receiving church) but are under the watch care of the same church until they are received into another church. A withdrawal without such letter of recommendation is equivalent to excommunication, and treated as such by the church.

OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

The officers of a church are a Board of Trustees, Clerk, Treasurer, Deacons and Deaconess', Finance Committee and Pastor.

Board of Trustees - The duty of the Trustees shall be to hold title to all property, either in fee or gift, and to maintain all rights to the same, to convey said property in the discretion of a four-fifths majority of those present at a regular business meeting, being announced at said church three months prior to said meeting.

Clerk - It is the duty of the Clerk to keep a church book and in it record the church covenant, the names of the members, and all the proceedings of the church in the exercise of its doctrine and management of its temporal affairs. The clerk also signs all the letters and other communications made by the authority of the church.

Treasurer - The Treasurer shall be entrusted with the funds of the church, and it shall be the duty of the treasurer to keep a regular account of all monies received, and from whom and make a report of the same annually to the church or more often if necessary, which funds shall be drawn on the treasury only by the order of the church..

Deacons - The Deacons are elected for life or during good behavior. They should be men distinguished among their brethren for piety and benevolence. Before entering upon the duties of their office, they are ordained by the pastor or other regular minister, ordination consisting of the charge, laying on of hands and prayer. It is their duty to serve at the Lord's Table, to distribute the bounty of the church among its needy members, to visit the sick, to assist the pastor in promoting attendance upon the church, and to conduct religious meetings in the absence of the pastor. A church belonging to the John-Thomas Association of Freewill Baptists will not:

- a. Ordain any woman as a deacon.
- b. Ordain any known homosexual as a deacon.

Deaconess - They assist the deacons and finance committee, in visiting the sick, in collecting funds and distributing among the needy members, and enforcing proper discipline among the female members.

Finance Committee - These have the general management of the finances of the church, subject to the church's control.

Pastor - Each church elects its own pastor out of the regular ordained ministers upon such terms as may be agreed upon between the parties themselves. It is the pastor's duty to faithfully preach the Word, to have the general superintendence of the church; to be himself an example to the flock, to visit the members, especially the sick, as he has the opportunity, and to do all within his power to promote the religious interest of the church which he serves and to advance the cause of Christ among men.

Before a minister can pastor a church in the John-Thomas Association, he must belong to the John-Thomas Association.

THE MINISTRY

1. No member of our connection shall be at liberty to take upon himself the public ministry of the Word, unless he feels divinely called, and makes report of the same to the church to which he belongs, and if the church shall be satisfied with his qualifications, and call of such person, then the church may grant said person the liberty to preach twelve months. He shall be listed as a licentiate minister by his church.
 - a. When he feels he is divinely called, he is given a license by the Pastor of the Church to which he belongs.
 - b. If, after attending and being under the watch care of his church for 12 months, he proves satisfactory to the church, they will grant a letter of recommendation, signed by the Pastor and Clerk to be sent to the Quarterly Meeting. (Recommendation shall consist of his attendance at church, Sunday school, conference and knowledge of the John-Thomas Association by-laws)
 - c. If satisfactory to same, the quarterly meeting may recommend him to the Ordaining Council.
 - d. He shall be ordained if proven satisfactory to the Council, if not he will be laid over by the ordaining council until a later date.
2. The Ordaining Council, consisting of three ordained ministers, must be elected by each quarterly conference according to its rules...and shall serve for a period of twelve months.
3. When a minister of another denomination wishes to unite with a Freewill Baptist Church of the John-Thomas Association, he must first become a member of the church, and then the proceedings are the same as with licentiates.
4. Any minister leaving the Freewill Baptist Church and desires to be reinstated shall be dealt with as though they had never belonged to the Church.
5. If an ordained minister becomes disorderly, or preaches a doctrine contrary to the John-Thomas Association Freewill Baptist faith, the minister shall be called to question by the church offended. He shall be given a fair and impartial trial, by evidence mainly by the Freewill Baptist members; if the charges shall be sustained, he shall be reported to the ministers conference; Each ministers' conference shall deal with him according to their rules. (See by-laws of the ministers' conference number 3)
6. If the charges are against a licentiate, the church where he belongs has the exclusive right to deal with him. (He is under the watch care of the church and not the quarterly conference.)
7. Any ordained minister of the John-Thomas Association of Freewill Baptists may serve the church in the absence of the pastor, in every Gospel order required of him by the church.
8. Ministers from another Freewill Baptist conference elected to pastor a church in a conference in the John-Thomas Association will be required to join the conference. (He will be examined by

the ordaining council as to the John –Thomas Association doctrine and if in agreement he will be issued a license by the conference accepting him.)

9. The John-Thomas Association of Freewill Baptists or any conference or church belonging to the Association will not:
 - a) Ordain any woman into the ministry.
 - b) Ordain any known homosexual into the ministry
 - c) No John-Thomas Association minister shall at anytime, now or in the indefinite future, be required or allowed to perform same sex marriages (male to male or female to female) according to our biblical and religious belief. (Articles of Faith number 8)
10. The John-Thomas Association of Freewill Baptists or any Conference or Church belonging to the Association for clarification of the term "BIBLE" as our rule of faith and practice will use only the Authorized King James Version of the Scripture of the 1611 translation (translated out of the original tongues, with subsequent translations diligently compared and revised) to preach, teach, marry, baptize, bury the dead, present to our Ministers when ordained, and to carry out any Gospel instructions.
11. When a new church wishes to unite with a conference in the John-Thomas Association, all their ordained ministers are examined by the ordaining council of the receiving conference as to the doctrine of The John-Thomas Association and if such are in agreement with them, those ministers are then issued a license by the conference, If any ministers are under the watch care of said church, his time under the watch care will be counted.

BY-LAWS OF MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

1. There shall be a Minister's Conference held annually in connection with the Yearly Meeting.
2. The object of the Ministerial Conference is to discuss points of doctrine and examine the Christian character of the ministers.
3. All ministers in the John-Thomas Yearly Meeting are required to attach themselves to the Minister's Conference and must be governed by the rules and regulations of the Minister's Conference.
4. All ministers belonging to the Conference are required to report themselves to the Conference annually, either in person or by letter or both.
5. Any minister failing to report for a period of one year, either in person or by letter, or both, shall automatically exclude himself from the Conference.
6. All ministers moving to another Quarterly Meeting shall be granted a letter of dismissal and recommendation so that they may properly unite themselves to the Quarterly Meeting where they move. (See Dismission of members section) Since ministers are members, same rule applies.
7. All Freewill Baptists using our church houses must hold a card of good standing with their conference or otherwise be in good standing with their Freewill Baptist Conference.
 - a. That Pastors, Deacons and Trustees must approve all appointments of non- Freewill Baptist Ministers.
 - b. All funeral services are to be exempt from these resolutions.
 - c. All church clerks are to be notified of these resolutions.
8. Our older Ministers, who would be approved by an appointed committee are to be issued good standing cards for life.

ORGANIZATION OF A QUARTERLY MEETING

Two or more churches wishing to organize a Quarterly Meeting shall appoint three delegates for that purpose and request, of an adjoining Quarterly Meeting; a council of not less than five members and one ordained minister which will meet with the delegates and proceed:

1. To examine the delegates respecting the Christian character and doctrines of their respective churches, and the right reason for such an organization as desired.
2. To offer the right hand of fellowship and consecrating prayer.
3. The election of a moderator, clerk and treasurer, and then proceed with such business as may come before it.
4. Delegates are elected to same Yearly Meeting or Association of the Freewill Baptists, and instructed for membership in one body.

