

CONSTITUTION
OF
EXETER CHAPEL

JANUARY 1, 1986

Revised on January 24, 1999

PREAMBLE

As Christians, we believe that the New Testament is properly and ultimately the constitution (governing document) of the local church. Therefore, the constitution which follows here has been kept as brief and simple as possible. We have included only those provisions that are required for legal incorporation, that define our doctrinal and practical basis, and that will guide us in church membership, the duties and selection of church officers (Elders and Deacons), and the carrying out of church business. Much has been omitted regarding the life, functions, and ministries of the local church and its members.

In addition, we have endeavored to maintain flexibility for future developments, to avoid institutionalizing an excessive bureaucracy, and to leave the members free to devote themselves to ministries of edification and evangelism. Most of all, we have tried to give practical expression to the truth that Christ is the Head of His Church and it is His will that the members desire to follow in all the affairs and decisions of the church.

I. NAME

The name of this church shall be Exeter Chapel

II. AFFILIATION

Exeter Chapel is an independent Baptist church. We desire to maintain fellowship with other assemblies of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, especially those which adhere to the Scriptural doctrines and standards set forth in Section IV.

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this church shall be:

1. To worship and glorify God;
2. To edify believers in our Lord Jesus Christ;
3. To evangelize the unsaved both in our local community and throughout the world.

IV. ARTICLES OF FAITH and CHURCH COVENANT

Exeter Chapel acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as our supreme authority in all matters of belief and practice. Specifically, the members of this church shall recognize and uphold the following Articles of Faith and Church Covenant:

ARTICLES OF FAITH

ARTICLE 1 – GOD

We believe that there is only one living and true God, Creator of heaven and earth; that he possesses all possible perfections and each in an infinite degree; and that he exists eternally in three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the same in essence and equal in every divine perfection.

Exodus 20:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Genesis 1:1; Exodus 15:11; John 10:30; Matthew 28:19

ARTICLE 2 – CHRIST: HIS PERSON

We believe that the Son, who is the Word of the Father, the true and eternal God, took man's nature of the virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person; thus Christ is true God and true man. As to his manhood, he was in every respect like us, except without sin.

John 1:1, 14; Philippians 2:6-8; Matthew 1:23; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 4:15

ARTICLE 3 – CHRIST: HIS WORK

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ truly suffered, died, and was buried to be a sacrifice both for original sin and for the actual sins of man, thereby reconciling us to the Father. On the third day he rose again bodily from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, where he ever lives to make intercession for the redeemed.

1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Romans 5:18, 19; Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Acts 2:32, 33 Hebrews 7:25

ARTICLE 4 – HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, was sent by the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; to effect the new birth; to baptize all believers into the body of Christ; to indwell them permanently; and to lead them into all the truth.

John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7-11, 13; John 3:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9

ARTICLE 5 – THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, whose teaching, whether on matters of faith, history, or nature, is to be regarded as true without any mixture of error. The Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, so that whatever is not found therein and cannot be proved thereby is neither to be required as an article of faith nor regarded as necessary to salvation.

2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 10:35; Revelation 22:18, 19

ARTICLE 6 – MAN

We believe that man was created in the image of God, male and female, in a holy and happy state; but by his disobedience to the law of his Creator, he not only exposed himself to personal misery, but involved all his descendants in the temporal and eternal consequences of sin. As an effect of his fall, the whole human race possesses a depraved nature, by which men are prone to choose and delight in evil and disinclined to things morally good.

Genesis 1:27, 31; 3:1-24; Romans 3:10-18, 23; 5:12; 6:23; 8:7; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Ephesians 2:1-3

ARTICLE 7 – SALVATION

We believe that the only way of salvation from man's state of guilt and condemnation is through the righteousness and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now exalted at God's hand as Prince and Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Salvation is by grace through faith, apart from any human merit or works, so that whoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Acts 4:12; 5:31; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 3:16

ARTICLE 8 – PERSEVERANCE

We believe that Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification; and we have the fullest assurance that those who are truly born of the Spirit and believe in Christ shall never be lost, and that those who die in the Lord shall rise again to a glorious immortality. Therefore, it is the duty of all believers to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure by sincere and loving obedience to the commands and teachings of God's Word.

Romans 4:25; John 6:39; 10:28, 29; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 1:10,11

ARTICLE 9 – THE FUTURE

We believe that Christ will come a second time, personally and visibly, with power and great glory, and that there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust. The just will be raised incorruptible and, together with the righteous living, changed in a moment, shall be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body and received into Christ's kingdom and glory; and so shall they ever be with the Lord. The unjust shall awake to shame and everlasting condemnation.

Hebrews 9:28; Acts 1:11; Matthew 16:27; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:9

ARTICLE 10 – THE LORD'S DAY

We believe that the first day of the week, called the Lord's Day, ought to be kept holy; and that it is our duty to assemble on that day and worship God in a public manner, by offering up our prayers and thanksgiving, by giving attention to the preaching of the Word, and by observing the ordinances of the church.

Exodus 20:8-11; John 20:1, 19, 26; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 1:10

ARTICLE 11 – THE ORDINANCES

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ to be continued until his second coming. Only those who have professed their faith in Christ have a Scriptural right to baptism; and this ordinance is to be administered by immersion only, signifying our union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic remembrance of Christ's broken body and of his shed blood.

Matthew 28:19; John 3:23; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:36-39; Romans 6:3, 4; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

ARTICLE 12 – THE CHURCH

We believe that the church is the spiritual body of Christ, of which he is the head, composed of all true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. This body is expressed on earth in local congregations of believers, united together for worship, for mutual edification, and for the spread of the Gospel throughout the

world. Officers of the local church are pastors (or bishops or elders) and deacons, whose qualifications and duties are clearly set forth in the letters of the New Testament.

Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:41, 42; Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 1:1;
1 Timothy 3:1-13

CHURCH COVENANT

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

WE RESOLVE, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit,
to walk together in unity;
to strive for the advancement of this church in truth, holiness, and love;
to promote its spirituality and prosperity;
to assemble regularly for worship, prayer, instruction, and the ordinances;
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 RESOLVE
to maintain family and personal devotions;
to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;
to seek the salvation of our family and friends;
to walk circumspectly in the world;
to be just in all our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct;
to avoid all gossip, slander, and excessive anger;
to abstain from anything that might harm our testimony for Christ or cause a brother to
stumble;
to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

WE FURTHER RESOLVE
to watch over one another in brotherly love;
to remember each other in prayer;
to aid each other in sickness and distress;
to discover and exercise our spiritual gifts;
to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy in speech;
to be slow to take offense but always ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the rule of
our Savior, to secure it without delay.

WE MOREOVER RESOLVE
that, when we remove from this place, 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.