

Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches

(History & Constitution follow Articles of Faith)

ARTICLES OF FAITH

I -- Of the Scriptures

WE BELIEVE that the Holy Bible as originally written was verbally inspired and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore has truth without any admixture of error for its matter. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.

II Timothy 3:16-17 II Peter 1:19-21

II -- Of the True God

WE BELIEVE there is one, and only one, living and true God, infinite, intelligent Spirit, and Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

Exodus 20:2-3 I Corinthians 8:6 Revelation 4:11 I John 5:7

III -- Of the Holy Spirit

WE BELIEVE that the Holy spirit is a divine person; equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the Evil One until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment that He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the New Birth; that He seals, baptizes, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies, and helps the believer.

John 14:16-17 Luke 1:35 John 3:5-6 Acts 11:16 Matthew 28:19 Genesis 1:1-3 Ephesians 1:13-14

Luke 24:49 Hebrews 9:14 John 16:8-11 Mark 1:8 Romans 8:14 John 14:26 Acts 5:30-32 John 1:33 Romans 8:16 Romans 8:26-27

IV -- Of the Devil or Satan

WE BELIEVE in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, and the author of all the powers of darkness, and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the Lake of Fire.

Matthew 4:1-3 II Corinthians 4:4 Revelation 20:10

V -- Of the Creation

WE ACCEPT the Genesis account of creation and believe that man came by direct creation of God and not by evolution.

Genesis 1 & 2 Colossians 1:16-17 John 1:3

VI -- Of the Fall of Man

WE BELIEVE that man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not only by constraint, but of choice; and therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse.

Genesis 3:1-6,24 Romans 5:19

Romans 3:10-19 Romans 1:18,32

VII -- Of the Virgin Birth

WE BELIEVE that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner; born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God, and God, the Son.

Genesis 3:15 Isaiah 7:14 Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 1:35 John 1:14

VIII -- Of the Atonement for Sin

WE BELIEVE that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, Who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin, honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the just dying for the unjust; Christ, the Lord, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.

[Ephesians 2:8](#) [John 3:16](#) [Hebrews 2:14](#) [I John 4:10](#)

[Acts 15:11](#) [Matthew 18:11](#) [Isaiah 53:4-7](#)

[I Corinthians 15:3](#) [Romans 3:24](#) [Philippians 2:7](#)

[Romans 3:25](#) [II Corinthians 5:21](#)

IX -- Of Grace in the New Creation

WE BELIEVE that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again, that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a miraculous manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith in newness of life.

[John 3:3](#) [Acts 16:30-33](#) [Ephesians 2:8](#) [II Corinthians 5:17](#) [II Peter 1:4](#) [II Corinthians 5:19](#) [I John 5:1](#)

[Romans 6:23](#) [Colossians 2:13](#) [John 3:6-8](#)

X -- Of Justification

WE BELIEVE that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is Justification:

(a) That Justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of righteousness.

(b) That Justification is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done; but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, His righteousness is imputed to us.

[Acts 13:39](#) [Zechariah 13:1](#) [Romans 5:9](#)

[Isaiah 53:11](#) [Romans 8:1](#) [Romans 5:1](#)

XI -- Of Faith and Salvation

WE BELIEVE that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation.

[Acts 16:31](#)

XII -- Of the Local Church

WE BELIEVE that a local church is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures; we believe the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity.

We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only true superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is Scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that every church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the church (local) is final.

[Acts 2:41-42](#) [Ephesians 4:11](#) [Colossians 1:18](#)

[I Corinthians 11:2](#) [Acts 20:17-18](#)

[Ephesians 5:23-33](#) [Ephesians 1:22-23](#) [II Timothy 3:17](#)

[Acts 15:13-18](#)

XIII -- Baptism and the Lord's Supper

WE BELIEVE that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privilege of a church relation. We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination.

[Acts 8:36-39](#) [Romans 6:3-5](#) [Colossians 2:12](#)

[John 3:23](#) [Matthew 3:16](#) [I Corinthians 11:23-28](#)

XIV -- Of the Security of the Saints

WE BELIEVE that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ.