BY-LAWS OF A QUARTERLY MEETING

1. No conference shall be held with less than three Ordained Ministers and four Delegates belonging to the Yearly Meeting.
2. At the opening of each conference, the clerk's books shall be presented and the proceedings of the last conference read.
3. This conference may at each regular meeting elect as many boards or standing committees as may be necessary in carrying out its benevolent purposes. These shall keep a record of their proceedings and make a report at each Quarterly Meeting of the conference.
4. The conference may extend to visiting brethren all the privileges of the body, save that of voting.
5. If any member, in the judgment of the conference, shall show anger in his discussion on any subject, he shall forfeit his seat in that conference.
6. No member of the general conference shall be at liberty to withdraw without leave of the Moderator.
7. The conference shall always adjourn by vote.
8. There shall annually be a committee of finance chosen to settle with the treasurer and report to the conference.
9. Conference shall always open and adjourn by prayer and praise of God.
10. Any motion must be made by one member, seconded by another, and afterwards stated by the Moderator, before it is debated. A motion shall be reduced to writing by the mover or at the demand of any one member.
11. All resolutions shall be submitted in writing.
12. A motion or resolution may be withdrawn at any time before a decision or amendment by the conference.
13. Any motion or resolution containing more than one distinct proposition shall be divided, provided the call for a decision be sustained by the majority.
14. When a member speaks or offers a motion he should rise and respectfully address the Moderator, confine himself to the question under consideration, avoid all personalities or unkind or disrespectful language.
15. When two or more members rise to speak at the same time, the Moderator shall decide who is entitled to the floor.
16. When a member is speaking no one shall interrupt him except to call him to order, ask leave to explain or to make explanation. The one allowed to explain shall confine himself strictly to an actual misunderstanding or language which may need explanation.
17. No member shall speak more than twice or longer than five minutes at each time on any question without leave of the Moderator, which leave shall be granted without debate.
18. All committees shall be named by the Moderator, by request of the conference.
19. The member first named on a committee shall be its chairman to call the committee together, but after it is convened the committee may elect its own chairman and secretary.
20. Voting shall be done by standing when a vote is close, or when it becomes necessary to count the affirmative and negative and in special cases by ballot.
21. The Moderator, in case of a tie, may cast the deciding vote.

22. All members should vote on one side or the other, unless excused by the Moderator and the clerk.
23. No motion, discussion, or other business shall be admitted while the vote is being taken.
24. The minutes of the conference shall be signed by the moderator and the clerk.
25. Each Quarterly Meeting shall ask its respective churches to deal with its members when necessary, according to Matthew 18: 15, 17.
26. If a minority of a Quarterly Meeting be grieved over the ruling of the majority, they have the right to appeal to the Yearly Meeting, and its decision shall be final.
27. No minister shall have a vote in the conference unless he is a member in good standing with his church and conference.
28. Any Freewill Baptist Church belonging to the John-Thomas Association that reports to the Quarterly Conference three consecutive conferences without a pastor will be automatically dropped from the conference.

E. A. REEDY
S. M. McFALL

D. L. SMITH
ARTHUR CASTEEL

J.C. RASNAKE
W.R. STALLARD

YEARLY MEETING CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

We, the members of the Freewill Baptist Church, in order to form a more perfect union and promote Christ's kingdom do ordain and establish this Constitution for the John-Thomas Yearly Meeting.

Article 1. This Yearly Meeting shall be called the John-Thomas Meeting, and shall be composed of such regularly ordained and well disciplined Freewill Baptist Quarterly Meetings, conveniently located, as may embody themselves under the Constitution. I

Article 2. The Conference of this Yearly Meeting shall be composed of ministers and delegates who are members of the Quarterly Meetings, each Quarterly Meeting being entitled to three delegates from each church.

Article 3. The officers of this Yearly Meeting shall be a clerk, treasurer and moderator, and shall be chosen at every session of the Yearly Meeting, with such assistants as may be found necessary.

Article 4. Any well-organized and well-regulated Freewill Baptist Quarterly Meeting, composed of such churches as conform to the usages and adopt the doctrines of the Freewill Baptist denomination, as published in the minutes of the John-Thomas Yearly Meeting, and are in favor of the benevolent enterprises of the denomination, may at the time, on application, by vote of the Yearly Meeting, become a member thereof.

Article 5. This Yearly Meeting shall have the power to discipline the Quarterly Meetings of which it is composed, and to exclude them for disorderly work if their labor proves unsuccessful.

Article 6. Each session of this Yearly Meeting shall convene on Friday before the second Sunday in September at 11:00 a.m., at which time it shall be the duty of the Quarterly Meetings of which the Yearly Meeting is composed to represent themselves by delegates, and report their standing, prospects and statistics by letter; at which time, the Yearly Meeting shall act on such questions and topics as may be referred to it by its respective Quarterly Meetings, and transact such other business not repugnant to this Constitution, nor the usages of the denominations, as in its judgment may promote the cause of Christ and the interest of the churches and Quarterly Meetings within the limits of the Yearly Meetings.

Article 7. The Yearly Meeting shall have the power to adopt any regulation or by-law not inconsistent with the Constitution which may be deemed essential to the further regulations of the sessions.

Article 8. This Conference shall not recognize any minister or delegate unless they comply with the constitution and by-laws thereof.

Article 9. Each Quarterly Conference shall send to the Yearly Meeting \$2.50 for each minute book ordered, this money will be used for the minutes and expense of the Yearly Meeting.

Article 10. The Constitution may be altered or amended by a vote of four-fifths of the ministers and delegates present at any session, notice of such intended alterations having been given and recorded at the next previous session.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

1. We believe that there is but one living, true and eternal God the Father, of whom all things from everlasting to everlasting glorious and immutable in all His attributes. -I Cor. 8:6; Isa. 40:28.
2. We believe that there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all things are; the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, who God freely sent into this world because of the great love wherewith He loved the world; and Christ as freely gave Himself a ransom for all, tasting death for every man; who was buried and rose again the third day, and ascended into Heaven, from whence we look for him the second time in the clouds of heaven at the last Day to judge both the quick and the dead.-1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 2:9; John 3:16; Rev. 1: 7; Acts 24:15; 1 John 2:2.
3. We believe that there is one Holy Ghost, the precious gift of the Father through his dear Son, unto the World, who quickeneth and draweth sinners home to God.- John 16:7-8, Acts 2:2; Eph. 2:1, Eph. 4:4-6.
4. We believe in the beginning God made man upright, and placed him in a state of glory without the least mixture of misery, from which he voluntarily by transgression fell and by means brought on himself a miserable and moral state subject to death. - Gen-2:17; 3:19.
5. We believe that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and the knowledge of truth, that they might be saved; for which end Christ hath commended the Gospel to be preached among all nations and to every creature.-Mark 16:15; Luke 24:27; John 3:15-17; Tim. 2:4.
6. We believe that no man shall suffer in hell for want of a Christ who died for him, but as the Scripture has said for denying the Lord that brought them; because they believed not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Unbelief, therefore, being the cause why the just and the righteous God of Heaven will condemn the children of men, it follows against all argument that all men, at one time or another are found in such capacity as that through the grace of God they may be eternally saved. - Acts 17:30; Mark 6:6; Heb. 3:10; I John 5:1, 10.
7. We believe that all people reaching the years of accountability must be born again. Then by trusting His promise and keeping His commandments until the end of life we shall be saved. II Tim. 4:7; John 3:3.
8. We believe the whole Scriptures are infallibly true and that they are the only rules of faith and practice. II Tim. 3:16-17.
9. We believe in the doctrine of General provision made of God in Christ, for the benefit of all mankind, who repent and believe in the gospel. -Luke 14:16-20; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 3:19; Mark 1:15.
10. We believe that sinners are drawn to God the Father, of the Holy Ghost, through Christ His Son and that the Holy Ghost offers His divine aid to all the human family so as they might be happy; would they give place to His divine teachings; whereas, such who do not receive the divine impressive of His Spirit, shall at a future day, own their condemnation just and charge themselves with their own damnation, for willfully rejecting the offers of sovereign grace. – Matt. 11:17, John 6:45, 65; Ps. 1:1; Tit. 2:11, 12; Jer. 12:29
11. We believe that men, not considered simply as men, but ungodly men, were of old ordained to condemnation, considered such who turn the grace of God into them, and therefore, shall bring upon themselves swift destruction; but we observe that they, and such the Apostle saith because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, therefore the indignation and wrath of God is upon every soul of man that doeth evil, living and dying therein; for there is no respect of persons with God. - Jude 1:14; II Peter 2:1; II Thess. 2:11; Rom. 2:10-21.

12. We believe that all children dying in infancy, having not actually transgressed against the law of God, in their own persons are only subject to the first death, which was brought on them by the fall of the first Adam, and that none of them dying in that state shall suffer punishment in hell by the guilt of Adam's sin for "of such is the kingdom of God." - 1 Cor. 15:22; Matt. 18:2-5; Mark 9: 36-37; Matt. 19:14.
13. We believe that good works are the fruits of saving faith and that in the use of the means of grace and not out of the use of those means, eternal life is promised to men. Rev. 22:14-15; Isa. 1:19-20; Matt. 7:8; Jer. 6:16; Luke 13:34-35.
14. We believe that no man has any warrant in the Holy Scriptures for justification before God through his own works, power or ability, which he has in and of himself, only as he by grace is made able to come to God through Jesus Christ; believing the righteousness of Jesus Christ to be imputed to all believers for their eternal acceptance with God. - Rom. 4:24; Acts 8:20- 21; Eph. 2:8-9.
15. We believe that all things are foreseen in the wisdom of God, so that God knoweth whatsoever can or cannot come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet not as having decreed any person to everlasting life, out of respect of mere choice, further that He hath appointed the godly unto life, and the ungodly, who die in sin, unto death. - Heb. 4:13; Prov. 8:22-31; Matt. 25:31-46.
16. We believe as teaching Gospel ordinances, in believer's baptism, laying on of hands, receiving of the sacrament in bread and the fruit of the vine, washing the saints' feet, anointing the sick with oil in the name of the Lord, fasting, prayer, singing praise of God and the public ministry of the Word, with every institution of the Lord we shall find in the New Testament.- Mark: 16:15-16; Acts 8:17; Acts 19:6; Luke 22:19-20; John 13:5-7; James 5:14; Eph. 2:8-9.
17. We believe the Gospel mode of baptism is by immersion in the name of the FATHER, SON AND HOLY GHOST, and that believers are the only subjects for Baptism. Matthew 28:19, Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:9-10, Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12.
18. We believe in a general resurrection of the dead and a final judgment at the last day.-John 5:28-29; II Cor. 5:10.
19. We believe the happiness of the righteous is eternal and the torments of the wicked are endless. - Matt. 25:46.
20. Freewill Baptists understand the Bible teaches the following fact: on the Day of Pentecost believers spoke in distinct foreign languages which were readily understood by the nationalities present. Acts 2:4, 8, 11. Tongues were given as a special gift to the early church as only one sign which confirms the witness of the Gospel to believers. I Cor. 14:14; Heb. 2:4. While tongues were bestowed by the sovereign will of God on some believers, all did not speak with tongues. I Cor. 12:10, 30. When this gift was abused, it became a source of disturbance in the congregational meetings. To eliminate confusion and correct the error, Paul set aside particular guidelines for the Christian church to follow. (I Cor. 14:18, 19, 23, 33). My gift of tongues was neither an evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, nor does it bring about sanctification. I Cor. 12:13. We believe that speaking in tongues as a visible sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an erroneous doctrine to be rejected. Any implication of a "second work of grace" has never been tolerated in our fellowship of churches, and will not be permitted. We teach and preach the fullness of the Holy Spirit and heed the scriptural admonition, "Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Eph. 5:8-20.

GAMBLING

We not wishing to conform to the practice of gambling pledge to abstain from the sale or use of all devices constructed for the purpose of gambling...a lottery, games of chance, or any numbered system for which there are odds given for gain or loss, whether it be associated with a person, place, or thing, spoken or unspoken. - I Tim. 6:10, I Thess. 5:22.