

# CONSTITUTION OF WINTONBURY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

Approved by membership on January 28, 2024

**ARTICLE I.**           **NAME:** The name of this church as incorporated in the State of Connecticut is Wintonbury Baptist Church, Inc.

## **ARTICLE II.           PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

*Section 1:*           *Purpose.* The purpose of this church is to bring eternal glory to God by making disciples in obedience to Christ's command in Matthew 28:18-20.

*Section 2.*           *Objectives.* This church is organized to encourage growing relationships with God and one another, teach Christians to obey God's word, and evangelize our world. We exist to connect people to God and to each other.

*Section 3.*           *Tax Exemption:*  
a. This church is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

b. No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of its purposes and objectives. No substantial part of the church's activities shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or against any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, the church shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

## **ARTICLE III.           STATEMENT OF FAITH:**

*Section 1:*           *The Word of God.* We believe that the whole Bible is the Word of God, verbally inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.  
(2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Matt. 5:18)

*Section 2:*           *The Trinity.* We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three Persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they perform distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 13:14)

*Section 3:*           *God the Father.* We believe in God, the Father, an infinite personal spirit, perfect in all of his attributes. We believe that He concerns himself mercifully in the affairs of people, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (1 John 4:10; Matt. 6:9 & 32; Gal. 3:26)

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- Section 4:* *Jesus Christ.* We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in his virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and teachings. We believe in his substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for his people, and his personal visible return to earth. (John 3:16; Matt. 1:18-25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:20-21; Heb. 7:23-25; Acts 1:11)
- Section 5:* *The Holy Spirit.* We believe in the Holy Spirit who was sent from the Father in the name of the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He also, in the present age, regenerates all who believe, baptizes them into the body of Christ, indwells them permanently, seals them until the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts upon each one, and fills those who yield to Him. We believe He is the abiding comforter, helper, teacher, and guide. (John 3:8, 14:16, 16:7-14; 1 Cor. 12:4-13; Eph. 4:30, 5:18)
- Section 6:* *Salvation.* We believe that all people by nature and by choice are sinners, but that “God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” We believe salvation is a gift of God’s grace and is received by people through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. We believe that all true believers, once saved, are kept secure forever in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior will rejoice forever in God’s presence. We believe that those who do not trust Christ as savior will be forever separated from God. (Gen. 3:1-24; Rom 3:23, 5:12, 8:1 & 29-30; John 1:12, 3:16, 10:29-30, 14:2-3; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:8; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:11-15)
- Section 7:* *The Church.* We believe in the universal Church, a living body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church which is an assembly of believers in a certain place who are organized, who practice the ordinances, and who seek to do God’s will on earth. (Matt. 16:18, 28:19-20; Col. 1:18; Phil 1:1; Heb. 13:7; 1 Cor 11:23-26)
- Section 8:* *Christian Conduct.* We believe that Christians should live to bring praise and honor to God, to contribute to the well-being of others, to be faithful stewards of their resources, and to seek spiritual growth for themselves and others. (1 Cor. 10:31; Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:10; Eph. 4:11-16)
- Section 9:* *The ordinances.* We believe that the Lord Jesus has committed two ordinances to the local church: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of the believer in water in the name of the triune God and that it represents being buried with Christ into death and being raised up in newness of life. We believe that the Lord’s Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of Christ and his death. This ordinance is, then, a simple, yet majestic, memorial to the atoning sacrifice of the Lord. We believe that these two ordinances should be preserved and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 26:26-29, 28:19-20; Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Rom. 6:1-11)
- Section 10:* *Religious Liberty.* We believe that every Christian has direct relations with God and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith. We believe that each church is independent and must be free from interference by an ecclesiastical or political authority. We believe that Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage from the other. (1 Cor. 4:1-5; Matt. 22:17-21; Rom. 13:1-7; Acts 4:18-21)

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## Section 11:

*Church Cooperation.* We believe that churches can promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or general conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in such an organization is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with other churches and fellowships on a voluntary, independent basis. We also believe that a church of Jesus Christ must keep itself separate from other churches or organizations which do not teach salvation by faith in Jesus alone. (Acts 9:31; 20:28-32; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:6-9)

## Section 12:

*The Last Things.* We believe in the personal, visible, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ for his bride, the Church, and his return to earth to set up his kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the judgment, the eternal happiness of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked. (1 Thess. 1:9-10, 4:13-18; Zech. 14:4-11; Rev. 20:6 & 11-15; Phil. 1:23; John 14:2-3)

## ARTICLE IV

### DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVES

The church shall subscribe without reservation to Wintonbury's doctrinal distinctives. The Board of Elders shall initiate and draft any doctrinal distinctive for adoption by the Wintonbury membership. A doctrinal distinctive requires a two-thirds majority vote of the Wintonbury membership for adoption.