[Philippians 1:6](#) [John 10:28-29](#) [Romans 8:35-39](#) [Jude 1](#)

XV -- Of the Righteous and the Wicked

WE BELIEVE that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost.

[Malachi 3:18](#) [I John 5:19](#) [Proverbs 14:32](#) [Genesis 18:23](#) [Romans 7:6](#) [Luke 6:25](#) [Romans 6:17-18](#)

[Romans 6:23](#)

[Matthew 25:34-41](#) [John 8:21](#)

XVI -- Of Civil Government

WE BELIEVE that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming Prince of the Kings of the earth.

[Romans 13:7](#) [Exodus 18:21-22](#) [Matthew 22:21](#) [Acts 4:19-20](#) [II Samuel 23:3](#) [Acts 23:5](#) [Acts 5:20](#) [Daniel 3:17-18](#)

XVII -- Of the Resurrection, Personal, Imminent, Pre-Tribulation Return of Christ, and Related Events

WE BELIEVE

(a) In the bodily Resurrection.

[Matthew 28:6-7](#) [John 20:27](#) [Mark 16:6](#)

[Luke 24:39](#) [I Corinthians 15:4](#) [Luke 24:2-6](#)

(b) The Ascension.

[Acts 1:9-11](#) [Luke 24:51](#) [Mark 16:19](#)

[Revelation 3:21](#) [Hebrews 12:2](#)

(c) The High Priesthood.

[Hebrews 8:6](#) [I Timothy 2:5](#) [I John 2:1](#)

[Hebrews 2:17](#) [Hebrews 5:9-10](#)

(d) Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

[Revelation 3:10](#) [Revelation 4:1](#)

(e) The Second Coming.

[John 14:3](#) [Acts 1:11](#) [I Thessalonians 4:16](#)

[James 5:8](#) [Hebrews 9:28](#)

(f) The Resurrection of the Righteous Dead.

[I Thessalonians 4:13-18](#) [I Corinthians 15:42-44](#)

[I Corinthians 15:52](#)

(g) The Change of the Living in Christ.

[I Corinthians 15:51-53](#) [Philippians 3:20-21](#)

[I Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)

(h) The Throne of David.

[Luke 1:32](#) [Isaiah 9:6-7](#) [Acts 2:29-30](#)

(i) The Millennial Reign.

[I Corinthians 15:25](#) [Isaiah 11:4-5](#)

Revelation 14:14 Isaiah 32:1

Psalms 72:8 Revelation 20:6

XVIII -- Current Trends

WE BELIEVE that the present-day teaching and practicing of speaking in tongues, so-called faith healing, the compromising New Evangelicalism, Covenant Theology, Bullengerism, and Pennalism is erroneous, and is scripturally condemned.

Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches

THE NATURE OF THE ASSOCIATION

The PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES has been in existence since 1949. The P.A.R.B.C. is the result of a firm conviction of several Baptist pastors. The pastors believed that a blessing and a more effective ministry would result from a state fellowship of fundamental Bible-believing churches. The united testimony of such an association and enlarged opportunities for fellowship should undoubtedly bring glory to the Lord whom we serve.

Since the formation of the Association, the number of churches affiliated has increased steadily. Since 1956, *THE KEYSTONE BAPTIST*, the official publication of the P.A.R.B.C., has sought to keep the constituency of the Association informed concerning the activities and ministry of the fellowshiping churches. This is published on a quarterly basis.

The P.A.R.B.C. has adopted Articles of Faith and functions under a Constitution. A Council of Ten, elected from the fellowship, serves as an Executive Committee.

Any independent Baptist church in Pennsylvania and environs, duly recognized as a Baptist congregation, may be included in the fellowship by complying with the provisions of the Constitution. It is assumed that no church included in the National or the World Council organizations, or neo-evangelical or charismatic churches will seek to enter the P.A.R.B.C. fellowship.

No church entering the ASSOCIATION relinquishes its autonomy, nor will it be asked to submit to an ecclesiastical over-lordship. The P.A.R.B.C. holds that any such practice is not Scriptural. Fellowship in the ASSOCIATION does not establish a church in any other Association or Fellowship, on any level.

BRIEF HISTORY

On May 31, 1949, a group of 18 pastors gathered at the Forest Hills Youth Camp to consider the possibility and advisability of establishing a Pennsylvania state fellowship of fundamental Baptist churches. These men sensed the need, not only for fellowship, but also for a united testimony in the proclamation of and the loyalty to the Word of God. A temporary organization was formed under the name of KEYSTONE STATE FELLOWSHIP OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES, and committees were appointed to formulate plans for permanent organization.

A second meeting was held September 27, 1949, in the First Baptist Church of Lock Haven. At this time, Council of Ten was elected and the drafting of the Constitution began. When the fellowship met for its first annual meeting at the Crescentville Baptist Church of Philadelphia in September, 1950, the Constitution

was adopted officially. The name of the fellowship as provided by the Constitution became THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES.

The purpose of the Association as originally stated was “to provide a Biblical fellowship for Baptist churches and to encourage and promote the establishing of Baptist churches at home and abroad. This fellowship shall seek to maintain the independence of such churches.” In 1956 this purpose was broadened by amendment to the Constitution. Through the ensuing years, the Association has held to this purpose in faith and in practice as is evidenced by the resolutions which have been passed, published, and promoted.

In 1955 an official publication, *THE KEYSTONE BAPTIST*, was authorized. This newspaper is useful, not only in the matter of exchanging news and views, but also in spreading the work and enlarging the fellowship. It was decided at the 1956 meeting to have a spring meeting each year in addition to the annual meeting in the fall.

Numerical growth has been slow but steady. The number of fellowshipping churches at this time is just under 100 churches. Bound together in love for the Living and Written Word as expressed in the Articles of Faith, the Association faces the future in confidence that God will bless even as of old. *“And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.” ACTS 16:5.*

CONSTITUTION

OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES

Article I -- Name

THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES.

Article II -- Purpose

To maintain a Biblical fellowship of sovereign, Bible-believing, Baptist churches (in doctrine, in practice; and in name); to give occasion for fostering personal friendships as existed in the early churches for mutual helpfulness and counsel; to raise a standard of Biblical separation from worldliness and apostasy; to promote the spirit of evangelism; to encourage the establishment of independent Baptist churches; to provide inspiration for better Sunday schools and to advance our educational and missionary enterprises at home and abroad.

Article III -- Meetings

A meeting of the fellowship shall be held annually for the election of a council, and the conducting of a Bible and missionary conference at a date fixed by the council, and such other meetings as may be deemed advisable for the good of the fellowship. A Semi-Annual Meeting is held also.

Article IV -- Fellowship and Voting Privileges

SECTION 1. Any Baptist church in Pennsylvania and environs which is not in fellowship or cooperation with any local, state, or national convention holding to liberalism and apostasy and which subscribes to the Constitution and the Articles of Faith herein contained may, upon submitting to the Secretary written notice to the effect that it desires fellowship, and upon recommendation of the Council, be received into the Association by a majority vote of the messengers present and voting at the next business meeting.

SECTION 2. No limit shall be placed on the number privileged to attend the Annual Meeting from any church, but each fellowshiping church may designate a maximum of three of its members as *messengers* who shall be entitled to vote at all sessions of the Annual Meeting.

SECTION 3. Should the fellowship ever Employ salaried servants, they shall not be entitled to vote.

SECTION 4. All business sessions of the fellowship and the Council shall be conducted decently and in order in a Scriptural fashion.

SECTION 5. Any fellowshiping church may with-draw from the Association at any time and for any reason sufficient to itself. Christian ethics would suggest that reason for such withdrawal should be filed with the Association, but such action is not mandatory. In conformity with the historic Baptist position, the property rights of such a church can in nowise be legally prejudiced or endangered by such withdrawal.

SECTION 6. Any fellowshiping church which is publicly known to be no longer in agreement with the Constitution and Articles of Faith of the Association, or "that has, in any matter deemed vital, departed from the faith and practices of the associated churches,"¹ and has not voluntarily withdrawn itself from the Association, shall be contacted by the Council of Ten. Upon satisfactory evidence of disagreement being presented by the Council, and upon its recommendation, the church may be removed from the rolls by majority vote of the Association.

