

# CONSTITUTION BLANTYRE BAPTIST CHURCH BLANTYRE, MALAWI

## Preamble

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith, and that this body may be governed in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches.

## Article I - Name

This Christian fellowship shall be known as the Blantyre Baptist Church, P O Box 1283, Blantyre, Malawi.

## Article II - Purpose of the Church

Blantyre Baptist Church, using the Bible as the primary source of authority, is a fellowship composed of baptized believers who share a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This church seeks to be a redemptive body in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The church describes its purpose and nature of existence in its objectives as stated herein. These objectives are statements of ultimate goals toward which this church aims its activities. We recognize that a mature church is one where the greatest gift, love, is experienced and shared (I Corinthians 13). The church encourages its members to discover their God-given gifts. The objectives of the members of Blantyre Baptist Church are:

- i. To WORSHIP as a fellowship of believers seeking to provide opportunities for a personal encounter between God and man (Psalm 95:6).
- ii. To plan and promote such activities as are conducive to the spiritual growth of all members.
- iii. To carry out the Great Commission of our Lord as our Lord recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 (RSV).

**"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the  
Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to**

**observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."**

### **Article III - Articles of Faith**

1. We believe that there is one God, Creator and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons revealed to us as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Genesis 1:1, John 5:7).
2. We believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God and, therefore, the Supreme standard of Christian faith and practice, (II Timothy 3: 16-17).
3. We believe that all men are lost sinners without Jesus Christ as personal Savior and, therefore, are under just condemnation to eternal punishment because of willful transgressions. (John 3:16-18)
4. We believe that salvation is wholly of grace through the provisions that a loving and righteous God made for all men; and that repentance for one's Sin and faith in the living Christ are the means of receiving eternal life which was made possible by the shedding of His blood upon the Cross. (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16).
5. We believe in the Virgin Birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. (Luke 1:34-35).
6. We believe in the priesthood of every born again child of God. We need go through no person or any institution for access to God. Through Jesus Christ every Christian has direct access to God. (1 Peter 2:5-9).
7. We believe that Christ is the Founder and Head of the Church; and that a local Church is a congregation of baptized believers voluntarily associated in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. (Matthew 16:18).
8. We believed in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of Judgment. He calls men to the Saviour and effects regeneration.
9. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is symbolic of our death to sin and resurrection to a new life in Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper as a symbolic and memorial ordinance of the Church reminding the

participant that Jesus died in order to make our redemption possible.

We believe that these ordinances have no saving efficacy whatsoever. (Matthew 29: 16-20), Romans 6:16, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

10. We believe that the evangelization of men in all the world is the supreme task given to the Church by Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:16-20).

11. We believe that the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday, is the Lord's Day, and as the memorial of Jesus Christ's resurrection it is sacred, and should be joyfully observed by faithful attendance at the services of the Church and by abstaining from unnecessary work and other activities contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:1-6).

12. We believe in the personal return of Jesus Christ, in the resurrection of all dead, in divine judgment to determine degrees of rewards for the righteous and punishments for the wicked and in unending life beyond physical death. (Matthew 25:31-46).

#### **Article IV - Church Covenant**

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and, on profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church the relief of the poor and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealing, faithfully in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment and to be slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we move to another community, we will, as

soon as possible, unite with some other Church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

### **Article V - Affiliation**

The authority of this Church is vested solely in the body of believers who compose its membership; but because our Christ-given responsibilities are world-wide, we recognize our privilege and obligation to co-operate with other Christian bodies. We shall, therefore, be voluntarily affiliated with the Blantyre Baptist Association, the Baptist Convention in Malawi, the Baptist World Alliance and such other Christian bodies with them we may desire to co-operate in joint enterprises so long as such affiliation does not violate the autonomy of our local church.

Delegates, messengers or representatives to meetings, assemblies or conventions at which our Church should be represented shall be nominated and approved by the Church.

