

## **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE UPPER MERION BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **ARTICLE I - NAME**

The name of this church shall be the Upper Merion Baptist Church of King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, and it is incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

### **ARTICLE II – STATEMENT OF FAITH**

We believe in God, the Creator, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit who indwells and works within us.

We affirm the historical doctrine and practice of Christianity as expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-11, which states that Christ died for our sins, was buried and raised from the dead on the third day. His resurrection is proof that God is faithful to keep his promise to forgive our sins and to give us eternal life.

We believe that the truth of Scripture is the final authority for faith and practice.

We believe that Jesus has called every believer to follow him in faithful obedience and has equipped each one to have a role in carrying out God's mission in our world.

We affirm Jesus' command to love God, to love one another, and to love our neighbors near and far.

### **ARTICLE III - PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church is to live out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ through proclaiming the gospel, through corporate worship, through disciple-making, and through serving others in the Name of Christ, at home and around the world.

### **ARTICLE IV – GOVERNANCE**

Jesus Christ is the only head of our church and we seek to obey his will in matters of faith and practice. We work together to discern God's specific will for our congregation through examination of scripture, prayer, and corporate listening.

We are a cooperating church of the Central Union Association, the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware (ABCOPAD), and the American Baptist Churches of the United States of America (ABCUSA). This church shall not resign or withdraw from any of these bodies except by a duly adopted amendment to the constitution of this church and consultation with the moderator of the Central Union Association and the executive leadership of ABCOPAD and ABCUSA.

## ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

### Section 1: Admission of Members

Acknowledging that we are all sinners saved by grace, our church welcomes all people who are actively seeking to be transformed by faith in Christ.

Any person who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, is in substantial accord with the historical doctrine and practice of Christianity as expressed in our statement of faith, and is a baptized believer may become a member of this congregation. Individuals become members by a vote of the congregation upon recommendation from the Executive Committee or a team designated by the Executive Committee.

Each member commits to:

- a. *demonstrate love for God* by seeking to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ through prayer and personal scripture study, through obedience to our understanding of God's word, by sharing our testimonies of faith with others, and by attending worship regularly
- b. *demonstrate love for others* by praying for one another's concerns, by helping each other in practical ways, by participating in fellowship opportunities, by using our spiritual gifts and talents in order to serve the church together, and by giving generously of our financial resources to support the ministries of the church and those in need.
- c. *demonstrate love for our neighbors near and far* by using our spiritual gifts and financial resources to serve as the hands and feet of Christ in our own communities and around the world.

### Section 2. Eligible voter

An eligible voter is any active member, as determined by the Executive Committee, who demonstrates concern for the mission and ministries of this church.

### Section 3. Dismissal of Members

- a. Regular Dismissal: Members may leave UMBC by death, by letter of transfer to another congregation, or by request.
- b. Termination of Membership: If a member persistently engages in behavior that is deemed ungodly by Scripture, the church may take steps to terminate that individual's membership. (1) The individual shall meet with a team of people appointed by the Executive Committee in order to receive prayer and biblical guidance in accordance with Matthew 18 which stipulates that we go to our brothers and sisters in order to bring about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and/or reparation. (2) If these efforts fail to bring about repentance or a biblical solution, the matter shall be brought to the Executive Committee for a decision to terminate membership.

## **ARTICLE VI – PASTORAL STAFF**

It shall be the duty of the Pastor to teach and preach the gospel, to administer the ordinances, to supervise all worship services, to exhort believers to grow spiritually, to help believers understand and exercise their spiritual gifts, and to help believers discover God's call. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all boards, committees and ministry teams of the church.

### **Section 1. Calling a Pastor**

Whenever a vacancy occurs in the office of Pastor, a committee shall be elected by the congregation to conduct a thorough search of available candidates and to supply interim pastoral duties until a new Pastor is called by the congregation. The candidate recommended by the committee shall be voted upon at a congregational meeting and called by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting.

### **Section 2. Pastor's Contract**

There will be a written contract drawn up and signed by the Pastor and appropriate church leader(s), covering such subjects as moving, salary, housing, benefits, and any other mutually desirable area of the pastor-church relationship. The contract remains in force until such time as either the pastor or the congregation chooses to end the relationship. In the event the congregation desires to end the relationship, two months' notice must be given and approved by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting. The period of service may also be terminated by the Pastor upon two months' notice given in writing, or in a shorter time by mutual consent. A majority of those present and voting will be sufficient to accept the resignation.

### **Section 3. Adding Additional Staff**

If the church decides to hire additional staff, a committee shall be formed to create a job description, to determine qualifications and duties of the position, and to conduct a search for an appropriate candidate following the same process as calling a pastor. Affirmation of the candidate will require three-fourths (3/4) of the congregation present and voting.

## **ARTICLE VII - OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH**

### **Section 1. Officers**

The officers of the church shall be Moderator, Clerk, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer.

### **Section 2. Election**

Qualified members shall be elected by the congregation annually for a term of two (2) years by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the congregation present and voting. They shall hold office until their successors are elected.