Article V -- Officers and Their Election

SECTION 1. The officers of the fellowship shall consist of a Council of ten men, pastors or laymen, who shall be elected from as many fellowshiping churches, five of whom shall be elected for two years, annually. After having served two consecutive terms on the Council, a member shall be ineligible for re-election until one year has elapsed.

SECTION 2. The Council shall appoint annually a chairman and secretary from among their own number, a treasurer who does not have to be a member of the Council, and such other officers and committees as needed.

SECTION 3. The Council shall be elected in the following manner: Each fellowshiping church shall, at least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting, select and send to the secretary not in excess of ten nominations for the Council. The secretary shall tabulate all lists, and the ten highest names shall be considered the nominees.

The Annual Election shall take place at the call of the chairman who shall present the names of the ten nominees, whereupon the voting messengers present shall each vote by ballot for five members of the Council. The five nominees receiving the highest number of votes shall be considered elected.

Removal from a fellowshiping church shall constitute resignation from the Council and the unexpired term shall be filled by election at the next Annual Meeting. In case of an officer resigning, the chairman shall appoint a temporary officer to serve until the next election of officers.

The secretary shall notify all nominees prior to the election to provide sufficient time for withdrawal, if so desired.

All nominees to the Council of Ten must sign the Constitution and Articles of Faith of the P.A.R.B.C. and abide by the requirements of **I Timothy 3** and **Titus 1**, especially interpreting the phrase, *“the husband of one wife,”* as not being divorced and remarried.

Article VI – Dissolution

Upon the dissolution of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches, the elected officers, to wit: the Council of Ten, shall after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the Association, dispose of all the assets of the Association exclusively for the purposes the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, or religious purposes as shall at that time, qualify as an exempt organization(s) under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Council of Ten shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to organizations which agree with the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches' Statement of Faith.

Article VI I-- Amendments

This Constitution may be revised or amended at any Annual Meeting of the fellowship by a two-thirds vote of the messengers present and voting, provided notice has been given to the churches three months prior.

¹ Edward T. Hiscox, The New Directory for Baptist Churches (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1970), p. 337

NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF A RECOGNITION COUNCIL

Reference is made to a RECOGNITION COUNCIL in our application form. Assuming that this may raise some questions, we desire to give the reasons for such a requirement. Since many sound Baptist churches have been holding to Biblical principles and polity long before the P.A.R.B.C. was founded, it may seem rather odd that the Association would now request a church desiring fellowship to call a Recognition Council. However, there are three factors which bear on this subject and must be considered.

First, in our beloved land, a religious organization need not obtain status in any direction in order to qualify as a bona fide institution. A group of Christians (or heathen, even) may call themselves a “church” and conduct themselves under nearly any rules of order, and none can challenge their right to do so. This is especially true of those who lay hold of the distinctive called “Baptist.” Baptists have championed the independent, congregational type of church government, free of any hierarchy or rule outside itself. Now the very nature of this blessed basic truth gives rise to the possibility of a religious society making use of the Baptist title when it is not a genuine Baptist church. This possibility has long been

recognized in Baptist circles and the idea of a recognition or examining council is not new.

A second factor to be considered is the uniqueness of the days in which we are privileged to live. Among other things, Regular Baptists have emphasized the Biblical command of separation from apostasy. While a church may be a Baptist church, it does not automatically follow that it is a REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCH. It may, for example, have some entangling alliance with liberalism. Thus, a council from sister churches, considering the society in question, could detect such irregularities. Also, the association to which the local society is looking for fellowship could be protected from becoming an association of *irregular* Baptist churches.

A third factor to consider is that no association has a right to impose an examination upon a church. Baptists may not examine without a request to do so from the church itself, but an association can require a church to do so, that is, call its own council, if it desires to become a part of that association.

As we suggested, it may seem odd that a Baptist church which has stood through the years should now call for a council of recognition. However, the mere fact that a church has been in existence for one

hundred years does not vouch-safe for its being indeed a Regular Baptist Church. Actually, no church ought to object to an opportunity to present its credentials in defense of its faith and polity.

Such a council is called and conducted much like an ordination. Instead of a candidate being the object of consideration, the Constitution, Articles of Faith, and the practice of the church is that object. It is a time of rich spiritual blessing and fellowship for all concerned.