## ARTICLE V.

### MEMBERSHIP:

#### Section 1:

*Establishment of membership.*

- (a) The Board of Elders is responsible for the interviewing of each candidate for membership in this church to ascertain that he or she meets the following qualifications: the candidate's have a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they have a godly spiritual lifestyle, they are baptized as a believer and they accept Wintonbury's statement of faith, doctrinal distinctives, practices and objectives.
- (b) Candidates become members of this church upon affirmative vote of the Board of Elders and are thereafter publicly welcomed into membership.

#### Section 2:

*Duties of membership.* The duties of membership in the church are those duties of a Christian taught in the scriptures. These include regular participation in the services of the church, faithful stewardship of time, talent, and possessions in the ministry of the church, and an exemplary life in devotion to Christ separated from the world.

#### Section 3:

*Nonresident membership.*

- (a) There are some members whose circumstances prohibit or limit their involvement in fellowship and ministry, for example, students, persons in military service, missionaries, and those confined to their residence through illness or infirmity. Such persons may, by vote of the Board of Elders, be designated as Nonresident Members.
- (b) Persons who have made a permanent move may be included on the nonresident membership list for approximately one year to allow them time to find a new church home.
- (c) The nonresident membership list is reviewed annually by the Elders.

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## Section 4:

### *Termination of membership.*

- (a) Membership may be terminated upon the personal request of a member or the request of a church to which the member is moving his or her membership. A letter of recommendation may be sent to such a church if it or the member so requests.
- (b) Should any member become an offense to the church and its good name by reason of unchristian conduct, the Elders may, subject to the following procedure, terminate his or her membership. First the Elders seek to restore the member by applying the method taught in Matthew 18:15-16 and Galatians 6:1-2. If this does not result in the member's repentance and restoration, the Elders give notice to the church during a business meeting of their intent to terminate this membership. One month after such notice is given, unless the Elders vote otherwise, the membership ends.
- (c) Once having been terminated from membership for disciplinary reasons, a person is regarded lovingly by the church, which endeavors by prayer and invitation to restore his or her fellowship with Christ and the church.
- (d) The Board of Elders prepares, from year to year, a list of those members who have failed to participate regularly in the service of worship without a valid reason. If the Board is satisfied after contacting the persons so described, that they cannot be excused, it removes such names from the church list. Names so removed are published in the Elders' reports to the congregation.

## ARTICLE VI.

### **BOARDS:**

## Section 1:

### *Election of Board Members.*

- (a) Criteria. All board members are members of this local church. All boards have a minimum number of four members. Nominations are subject to approval by the Elders.
- (b) Vacancies. If a vacancy occurs on a board during a term of office, that board appoints someone to fill it, subject to the approval of the Board of Elders.
- (c) Term of office. Terms of office are for two years and end upon the last day of the month following the annual meeting date. Approximately one half of a board's number is elected each year by the membership, so that terms end alternately. No one should serve more than three consecutive terms.

## Section 2:

### *Board of Elders.*

- (a) Qualifications. The Board of Elders consists of men who meet the Biblical qualifications found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The pastors of the church are automatically members of this board.
- (b) Authority. This board is the central board of the church, responsible for overseeing all ministries and activities. The pastor (s), elected church officers, ministry teams, committees, task forces, and other boards are under its authority.

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## (c) Responsibilities.

- (i) The Elders are responsible for assuring that pastoral care is provided for all people who worship with this local church.
- (ii) The Elders see that the Scriptures are accurately taught and guard against false doctrine.
- (iii) The Elders give guidance to the Board of Deacons
- (iv) The Elders appoint a nominating committee prior to the annual church meeting and approve all acceptable nominations prior to congregational vote.
- (v) The Elders are responsible for the administration of the ordinances in the church.
- (vi) The Elders elect a board moderator who also serves as moderator of the church. The moderator has the authority to call special board meetings. They elect a board secretary who also serves as clerk of the church.
- (vii) The Elders communicate regularly to the church, including decisions they have made or actions they have taken, except in matters of personal counsel or discipline.
- (viii) The Elders provide guidance for financial stewardship, initiate and approve the proposed annual budget prior to congregational vote, and monitor the budget's implementation. They seek congregational approval for unbudgeted expenditures.
- (ix) The Elders must establish or approve any committees, ministry teams, or task forces needed to accomplish the ministry of the church
- (ix) The Elders interpret this constitution and see that its provisions are carried out.

## (d) Trusteeship. The Board of Elders holds all titles to properties of the church.

### Section 3:

#### *Board of Deacon.*

- (a) **Qualifications.** Deacons are –men or women who meet the Biblical qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 and Acts 6:3.
- (b) **Authority.** This Board assists the Elders in ministering to the needs of the church people and reports to the Elders.
- (c) **Responsibilities.**
  - (i) To the extent delegated by the Elders, the Deacons assist in the pastoral care of the people of the church.
  - (ii) The Deacons administer a special fund for helping those in need.
  - (iv) The Deacons have such other duties as the Elders may delegate to them.

## ARTICLE VII.

### OFFICERS:

#### Section 1:

*Qualifications.* The officers of the church are members of the church.

#### Section 2:

*Vacancies.* If a vacancy occurs among the officers during a term of office, the Elders name someone to fill that office until the time of the next annual church meeting, at which time, if the office is elective, the position is filled by election.

#### Section 3:

*Authority:* The officers report to the Board of Elders

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## *Section 4:*                    *Selection and Responsibilities.*

- (a) Moderator. The moderator of the church is the moderator of the Board of Elders. He is responsible for the proper, orderly running of all church business meetings.
- (b) Clerk. The secretary of the Board of Elders also serves as the clerk of the church. The clerk keeps minutes of all church business meetings, keeps the official membership list, does necessary correspondence, and prepares the annual report (see under business meetings, Article VII, Section 3a).
- (c) Treasurers. The treasurer and assistant treasurers are church members who are elected by the membership at the annual meeting for one-year terms of office. They keep an accurate account of all monies deposited by the Financial Secretary and pay by check all obligations incurred by the church. They issue complete, written reports on the church's financial position for the business meetings.
- (d) Financial Secretaries. The financial secretary and assistant financial secretaries are church members who are elected by the membership at the annual meeting for one-year terms of office. They keep an accurate account of all monies received and deposit them in the church's bank account. They issue written reports on all receipts for the business meetings.
- (e) Auditors. The auditors are at least two church members who are elected by the membership at the annual meeting for one-year terms of office. They audit all the financial records of the church and issue written reports for the business meetings.

## **ARTICLE VIII.            STATED MEETINGS:**

*Section 1:*                    *Public worship.* Public worship is held on Sunday and at other appropriate times

*Section 2:*                    *The Lord's Supper.* All who have placed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and are presently in fellowship with Him may participate in the Lord's Supper.

*Section 3:*                    *Business meetings.*

- (a) The annual business meeting of the church is held during the month of January. The annual election of officers takes place at this meeting, with new terms of office beginning February 1. All annual reports are submitted in writing to the church clerk two weeks prior to this annual meeting. These reports are incorporated into an annual report of the clerk given at this meeting.
- (b) A midyear business meeting of the church will be held if deemed necessary by the Elders)
- (c) Special business meetings may be held at other times by order of the Board of Elders.
- (d) The fiscal year is January 1 through December 31.
- (e) Business meetings are conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.
- (f) For a business meeting of the church, a quorum consists of 20% of members of legal age, nonresident members excluded.

## **ARTICLE IX.            THE SENIOR PASTORS AND OTHER STAFF:**

*Section 1:*                    *Pastors.* The pastors are elders who shepherd the people and teach the Word. They are the elders primarily responsible for the teaching ministry.

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*Section 2:* *Calling a senior pastor.* When the senior pastorate is vacant, a pulpit committee is formed. The pulpit committee is composed of four Elders of the church; and, in addition, the Elders name to the pulpit committee other members representing as many groups (e.g., age, sex, ethnic, church position) as possible. The pulpit committee seeks out qualified candidates for the pastorate, beginning with regular denominational and seminary channels. When it agrees on one man, it will recommend him to the church for consideration at a business meeting. Notice of such a business meeting and its purpose must be given from the pulpit on two consecutive Sundays. Voting is by written ballot. Extending a call requires a three-quarters vote of those present and voting.

*Section 3:* *Termination of a senior pastor.*  
(a) The senior pastor's term of office may be ended upon thirty days' notice on the part of the pastor.  
(b) The Board of Elders receives any grievances against the senior pastor and originates any motion for dismissal. This must be done according to the guidelines in I Timothy 5:19-21. Notice of a meeting for this purpose is delivered to all members in writing at least one week in advance. Voting is by written ballot. Dismissal requires a three-quarters vote of those present and voting.

*Section 4:* *Other staff.* The Board of Elders is responsible for hiring, supervising and dismissal, if necessary of other professional staff. They will be supervised by designated pastoral staff. If dismissal should be considered, it must be done according to the guidelines in I Timothy 5:19-21

**ARTICLE X. AFFILIATIONS:** This church is affiliated with Converge Northeast and Converge (formerly known as the Baptist General Conference). All other corporate ventures of the church with other churches or organizations must be approved by the Board of Elders.

**ARTICLE XI. DISPOSITION OF CHURCH PROPERTY:** In case of organic division of the church membership, the property will belong to those members who abide by this constitution. Should conditions arise, when for any reason the church cannot continue, the church assets will be transferred to Converge Northeast, or if this is not possible, Converge (formerly known as the Baptist General Conference). If neither of these organizations is an eligible 501(c)(3) organization at that time, then all assets shall be distributed to one or more other organizations that are then exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3), or for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the court having subject matter jurisdiction in the town, county, or judicial district in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes. Should conditions arise where consolidation with another church of the same convictions be advisable, the Board of Elders will request authorization by the church to negotiate the terms of such consolidation insofar as the property is concerned.

**ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS:** Amendments for this constitution may be introduced through formal motion at any regularly scheduled or special business meeting. Amendments are not acted on until the following regular business meeting and, in any case, not sooner than three months after introduction. To be adopted, amendments require a three-quarters vote of those present and voting.