The congregation shall be invited to nominate qualified individuals as officers. If the individual agrees to serve, his/her name shall be presented to the congregation for election bi-annually for a term of two (2) years. Except in unusual circumstances, no individual shall be elected to the same office for more than three terms in a row.

### Section 3. Duties of the Officers

#### a. Moderator

The Moderator shall preside at all business meetings of the church and of the Executive Committee, and appoint any special teams or committees necessary to ensure that the church carries out the church's mission. The moderator may appoint assistants to any officers as needed.

#### b. Clerk

The Clerk shall keep a complete record of the transactions of all business meetings of the church. This shall be presented for approval at the following business meeting. The Clerk shall keep a record of the full names, addresses, and birth dates of members, with dates and manner of admissions and dismissals, and a record of baptisms. The Clerk is the keeper of the corporate seal.

#### c. Church Treasurer

The Treasurer shall oversee the development of a balanced budget, shall keep and publish monthly and yearly summaries of the income and expenditures of the church in accordance with the budget, and shall see that the financial obligations of the congregation are paid by the church in a timely manner. The Treasurer shall have custody of the securities, investments, title papers, and other valuable documents of the church. The year-end report shall be reviewed by two members of the church who do not serve in a financial capacity.

#### d. Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall provide envelopes for the collection of contributions to church expenses, capital improvements, and missions; keep a record of all pledges and contributions; oversee weekly collections of tithes and offerings; deposit all collections weekly in the bank approved by the Executive Committee; and provide a statement to the Treasurer. The Financial Secretary shall provide monthly and yearly reports to the church and semi-annual reports to each donor.

## **ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES & MINISTRY TEAMS OF THE CHURCH**

### Section 1.

The Moderator along with the Executive Committee shall ensure that the mission and purpose of the church is carried out efficiently and effectively by creating any committees or ministry teams deemed necessary for the congregation to carry out the Great Commission and other missions of the church. These committees or teams shall be formed as needed, organized to facilitate ministry effectively, and suspended after their season of usefulness.

The work of these teams shall include, but is not limited to: visiting and caring for members; facilitating issues of accountability, reconciliation, repentance, and forgiveness; designing vibrant worship; encouraging discipleship, prayer, and Bible study; providing age-appropriate programming for children, youth, and young adults; maintaining the financial records of the congregation; maintaining the physical assets of the church; implementing local outreach; and supporting missionaries.

## Section 2: The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of leaders, including but not limited to, elected Church officers, the Pastor, staff members, and other ministry leaders who are qualified members. The Committee shall meet monthly to coordinate and discern God's present ministry and purposes for the church through prayer, study of scripture, and listening to God and to each other. The Committee shall be responsible for developing a budget to be presented to the congregation for adoption.

The Executive Committee is authorized to incur expenditures up to \$2000 to conduct ministry or the business of the church. Amounts in excess of \$2000 require a simple majority approval of the congregation present and voting.

## **ARTICLE IX - MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH**

In accordance with Hebrews 10:25, the congregation shall gather regularly for worship, for observation of the Lord's Supper, for study of God's Word, for instruction in discipleship, and for training in ministry and evangelism.

The congregation shall meet for business four (4) times each year, or when a special need arises. A special meeting of the congregation may be called by any two members of the Executive Committee or by the Pastor and any two members of the congregation. Notice of any congregational meeting shall be given at least 14 days in advance. A quorum for the transaction of business at any business meeting shall consist of 25 percent of the current number of active members. The affirmative vote of a simple majority of eligible voters shall be required to approve favorable action on any matter brought to the congregation except the election of staff members or amendments to this constitution. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern when not in conflict with this constitution.

The meetings of the congregation shall include:

- a. consideration of business deemed important by any member or the Executive Committee
- b. election of officers
- c. approval of an annual budget
- d. consideration of any expenditures exceeding \$2000
- e. approval of staff changes by three-fourths vote of active members present and voting
- f. consideration of changes in relationship with the ABCUSA, ABCOPAD, or the Central Union Association or to approve changes in status of the congregation itself.

**ARTICLE X - FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Upon recommendation from the Executive Committee or a team designated by the Executive Committee, the congregation shall adopt a budget annually for the ensuing fiscal year. The budget shall include all expenditures of the church, and the sum of all appropriations shall not grossly exceed the expected income.

**ARTICLE XI - AMENDMENTS**

Amendments may be made to this constitution by vote of three-fourths of the members present and voting at any regular or special business meeting of the church.

**ARTICLE XII – CHURCH DISSOLUTION**

If the church dissolves or ceases to function as a church, then, after the satisfaction of all obligations, debts, and liabilities of the church, all of the assets of the church, including its personal and real property, appurtenances and effects, shall inure to the benefit of, and become the property of American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware (ABCOPAD) or another Christian entity under the conditions of 501(c)(3) of the Tax Code. The church shall determine which entity is to receive the assets by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting.