



Church Planter Application.

Date: _____

Part 1. CHURCH PLANTERS INFORMATION

1) Personal Background Information:

- a. Name: _____
- b. Home Address: _____
- c. Phone: (home) _____ (Cell) _____
- d. Email Address: _____
- e. Date of Birth: ____/____/____ Country of Birth: _____
- f. Ethnicity: _____ Language(s) you speak: _____
- g. Citizenship: _____
- h. Type of Visa (if not U.S. Citizen): _____
- i. Current Occupation / Vocation: _____
- j. Marital Status: Married / Single Ever been divorced? Yes / No
 Wedding Anniversary: ____/____/____
 Wife: _____
 Child(ren): _____ (ages) _____

2) Spiritual / Church Background:

- a. Denomination: _____ Date joined Southern Baptist Church _____
- b. Have you read and agree with the ***GCA Statement of Faith***? Yes / No
- c. Present Membership of SBC Church? Yes / No
 Church Name: _____
 Pastor's Name: _____
 Church Address: _____
 Email: _____ Phone: _____

3) Education Background:

- a. College: _____ Year Graduated: _____ Degree: _____
- b. Seminary: _____ Year Graduated: _____ Degree: _____
- c. Bible Institute: _____ Year Completed: _____ Degree: _____
- d. Other: _____ Year Completed: _____ Degree: _____

4) Vocational Background:

- a. Licensed to Preach the Gospel? Yes / No Date Licensed: _____
- b. Are you ordained? Yes / No Date Ordained: _____
Ordained by which church: _____
- c. Previous experiences in the Pastoral / Church ministry:
 - 1. _____ Dates: _____
 - 2. _____ Dates: _____
- d. Previous experiences in Church Planting
 - 1. When: _____ Where: _____ Your role: _____
 - 2. When: _____ Where: _____ Your role: _____

5) Church Planting Background:

- a. Church Planter Mentor Name: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
- b. Sponsoring church, if any: _____
Pastor's Name: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
- c. Potential location(s) for the new church plant:
City: _____ Zip Code: _____
City: _____ Zip Code: _____
- d. Target people group for the new church plant:
Ethnicity: _____
Language: _____
Age Group: _____
- e. List of team members and roles for the new church plant:
_____/_____
_____/_____
_____/_____
- f. List Books read about Church Planting
_____ by _____
_____ by _____
_____ by _____
_____ by _____
_____ by _____

I declare that all the information given is true to the best of my knowledge, and I hereby give GCA permission to contact the references given and to share the information amongst all parties involved in the Church Planting. The purpose of discussion among the assessment team is solely to evaluate your suitability for church planting. Your information will be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Church Planter Name

Church Planter Signature

Date

Statement of Faith of Great Commission Association

Below is a summary of some of our basic beliefs:

1. **GOD** is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the Universe. There is one God who reveals himself to us as the Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. This mystery is commonly called the Trinity: each “person” of the Trinity exists simultaneously and has distinct personal attributes, but there is no division of nature, essence, or being in God.
2. **THE SCRIPTURES** were written by those who were divinely inspired. The Bible is the written Word of God, revealing God’s will for humanity. It is the basis for our faith and practice as individual Christians, as churches, and as an association of churches. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ are the criteria by which we interpret the Scriptures.
3. **MANKIND** was created in the image of God. All people sin; therefore, mankind is “fallen” from the position that God designed for it. God’s grace (gift of salvation) in Jesus Christ allows mankind to come back into fellowship with God. Because mankind is created in God’s image, and because Christ died for all, then all people are to be given dignity and respect.
4. **SALVATION** is the gift of God, which we receive by faith in Jesus Christ who died for our sins. It involves fellowship with God and eternal life, beginning at the moment one entrusts himself to Jesus as Lord of his life and continuing on past this life, without end. God patiently seeks the salvation of all people, not desiring for any to perish. The “security of the believer” teaches that salvation, once received, cannot be lost; the believer is safe in the Father’s hand. However, a disobedient believer will be disciplined by the Heavenly Father.
5. **HEAVEN AND HELL** are eternal dwelling places. Heaven—the place where God’s people live with him forever—is a gift to the believer. Heaven is also a place where rewards are received. Salvation itself is a gift from God, and not a reward. Heaven’s rewards vary and are based on individual faithfulness in this life. Those who do not receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior in this life will spend eternity apart from the loving presence of God in hell. Hell is a place of suffering where the devil and his followers dwell.
6. **THE CHURCH** is a term that is used in two ways in the Scriptures. In the broadest spiritual sense, the Church is the body of Christ, which includes all Christian believers of all ages. In a more tangible sense, the New Testament most often speaks of the church as a local body of baptized believers. All believers are members of the Church, and should express this through participation in the local church family of faith. Baptist churches are accountable to the membership under the Lordship of Christ and as each member has a voice and vote in the life of the church. All members of the local church family of faith are to be treated with dignity and respect according to the principles of the Scriptures. All members, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or national origin are gifted by God to participate in building up the church. The local church should encourage the giftedness of the members.
7. **BAPTISM** is an ordinance of the church: Jesus set it aside (“ordained” it) as a reminder and as an act of obedience. Baptism is by immersion in water and is a statement of one’s faith in Jesus who died, was buried, and rose again. It is also a statement that one has died to sin and is raised to a new life in Christ, looking forward some day to the resurrection from the dead. Baptism portrays a faith already held within the person, and has no saving power in itself.
8. **THE LORD’S SUPPER** is the other “ordinance” of the church. In taking the Lord’s Supper (sometimes called “communion”), we remember especially the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross: the fruit of the vine reminds us of his blood that was shed, and the bread reminds us of his body that was given

for us. Taking the Lord's Supper together regularly as a church body also reminds us that we are united together by our common faith in Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross.

9. **THE KINGDOM OF GOD** is the Lord's spiritual reign over the lives of all who give allegiance to him, whether they be living on earth or in heaven. It includes all who are in the Church, but also includes believers in God prior to the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his Church.
10. **LAST THINGS** refers to those things that will happen near the end of time. The Bible tells us that Jesus will come again visibly to receive his followers to himself. The evil forces of Satan and this world will be ultimately defeated and cast into hell, and God's kingdom shall prevail forever.
11. **EVANGELISM** is every Christian's privilege. We are all called to share personally with others how they may be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. By faithful giving, we also support the evangelistic efforts of our local churches, as well as the missions efforts of our denomination in the United States and around the world.
12. **THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER**, or "soul competency," means that every believer prays directly to God and may read the Bible to better understand the will of God. Other believers may help our understanding, but each one of us is able to stand before God without any intermediary other than Jesus Christ.
13. **SERVANT LEADERSHIP** is exemplified by the true nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded that the Christian leader should not seek to rule over others, but rather to be the servant of all. The cross mandates laying down our rights for the good of others.
14. **BIBLICAL OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S MORAL STANDARDS.** We believe that the Church and its members are subject to, first and foremost, the laws of God and have a spiritual obligation to stand for these biblical expectations in all ages, (Mark 6:14-29). We also believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral and therefore sin (Gen. 2:24-25; Ex. 20:14, 17, 22:19; Lev. 18:22-23, 20:13, 15-16; Matt. 19:4-6, 9; Rom. 1:18-31; 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 15-20; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; Jude 7). We believe that God created the human race male and female and that all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is outside of God's will for His creation, (Gen. 1:27; Deut. 22:5). We also believe that all sin and every similar is redeemable by the Grace of God through the powerful work of repentance of our sins and the forgiveness of God in Christ. (1 John 1:9).

I hereby declare that I, _____ have read and reviewed and am in agreement with the GCA Statement of Faith.