## **CHURCH BYE- LAWS**

### **ARTICLE I**

#### **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

##### **Section1: General**

A person's request for membership must be affirmed by the members present at a regular meeting of the Church. Members will be received into the Church on one of the conditions below:-

1. Upon testimony of true repentance and public profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, subject to their baptism by immersion.
2. Upon promise of a letter of recommendation from a Baptist Church of like faith and order, subject to the receipt of a letter which indicates that they were members in good standing in that Church.
3. Upon their statement that they have experience the New Birth, and that they have been baptized by immersion which to them was entirely symbolic and without any suggestion of conferring any kind of sacramental grace

4. Upon the public confession of his/her sins and satisfactory evidence of genuine repentance of a member whose membership has been revoked because of misconduct
5. A temporary resident in Malawi may be received as an associate member is, for valid reasons, the individual does not desire to transfer his/her membership from the Church to which he/she will return. Baptism by immersion will not be required of associate members

## **Section 2 – New Members**

Prior to membership, each prospective member 18 years and over must participate and complete the New Member Orientation program with this Constitution and By-Laws being presented as the final lesson. Each person, upon being received into membership, agrees to be bound by all of the terms, conditions, and provisions of these by-laws. Children and youth will attend an age-appropriate discipleship class as designed by church leadership. Upon reaching the age 18 they must complete the New Member Orientation - which will entitle them voting privileges, as described in Section 3 (1).

## **Section 3- Rights of members**

1. Members of the church are entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present and in good standing.
2. Whereas non-members are restricted to serving in limited non-leadership positions, all members may be considered for any appropriate positions within the life of the church.

## **Section 4- Termination of Church Membership**

Church membership shall be terminated by a majority vote of those present at any regular meeting of the Church on one of the following basis:

- i. By letter to another Baptist Church of like faith and order.
- ii. By erasure following union with a church of another denomination.
- iii. By exclusion due to action by the church as set forth in Article I, Section 5 of these by-laws.
- iv. By request of the individual.

- v. After an absence of three years, and no response to attempted contacts by their deacon.
- vi. Church membership shall be automatically terminated upon the death of a member.

No member may be removed from the rolls of the church except by the methods outlined above, and only after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment.

## **Section 5 - Discipline**

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The Pastor, other members of the staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

- i. This church recognizes **Matthew 18:15-17** and **Galatians 6:1-2** as the main guidelines for all disciplinary action concerning the sin of one member against another. Should action related to the above scriptures be necessary, the scriptural procedure shall be followed.
- ii. The church recognizes I Corinthians 5 as action concerning the sin of one member against the congregation. Should any case of serious breach of covenant or of public scandal occur, the Pastor shall endeavor to resolve the offense with advice and counsel of the deacons, and if necessary shall report the case to the church.
- iii. An announcement for a meeting of exclusion shall be given at least fourteen (14) days in advance to the congregation and to the member involved. This meeting will only be open to voting members. The decision concerning exclusion must be supported by 75% of those voting. The vote will be taken by ballot. The offender may speak for his own defense, and/or call witnesses in his favor. If the offending member is not present at the meeting and has not offered satisfactory explanation of his/her absence, the church may proceed.

## **Section 6- Restoration**

Any member who has been terminated by the church may be restored to church membership after counseling by the Pastor and/or deacons, and by the same conditions as his discipline, be restored to church membership after a public display of repentance and request for reconciliation and an affirmative vote by the church body.

## **ARTICLE II CHURCH OFFICERS**

### **Ministerial Staff**

The ministerial staff of this church will subscribe fully to articles of Faith and Covenant adapted by this church (Article III and IV of the Constitution).

#### **Section 1 Pastor**

- a. The Pastor of the Church shall be an ordained Minister. He shall be approved and called as provided for in article VI of these Bylaws.
- b. At the time of his call there shall be prepared by the Pastor Selection Committee written agreement between him and the Church relative to duties expected of him and compensations to be given him by the Church. The Pastor, in co-operation with other members of the staff and the Deacons shall conduct, or arrange for, all worship services of the Church.
- c. He shall perform all other duties normally expected of the Pastor of the Church. He shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees and shall be recognized as the counselor and advisor of all departments and groups working in the Church program. All members of the Church staff and office personnel shall be supervised by the Pastor or by someone appointed by him.
- d. The Pastor shall be the overseer of the entire ministry of Blantyre Baptist Church. He shall be responsible for the following:-
  - i. Lead and develop leaders
  - ii. Supervisory role over the leaders of various ministries to include planning
  - iii. Organizing workshops for training and equipping the Leaders.
  - iv. Chairmanship of the Pastoral Deacons Team
  - v. Advisor on the Administrative Deacons Team

#### **Section 2 - Church Office Staff**

The Church office staff shall consist of the office employees who shall be employed by the Church in concurrence with the Pastor and the Stewardship Finance Committee. (Qualifications, duties and benefits will be outlined in a separate job

description approved by the church.)

