



## Constitution

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### **ARTICLE 1 – NAME**

The name of this corporation is Gateway Church Old Brooklyn. This corporation will be further referred to in this constitution and by-laws as the “Church” and also may be referred to by and may do business as “Gateway Old Brooklyn,” and such other names as the Elders of the Church shall determine from time to time.

### **ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE**

As followers of Jesus Christ, the mission of Gateway Old Brooklyn is to **Bring New Life**. Our vision is to be a church where we **receive** new life in Christ (John 3:16, 10:10, 14:6) , **share** that life in community (Acts 2:42-47) , and **bring** that life on mission to the world around us (2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Matthew 28:18-20).

We are a church on an incarnational mission to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives and bring the good news of Jesus to Cleveland’s Old Brooklyn neighborhood and beyond.

### **ARTICLE 3 – STATEMENT OF BELIEFS**

Our core beliefs are intended to be a basis of fellowship. There will always be peripheral doctrines that committed Christians disagree upon, but the core beliefs of Christianity are non-negotiable. Our core beliefs are found in the Baptist Faith and Message of 2000 as well as the 1689 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith. It is required that all pastor/elders and deacons/ministry leaders be in full convictional subscription to these confessions of faith. (If at any point a pastor/elder or deacon/ministry leader's subscription changes, it is the responsibility of these individuals to notify church leadership.)

### **ARTICLE 4 – CHURCH COVENANT**

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully covenant before God with each other to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and God’s revealed Word in the following manner.

- We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-6). We will walk together in brotherly and sisterly love, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require (Galatians 6:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-15).
- We will gladly cooperate with and submit ourselves to the elders of this church for the care of our souls, which is for our good and their joy (Hebrews 13:17).
- We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others (Hebrews 10:25; James 5:16).
- We will endeavor to raise the children under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:24-26).
- We will rejoice at each other’s happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other’s burdens and sorrows (2 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 6:2).

- We will diligently seek to promote edification with our tongues, while avoiding gossip and slander (1 Timothy 5:13; James 1:26, 3:5-8).
- We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life (1 Timothy 1:8-11; Romans 12:1-2).
- We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines (Acts 2:42-47).
- We will responsibly steward our spiritual gifts for the building up of this church. (Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12).
- We will 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 (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15).
- We will subscribe to unity in the purpose, statement of beliefs, church government, by-laws, membership policy, and the Gateway Old Brooklyn church discipline policy, as defined by this church in its Constitution. We agree to not teach nor act contrary to the church's confession of faith and practice and to not seek to cause division, but rather to uphold the clarity of our confession and seek maturity together in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 4:1-6; Romans 16:17)
- We will, when we move from this place, 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 (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:25).

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

---A Watch Care Ministry Agreement as created by the elders exists to allow certain persons not covenanting in church membership a limited ability to serve in the church under a set list of conditions. See agreement for details.---

## **ARTICLE 5 – GOVERNANCE**

We believe that Jesus is the head of the church and has ordained godly, gifted men to lead and care for the congregation under His authority. Governing decisions will be made based upon the revealed Word of God, with much prayer and seeking God's will and guidance from the Holy Spirit, as well as receiving input from the members of the church to best understand the needs and desires of the congregation.

The authority of this church shall rest in the Elders. Elders are selected, maintained and removed by a consensus of the Elders as provided for in the by-laws.

The Elders may structure and organize itself however it deems necessary for the sake of simplicity, clarity of communication, and efficiency of organization, according to the needs of the church and the size of the Elders so long as it preserves the plurality of Elders and the doctrinal and character requirements for Elders articulated in the by-laws.

## **ARTICLE 6 – AFFILIATION**

Gateway Old Brooklyn is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational control. However, we have chosen to affiliate and partner with the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, Southern Baptist Convention, and Cleveland Hope to further God's Kingdom locally, nationally, and around the world. We also desire to partner with other like-minded churches, ministries, and organizations locally and globally for the same purpose.

## **ARTICLE 7 – BY-LAWS**

The conducting of the affairs of Gateway Old Brooklyn not addressed in the Articles of Incorporation or this Constitution will be outlined in the by-laws of Gateway Old Brooklyn. The Elders may adopt such by-laws for the conducting of its business and the carrying out of its purposes, as it may deem necessary. By-laws must be approved by a consensus of the Elders.

## **ARTICLE 8 – AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution or any of its provisions may be altered, amended, or repealed by a consensus of the Elders as further defined in the by-laws of Gateway Church Old Brooklyn.

## **By-Laws**

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### **ARTICLE 1 – ELDERS**

The senior leadership of Gateway Church Old Brooklyn shall be vested in a governing body of male elders, hereinafter referred to as the Elders.