Church Planter Signature

Date

Version 2017

Rationale for the 10 Principles of Baptist Bylaws

Dr. Mike Stewart

Bylaw - from the middle English “byrlaw” which means the local law or custom. Bylaws for a Baptist congregation are their own local rules for making important decisions. They are a tool to create unity and fairness in the direction of the church. Good bylaws will guide the church at crisis moments and ensure the best outcomes possible. They also communicate what we really believe about the nature of the church.

Who is the Church?

Bylaws portray the true theology of what the church or its leaders believe about the church. Baptists have taught that every pastor and member are equally endowed with the Holy Spirit upon confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They readily confess that Jesus is Head of the Church and that no person should usurp His authority by seeking to control the body through title or office. The church is a body with many parts and every part has equal value. For the body is not one member, but many. *1 Corinthians 12:14*

This theology of the church means that fellow brothers and sisters in Christ are given equal right to be heard in church matters. This is why congregationalism and democratic practices are the norm in Baptist churches. It reflects the theology of who is the church. It is not one member, one leader or even one faction. Baptist bylaws place high value on the body of believers sharing with each other and being responsible together for the direction of the church.

In contrast to the congregational model is the hierarchical model. All power is placed in the hands of a few people. It is very controlled. This model is seen in the Catholic Church. The church has two classes of believers, the laity and the clergy. The clergy have special revelation from God. The laity must rely upon the clergy to truly hear from God. The laity’s ministry is to follow the clergy. When the Pope speaks, there is no debate. This is the same theology in practice when we state that only the pastor should be heard on any church matter. This model has been historically rejected by Baptists. The role of every member of the body of Christ is to follow the Lord. Setting our eyes upon man for our direction is not biblical.

Spiritual Leadership in Baptist Churches

There are three New Testament words used to describe the work of the spiritual leaders of the church. The term elder in the New Testament is from the Greek word *presbuteros*. The Greek word for shepherd is *poimen* and the Greek word *episkopos* is translated as bishop.

“Therefore, I exhort the elders [*presbuteros*] among you, as your fellow elder [*presbuteros*] and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd [verb form of *poimen*] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [*episkopos*] not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness”

(1 Pet. 5:1-2). *Peter does not describe this as three different offices in the church but three functions of godly church leadership.*

Baptists teach that there are two biblically recognized leadership roles which require a calling from God and the church body, and they are pastors and deacons. There are not separate New Testament roles for elders, as opposed to pastors. It is the same role, just a different way to describe it. A church may have multiple pastors/elders that help govern the affairs of the church, but all of them must meet the required biblical qualifications.

Who Has the Authority in the Baptist Church?

Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and earth. He is the head of the church, His body. The Greek word for authority is *exousia*. It comes from a verb that means (1) to do something without hindrance, and/or (2) the right to do something or the right to be over something. When someone has authority, it means that they wield influence and lead others in the accomplishment of a purpose. The word *exousia* is never used in the New Testament to grant ruling authority of one person or office over any other believer in the church.

“The scriptural model for Church life is one of gifted people, anointed by the Spirit and recognized by the people, functioning as a gift to the whole body, teaching and equipping ALL in the body to do the work of ministry as described in Ephesians 4:11-13. This is far different than a few office holders doing the work of ministry and all the people doing what they are told by those in office. The biblical model of the church moves one from viewing the church as an organization or institution to seeing her as an organism or a body, properly called the Body of Christ.”¹

The New Testament and Democracy

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 calls for Southern Baptist churches to use democratic processes to make their ministry decisions. Democracy is the highest form of social decision-making and brings the best long-term results. This is what our country is founded on (it is indigenous to our culture), and it is also biblical.

Democracy is practiced in the New Testament as the church selects its deacons in Acts 6. Acts 15 is an incredible meeting of opposing positions, with major ramifications for the church. This is a textbook case for how churches can make difficult - and at the same time, God honoring - decisions. The leaders don't duck the meeting for fear of creating division. They lead the meeting and listen to both points of view to seek God's will and create a unified direction. If the apostles had the authority to make and enforce the decisions by themselves, why have the meeting? When James gives his recommendation to the church, the Bible says it was met with approval by all of them. I have led large meetings, and the only way to know you have agreement is to ask for a response from the gathering.

Using democratic processes allows the church and its leadership to fully gage its own unity before making a significant ministry decision. *Democracy is not about having the votes to get what we want.* That is a secular understanding of it. In the church, it is a valuable tool to measure how unified the church is in its understanding of God's will in that moment. A church decision being considered, with substantial sincere opposition, may communicate to the church body that God is not ready for them to proceed.

¹ 'Authority in the Church' by Paul and Wade Burleson p. 24

The 10 Baptist Principles of Baptist Bylaws

1. Bylaws should have real protection to guard against and remove ungodly leaders and members. Bylaws that assume that wolves will never appear are unbiblical, as they reject the teachings of Christ as to this reality. They should state how the church will discipline, restore or remove church leaders and members in the cases of verifiable scriptural disobedience.
2. Bylaws should truthfully state who you are and who you are related to. It should state that the church is organized as a Southern Baptist church, so that new members understand the doctrinal position and affiliation of the church from the very beginning. If you don't want anyone to know that you are affiliated with Southern Baptists, then why are you really affiliating with them? This is an integrity question.
3. Bylaws should make membership real and meaningful. It should be very clear how to become a member of the church, which should include a public profession of faith in Christ, baptism by immersion as a believer and approval by the church body. (Accepting infant baptism as a valid form of baptism for church members or leaders is not permitted in churches wishing to be affiliated with Southern Baptists.) Church bylaws that grant no voting membership status to the body are not inherently Baptist and are in contradiction to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
4. Bylaws should undergird the truth that all leaders serve the church as a whole. They should state that the calling and removal of pastors/elders/deacons and other church offices such as treasurer, trustees, etc., will be ultimately reviewed and determined by the members of the church. Church leadership will often make recommendations for some of these officers to the body for their consideration. The local church leaders are to be accountable to the local church body for their ministry.
5. Bylaws should make openness and transparency the operating norm. They should allow the church members to have free access to church bylaws, articles of incorporation, church business meeting minutes, etc., as requested.
6. Bylaws should foster a spirit of teamwork and partnership among the whole church. They should allow the church to vote annually on a church budget and ministry plan that authorizes church to invest God's provision in the work of ministry. A ministry plan is the goals and proposed directions of the church in the upcoming year that are proposed by church leadership to the body for their review and determination.
7. Bylaws should make financial and ministry integrity open to regular review. The church members should be provided to them, at least on a quarterly basis, a financial report and update on their ministry plan progress. Church members will review and consider the reports for their final approval or amendment. The bylaws should clearly state when the church business meeting are held. For example the second Sunday of the first month in the quarter.
8. Bylaws need to have the ability to be flexible when needed. They should state how to have a special called congregational ministry meetings and who is allowed to call one. This should require proper notice to the church body that the meeting will be held and the agenda of the

meeting.

9. Bylaws should communicate that the church is always ready to hear sincere issues of the body. They should state clearly how members may scripturally bring concerns or agenda items to be heard by the church. It is wise to have church members submit these items in writing at least seven days in advance of the meeting to the appropriate person. This allows church leadership to have the needed information prepared for the meeting.
10. Bylaws should reveal a very high level of ethics being met by church leadership. The bylaws should not allow church officers or members to vote on any business items that they have a conflict of interest in. Bylaws should also include protection of church assets and properties to be used for future ministry work should the church not be able to continue in the future.

I hereby declare that I, _____ have read and reviewed, and am in *major* agreement with the 10 Baptist Principles of Baptist Bylaws.

Church Planter Signature

Date