### **Section 3-Building Maintenance Personnel**

The Building Maintenance Personnel shall be employed by the Church Trustees in concurrence with the Pastor and the Stewardship-Finance Committee and supervised by the Trustees

### **Section 4 - Church Moderator**

The Chairman of the Administration Deacons Team shall be the Moderator. He will preside at all business meetings of the church. It is the moderator's responsibility, or someone designated by him, to determine that all committees are functioning properly. If a committee member or any other elected officials fails to serve satisfactorily, the delinquent member will be so informed by the Moderator or the Chairman of that committee and given an opportunity to correct the inadequate performance. If the situation is not resolved satisfactorily, the delinquent member shall be replaced. Nomination of one to replace the delinquent member shall be done by deacons. The Chairman shall also chair the Joint Board Meeting.

### **Section 5 – Treasurer/Finance Manager**

The Treasurer shall be the leader of Finance (Chairman of the Finance and Stewardship Committee). He is the custodian of all church monies received and disbursed. He together with committee is responsible for ensuring that, policies are adhered to; monthly reconciliation is done; approval for expenditures; and ensuring expenditures are within budget. He shall supervise accounts staff. An annual audit shall be made of all financial records of the church.

### **Section 6 – Chairman of Sunday School**

It is the duty of the Director of Sunday School to work in conjunction with the Pastor in prayerfully planning and promoting the education ministry of our Church as defined by the purpose of the Sunday School. He/She is also to work in conjunction with all other leaders of our Church in co-ordinating the total program of the Church

### **Section 7 – Chairperson of Baptist Women**

It is the duty of the Chairperson of Baptist Women to work in conjunction with the Pastor and the Chairperson of Baptist Women in prayerfully planning and



promoting the missionary ministry of our Church as defined by the purpose of the Baptist Women

### **Section 8 – Chairman of Baptist Men**

It is the duty of the Chairman of Baptist Men to work in conjunction with the Pastor and the Chairman of Baptist Men in prayerfully planning and promoting the missionary ministry of our Church as defined by the purpose of Baptist Men

### **Section 9 – Chairman of Baptist Youth**

The Chairman of Youth will work in conjunction with the Minister of Youth and leaders of the Youth and Sunday School to plan and promote spiritual and social activities designed to reach youth for Christ and to help them to grow in their spiritual and social life.

### **Section 10- Director of the Library**

The Director of the Library shall have general supervision of the library ministries. The Director of the Library shall be assisted by the Library Committee in carrying out those duties defined under the Library Committee.

### **Section 11 - The Chairman of the School Board**

Chairman of the School Board shall be responsible for formulating policy and ensuring adherence to the same. They shall be responsible for making and presenting budget for the following school year. This shall be done in liaison with and approval of the stewardship and Finance Committee. They shall serve as the communication link with the Parents association.

### **Section 12 - Church Hostess**

The Church Hostess shall serve as Chairman of Hospitality Committee and shall, along with this Committee, be responsible for all special Church social functions. He/she shall also assist with weddings when her services *are required*.

### **Section 13 - The Chairman of the Administration Deacons Team**

The Administration Deacons Team shall elect the Chairman of the Administration Deacons Team annually. He shall chair all meetings or designate someone

when he and the vice chairman are not available. He shall work closely with the Pastor in planning and conduction the various ministries assigned to the deacons by the church.

#### **Section 14 - The Chairman of the Board of Trustees**

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees shall be elected annually by the Trustees at their first meeting of the new Church year. He shall work closely with the Pastor in planning and conducting the various duties and responsibilities assigned by the Church to the Trustees.

### **ARTICLE III**

#### **CHURCH ORGANISATIONS**

##### **Section 1 - Sunday School**

The Sunday School is a ministry – of the Church which provides weekday educational opportunity for four and five year old children. It seeks to teach Christian principles to the children, in addition to the usual Sunday School curriculum. It seeks to minister to Sunday School families who are not actively involved in a local church. The Sunday School operates on a non-profit making basis with all necessary finances coming from the tuition of the pupils.

##### **Section 2 - Blantyre Baptist Christian Pre-School, Primary and Secondary School**

The Blantyre Baptist Christian Pre-School, Primary and Secondary schools are ministries of the Church, which provide weekday educational opportunity for children using an approved School curricula. The schools seek to minister to parents of children who are not actively involved in a local church. The schools operate on a non profit-making basis with all necessary finances coming from the tuition of the pupils.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **DEACONS**

Deacons shall consist of men or women who are elected by the Church body according to scriptural guidelines.

