

CONSTITUTION
of the
GRAFFITI 2 BAPTIST CHURCH
Mott Haven, Bronx, NY

Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here in 2008 under the name Graffiti 2 Church, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and He has sustained and prospered this work to the present day; and

Whereas we, the members of Graffiti 2 Baptist Church, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit have recognized the need to reconstitute ourselves to more closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name;

Now therefore we, the members of Graffiti 2 Baptist Church, do hereby organize ourselves in accord with the New York State Nonprofit Corporation Act and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the Statement of Faith (2014) and Covenant (2014) of this church.

Article 1 - Name

The name of this church is Graffiti 2 Baptist Church.

Article 2 - Purpose

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.

This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

Worshipping Him;

Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;

Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ through proclamation and demonstration

Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international;

Administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper;

Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers;

Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ; and calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity

through instruction and encouragement about the nature of the local church and ministry within communities.

Article 3 - Membership

Section 1 - Qualifications

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 - Admission of Members

To be admitted into church membership, applicants must participate in an introductory class which shall teach the church's Statement of Faith, Covenant, and Constitution. Upon completion of this class, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by the two-thirds majority vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute through tithes, offerings, service, and spiritual giftedness to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and materials resources each has received from God. Only those shall be entitled to lead the ministries of the church who are members of this congregation; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church under the leadership of members and for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

Section 5—Associate Membership

Students and others temporarily residing in the New York City metropolitan area who are members of an evangelical church may apply for associate membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that:

- (a) when absent from the New York City metropolitan area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our worship meetings

(b) while they will be encouraged to participate in members' meetings they will not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote

Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor or elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the New York City metropolitan area.

Section 5 - On Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after private admonition has failed.

Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from the Lord's Supper for a definite period, deposition from office, and excommunication.

The purpose of such discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined; for the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them; for the purity of the church as a whole; for the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians; supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character.

Section 6 - Termination of Membership

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, and may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

Article 4 - Meetings

Section 1 - Worship Meetings

The church shall assemble regularly each week for the worship of the Almighty God. Prayer, fellowship, corporate worship, preaching of the Word, and teaching of the Word shall be among the components of these meetings.

Section 2 - Members' Meetings

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every other month, at some time apart from a public worship service agreed upon by membership.

An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

At any regular or special members' meeting, offices may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of 10% but not less than 10 members. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

Article 5 - Officers

Section 1 - Summary

The Biblical offices in the church are elders and servant deacons but final authority is vested in the assembled congregation. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of secretary, treasurer, and trustee. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 - Elders

The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After an elder, other than the senior or associate pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he will be encouraged to consider a one-year Sabbath from the role of Elder.

An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elders should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the

congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21. Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any members' meeting of the church.

The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of senior and associate pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position.

The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

The elders shall elect a chairman of elders' meetings and shall also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of members' meetings. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of New York State, the elders shall elect one of their number to serve as president of the corporation.

Section 3 - The Senior Pastor

The senior pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 3.

He shall preach at the weekly assembly of the church, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or set forth in the constitution.

In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4 - Associate Pastors

The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of associate.

An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 4.

He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.

In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

Section 5 – Pastoral Assistants

The church may call pastoral assistants, from within the congregation only, whose relationship to the senior and associate pastor(s) is that of assistant.

These shall not be pastors, though they may be recognized as elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation, in accordance with Article 5, Section 2.

The elders shall define the responsibilities of the pastoral assistant(s). They shall serve at the will of the elders for an initial term of up to one year, though that term may be extended with the approval of the elders.

Section 6 – Servant Deacons

The office of servant deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as servant deacons.

The church may recognize servant deacons to take responsibility for seeing that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the infirm receive spiritual and physical comfort; for leading the hospitality ministries of the church; for attending to the normal care and maintenance of church properties; for receiving holding and disbursing a fund for benevolence, and for reporting from time to time on the use of such funds to both the elders and the church; for attending to the accommodations for public worship; for assisting in distributing the elements during the Lord's Supper; and for serving in other specific capacities as the church has need.

Servant deacons shall serve on a rotation basis. Each year the assigned term of office of one third of the number of servant deacons shall expire, and election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the servant deacons such numbers as the church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect a servant deacon to fill the unexpired term.

Servant deacons shall be reaffirmed by vote of the church triennially. After a servant deacon has served two consecutive three-year terms, he or she will be encouraged to consider a one-year Sabbath from the role of servant-deacon.

A servant deacon may be removed from office by a decision of the elders, or upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

In the event a servant deacon position becomes vacant, the elders may appoint a person to fill that position and assume its responsibilities, until such time as some person can be duly recognized by the church as a servant deacon.

The servant deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

Section 7 - Secretary

It shall be the duty of the secretary to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the servant deacons, or the church.

The secretary shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year.

In the absence or incapacity of the secretary the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church secretary.

For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of New York State, the church secretary shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

The church secretary shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

Section 8 - Treasurer

The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder, servant deacon, or paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each members' meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of New York State, the church treasurer shall serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

Section 9 - Trustees

The church shall elect three or more trustees to serve as legal offices for the church. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote of the church, after one week's notice is given about the vote (except in emergency situations), authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property. When the signatures of the trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property or other legal documents related to church-approved matters.

Trustees shall serve on a rotation basis for three year terms.

Article 6 - Elections

Section 1 - Principles

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;

Nominations should proceed with the support of the elders;

All candidates for church office should be treated with grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;

The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 - Selection of Officers

The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the church. The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Recommendations should be sought at least eight weeks prior to election. Names of nominees to serve as elders, servant deacons, secretary, or treasurer shall be presented by the elders at the previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least two weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.

The moderator shall declare all men receiving a three-fourths majority of all votes cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

Section 3 - Calling of the Senior Pastor

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential senior pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

Section 4 - Calling of Associate Pastor

In the calling of any man to the position of associate pastor, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential associate pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

Article 7 – Church Finances

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts.

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer and be properly recorded on the books of the church.

The church fiscal year shall run concurrently with the church year which begins on January 1 and ends on December 31.

The church will operate under a unified budget plan, meaning all of an individual's undesignated gifts will go towards the general budget of the church. Designated gifts can only be made for those accounts that have been approved by the church.

A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting not more than three months after the start of the fiscal year. Prior to this approval and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

Each year the elders, after consultation with the servant deacons and the membership shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a business meeting and called up for a vote at the subsequent business meeting.

No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders.

Upon dissolution of this organization, the trustees shall, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all the liabilities of the organization, dispose of all assets of the organization exclusively for the purposes of the organization in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable and religious purposes in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx, that shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 2014 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) as the trustees shall determine. Preference shall be given to the North American Mission Board, its ministries and successors who wish to minister in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx, NY. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Circuit Court of the County in which the principal office of the corporation 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.

Article 8 - Relationships

Insofar as it is consistent with our purposes, this church will cooperate with and support the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association, the Baptist Convention of New York, the Southern Baptist Convention and other such bodies in keeping with our purposes and beliefs.

Article 9 - Indemnification

Section 1 - Mandatory 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 elders 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.

Section 2 - Permissive Indemnification

At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

Section 3 - Procedure

If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

Article 10 - Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without

reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities.

Article 11 - Amendments

The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting and shall have been announced at church services two successive weekly assemblies prior to such vote.

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced at church services two successive weekly assemblies prior to such vote.

The revised version of this constitution shall be made available to all church members by the church secretary.