#### **Section 1 - Pastoral Deacons Team and Administration Deacons Team**

Pastoral Deacons Team and Administration Deacons Team - both pastoral and administration teams to be ministry offices and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Section 2 - Qualifications**

Deacons shall meet the scriptural requirements as set forth in **Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13**. The person must have been attending church regularly for six months, is a church member and has attained the age of twenty five.

#### **Section 3 - Election Procedure**

The Church will submit nominations to the Deacons for consideration. Following testing by the Deacons the individual shall be approached for their consent. After which their name shall be presented to the Church Meeting for election.

#### **Section 4 - Terms of Service**

1. The normal term of service as a Deacon shall be three years. One third shall retire in rotation every year and an election for replacements, should they be needed, shall be called. They shall be eligible for re-appointment.
2. With the intent to effect the rotational system, one third Shall volunteer to retire after one year and a second third shall volunteer to retire after two years.
3. Should any Deacon resign his/her position the Deacons may recommend to The Church Meeting that a replacement should be elected who will serve out the term.

## **Section 5 - Responsibilities**

It shall be the responsibility of the deacons to serve the church in several ways:

### **1. Pastoral Deacons**

First and foremost, the duties of the Deacons shall be that of under-shepherds of the flock at Blantyre Baptist Church. They shall be responsible for the oversight and the development of the spiritual life of the Church, being actively involved in the pastoral care.

### **2. Administration Deacons Team Responsibilities**

The duties of the Administration Deacons Team shall be the administration of all business matters of Blantyre Baptist Church. Deacons who are chairing the committees or not, shall be responsible in making that respective duties are carried out efficiently and effectively.

The Deacons shall meet for the consideration of all matters of common interest of the Church as a whole.

All Deacons shall endeavour to faithfully attend the regularly scheduled deacons meetings.

## **Section 6 – Election of Officers**

1. There shall be officers of the Deacons as follows:- Chairman, Secretary and any such officers as may be deemed necessary.
2. Officers shall be elected by a vote of the Deacons from among their own number and such office shall be held for a period of one year. Re-election is permissible.

## **Section 7 – Church Treasurer**

The Deacons shall present to the Church Meeting someone within or without the deacons to serve as Treasurer.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **TRUSTEES**

The Board of Trustees shall consist of not less than five and more than seven members with each serving for a period of not more than three years. So far as possible, an equal number of members will be elected each year.

The trustees shall have power to hold in trust all real estate and personal property of the Church and shall be responsible for the Church and shall be responsible for the upkeep and management of the same. They shall not sell nor encumber the real estate for the Church as prescribed in Article X of these Bylaws.

All officers shall be elected by the Board of Trustees at the first meeting shall be called by the outgoing Chairman. Such officers shall be nominated by a Nominating Committee composed of Trustees appointed by the present Chairman of the Trustees.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **CHURCH COMMITTEES**

#### **Section 1 – General**

Each Church committee shall be subject to Church control and shall report its activities at Church business meetings. Unless otherwise designated, members of Church committees shall be elected by the Church at the November Business Meeting.

- i. The beginning of terms for those elected, with the exception of the Stewardship- Finance Committee, will begin 1 December. The term for the Stewardship – Finance Committee members will begin immediately following the November Business Meeting.
- ii. The number of members each Church committees shall be flexible and commensurate with the envisioned duties. Where the committee's work load dictates, the committee may request the Church to provide additional members.
- iii. An initial meeting of all committees shall be held as soon as possible after election to complete organization and develop plans for the year's work.
- iv. Ex-officio member of Church committees shall not have voting privileges.

A quorum shall consist of a majority of the total number of voting committee members.

- v. Committees may also form sub-committees to deal with special activities or problems.
- vi. Adhoc or temporary committees may be created, subject to Church approval, as may be deemed necessary for the furtherance of the Church's work.

## **Section 2- Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee shall consist of the Treasurer of the Church, Assistant Treasurer of the Church, a Trustee, A deacon and three members at large. The committee shall elect its officers other than the Chairman at its first meeting.

The duties of the Finance Committee shall be:

To plan and present an annual Church budget to the Church.

To develop and promote throughout the year a program of total Christian Stewardship for the members of the Church.

To supervise the raising of all money in the Church and to have supervision over the expenditures of same.

Periodically the Committee shall review the expenditures with respect to budget categories. No department, board or committee shall spend in excess of its budget without first securing approval from the Finance Committee.

The Committee is authorized to approve expenditures of up to K1,000. For non-budgeted items without the authorization of the Church.

All Church-wide special offerings and/or collections, with the exception of the regular annual approved offerings, shall first be submitted to the Finance Committee for consideration.

The Committee shall provide for an annual audit of all books or accounts of the Church.

### **Section 3 - Missions Committee**

The Missions Committee shall lead our Church in the locating and purchasing of needed sites for local mission work. Such missions shall be responsible to the Church and under the guidance of the Missions Committee until such time as they may be constituted into Church. Both the committee and the Mission shall be guided by the mission policies adopted by the Church. The members of the Committee shall also seek opportunities for the Church to witness through institutional missions and any other method available to the Church. The Committee shall consist of at least three members plus one representative from the Deacons and one from the Trustees.

### **Section 4 - Pastor Selection Committee**

The Pastor Selection Committee shall consist of seven (7) members who shall be nominated by the Deacons for election by the Church. The Committee shall prayerfully seek Divine guidance in the selection of a prospective Pastor who will be presented to the Church for acceptance. Only one person shall be considered at a time.

### **Section 5 - Hospitality/Ushering Committee**

The Hospitality Committee shall be charged with the planning of socials which are of a Church-wide nature, such as special dinners, picnics and receptions. The Committee shall consist of not less than three members. The Church Hostess will serve as Chairman of this Committee. The Hospitality Committee shall supervise the usage of the kitchen and dining area and see that all groups using such areas keep the areas clean and in proper order.

### **Section 6 - Flower Committee**

The Flower Committee is responsible for seeing that flowers are placed in the Church as the occasion may warrant. The Committee shall also see that appropriate flowers are sent from the Church in the event of the death of one of our members, or the death of any member of the immediate family (mother, father, or child) of any of our members. This Committee will be responsible for proper distribution of the flowers placed in the Church on Sunday to appropriate persons in hospitals or homes. There shall be at least three members of this Committee.

## **Section 7 - Library Committee**

The Library Committee shall consist of as many members as are needed. The Director of Library and those who assist him/her will constitute this Committee. They shall have supervision of all operations of the Library. They shall promote The Library ministry through all of the organisations of the Church and School, act as reviewers of all books and visual aids, select and recommend those to be added as they are needed, process all books and materials which are owned by the Library. Audio-visual aids, equipment and materials shall be checked out by those using them.

## **Section 8 - Baptismal Committee**

The Baptismal committee shall consist of two men and two women. It shall be the duty of the committee to make all necessary arrangements for the ordinance of Baptism and to render such assistance to the Pastor and to candidates as may be necessary.

## **Section 9 - Ushering Committee**

The Ushering Committee shall be charged with the planning of socials which are of a Church-wide nature, such as special dinners, picnics and receptions. The Committee shall consist of not less than three members. The Church Hostess will serve as Chairman of this Committee. The Ushering shall supervise the usage of the kitchen and dining area and see that all groups using such areas keep the areas clean and in proper order

## **Section 10 – Creche Committee**

The Creche Committee shall be responsible for planning and co-ordinating the ministry of our Creche for worship services and such other occasions when Creche workers are needed. It shall be the committee member's duty to secure and counsel with all paid and volunteer Creche workers. Such members shall check frequently to see that the Creche is kept clean, attractive, safe and staffed with an adequate number of workers. They shall bring recommendations to the Trustees for whatever equipment is needed.



## **Section 11 – School Committee**

The School Committee is responsible for the employment and supervision of the School personnel. The committee shall recommend an annual budget for the School to the Finance Committee. The committee shall work closely with the School personnel in the planning and administration of all ministries for which the School is responsible.

## **ARTICLE VII WEDDINGS**

All weddings which use the facilities of the Church must be arranged ahead of time with the Pastor. Nothing shall be done at any wedding or reception which violates or is offensive to sacredness of marriage as taught by the Scriptures. Regulations governing the use of Church facilities and a schedule of all costs and fees pertaining thereto shall be prepared by the Trustees and submitted to the Church for approval.

## **ARTICLE VIII ORDINANCES**

### **Section 1 – The Lord's Supper**

The ordinance commemorating the Lord's Supper (defined in Article..... of the Constitution) normally shall be observed by the Church at least once a month. All Born-again believers, according to the dictates of their own conscience, are invited to participate therein.

### **Section 2 - Baptism**

The Ordinance of Baptism (defined in Article.....of the Constitution) may be administered at any worship service for the benefit of all candidates who have united with the Church upon acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and upon public profession of faith.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year shall be a period of twelve months beginning on 1 January and ending on the next 31 December.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **QUORUM**

In matters pertaining to the call or dismissal of a Pastor or the selling or encumbering of real estate belonging to the Church, seventy percent (70%) of the resident membership roll shall constitute a quorum and a favourable vote, by secret ballot, of two thirds of the members present shall be required. All business meetings for these purposes shall be held on Sunday. Notice of such a meeting will be given at least two weeks in advance. The members present at all other business meeting shall constitute a quorum to transact the business to be considered and a majority vote shall prevail.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS**

This Constitution and By-laws may be revised or amended by a vote of at least two-thirds of the members present at any business meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose. Written notice giving the wording of such proposed amendment shall be given at least two weeks previous thereto.

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **CHURCH CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

This church is committed to resolving in a biblical manner all disputes that may arise within our body. This commitment is based on God's command that Christians should strive earnestly to live at peace with one another (see Matt. 5:9; John 17:20-23; Rom. 12:18; and Eph. 4:1-3), and that when disputes arise, Christians should resolve them according to the principles set forth in Holy

Scripture (see Prov. 19:11; Matt. 5:23-25; 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1). We believe that these commands and principles are obligatory on all Christians and absolutely essential for the well-being and work of the church. Therefore, any and all disputes in this church shall be resolved according to biblical principles, as provided in these By-Laws.

When a member of this church has a conflict with, or is concerned about the behavior of another member, he shall attempt to resolve the matter as follows.

(1) The offended or concerned person shall prayerfully examine himself and take responsibility for his contribution to a problem (Matt. 7:3-5), and he shall prayerfully seek to discern whether the offense is so serious that it cannot be overlooked (Prov. 19:11; see also Prov. 12:16; 15:18; 17:14; 20:3; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13; 1 Pet. 4:8).

(2) If the offense is too serious to overlook, the offended or concerned person shall go, repeatedly if necessary, and talk to the offender in an effort to resolve the matter personally and privately, having first confessed his own wrongdoing (Matt. 18:15).

(3) If the offender will not listen and if the problem is too serious to overlook, the offended or concerned person shall return with one or two other people who will attempt to help the parties resolve their differences (Matt. 18:16); these other people may be members or officers of the church, other respected Christians in the community, or trained mediators or arbitrators (conciliators) from a Christian conciliation ministry. At the request of either party to the dispute, the church shall make every effort to assist the parties in resolving their differences and being reconciled.

Conflicts involving doctrine or church discipline shall be resolved according to the procedures set forth in these By-Laws.

If a dispute arises within the church or between a member and the church and cannot be resolved through the internal procedures described above, it shall be resolved as follows.

1) The dispute shall be submitted to mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration, and judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction.

2) All mediators and arbitrators shall be in agreement with the statement of faith of the church and our basic form of government, unless this requirement is modified or waived by all parties to the dispute.

3) If a dispute submitted to arbitration involves a decision reached by the trustees, the arbitrators shall uphold the Trustee's decision on all matters of

doctrine and church discipline.

4) This section covers the church as a corporate entity and its agents, including its pastors, officers, staff, and volunteers with regard to any actions they may take in their official capacities.

5) This section covers any and all disputes or claims arising from or related to church membership, doctrine, policy, practice, counseling, discipline, decisions, actions, or failures to act, including claims based on civil statute or for personal injury.

6) By joining this church, all members agree that these methods shall provide the sole remedy for any dispute arising against the church and its agents, and they waive their right to file any legal action against the church in a civil court or agency, except to enforce an arbitration decision.

7) If a dispute or claim involves an alleged injury or damage to which the church's insurance applies, and if the church's insurer refuses to submit to mediation or arbitration as described in this section, either the church or the member alleging the injury or damage may declare that this section is no longer binding with regard to that part of the dispute or claim to which the church's insurance applies.

### **ARTICLE XIII**

#### **DISSOLUTION AND REVERSION CLAUSE**

Upon the dissolution of the church, the corporate officers shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all liabilities of the church, make certain that all church property and appurtenances revert to and become vested in the Blantyre Baptist Convention/Baptist Convention in Malawi?, to be used for church and mission purposes.

### **ARTICLE XIV**

#### **INDEMNIFICATION**

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the church determine that the person acted:

- (a) in good faith,
- (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and
- (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.