#### **Qualifications**

To be considered an elder, a man must be of the highest Christian character according to the qualifications of Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:5–9) and have been called by God into leadership at Gateway Church Old Brooklyn (Acts 20:28).

Elders must be active members of Gateway Old Brooklyn for a minimum of one year or by special appointment by the Elders.

#### **Responsibilities**

The primary role of the Elders is to lead and care for the congregation under the authority of Jesus. We have 7 categories of roles and responsibilities that Elders are scripturally called to fulfill and live out in their leadership of the church:

1. To teach/preach (1 tim 3:2 and 1:3, Titus 1:9, acts 6:4)
2. To lead the church (1 pet 5:5, 1 Tim 5:17, and heb 13:17)
3. To train Christians to do ministry (eph 4:11-16, 2 Tim 2:2)
4. To shepherd/counsel (1 pet 5:2-3, 1 Thess 2:9-12, Titus 2:15)
5. To model Christian maturity (1 tim 3 and Titus 1, 1 cor 4:16 and 11:1, Phil 3:17, 1 Thess 1:6, 1 pet 5:3)
6. To lead in prayer (acts 6:4)
7. To lead in evangelism (Matt 28, 2 Tim 4:5)

To promote efficient handling of church matters, the Elders may appoint various councils, committees, or ministry teams from within its membership, the staff, and from the church at large. These groups shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with powers specifically delegated by the Elders. The general functions of these groups are:

- A. To bring considered recommendations to the Elders concerning ministries.
- B. To provide a wider base of counsel to the Elders having the oversight of specific ministries.
- C. To execute special plans defined by the Elders.

All councils, committees, and ministry teams shall exist for the period specified by the Elders.

#### **Selection**

The process of becoming an elder involves at least the following steps:

- A. He must be a member in good standing at Gateway Old Brooklyn and has demonstrated the calling, character, and competency of an elder.
- B. If accepted as an elder nominee, the man will then undergo a period of training and testing.
- C. Training, prior to becoming an elder, will include whatever is deemed necessary to enhance the nominee's understanding of an elder's responsibilities as outlined in Scripture.
- D. Upon completing his training and testing process, the man must be approved by consensus of the Elders without objection to be introduced to the church members as an official elder candidate.
- E. If approved as an elder candidate, members of Gateway Old Brooklyn will be notified that he has met the criteria of an elder. Anyone, member or non-member of the church, having a concern regarding the man's qualifications to lead as an elder will have four weeks to notify the Elders, who can investigate the matter to determine if there is any reason to disqualify the man.
- F. If the Elders do not find any reason to reject the man for eldership, an official consensus vote of the Elders shall be taken and if there are no objections to his installation from any elder, the man will be installed as an Elder.

## **Term**

Once a man becomes an elder at Gateway Old Brooklyn it is expected that he will continue to serve as an elder indefinitely. If the Elders determine that an elder needs an extended Sabbath for a season because of a legitimate need (e.g., illness, tragedy), then that elder can transition to an inactive and non-voting elder for a set period of time as determined by the Elders.

## **Removal**

To resign from the Elders, an elder must notify the Elders of his decision in the form of a letter of resignation given to the lead elder who will then distribute to the other elders.

Any credible charge of wrongdoing in matters of morality, legality, or both, and in matters relating to doctrine against an elder, based on the biblical qualifications of an elder, shall be investigated by the Elders or a delegated committee. During the investigation, the elder in question shall not be allowed to vote on any church matters and shall be placed on temporary leave. If the investigating body finds credible evidence of wrongdoing, the elder in question shall be tried by the Elders according to the criteria of Scripture (e.g., James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19–21). A consensus of the remaining elders is necessary in order to find an elder guilty of the charges. If such a verdict is rendered by the remaining elders, the consequences for such a finding shall be determined by the remaining elders, with any action (up to and including removal) requiring another consensus of the remaining elders. In such instance, the church members of Gateway Old Brooklyn shall be notified of the process and results.

## **ARTICLE 2 – Lead Elder/Pastor**

The lead elder functions as a first among equals and is the lead pastor for the church.

### **Qualifications**

The lead elder/pastor must be of the highest Christian character according to the qualifications of Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:5–9) and have been called by God into leadership at Gateway Church Old Brooklyn (Acts 20:28).

### **Responsibilities**

The primary role of the lead elder/pastor is to lead the Elders in their leadership and care for the congregation under the authority of Jesus and to lead the entire church in obeying God's leading as revealed in Scripture and by the Holy Spirit.

The lead elder/pastor:

- A. Is responsible to lead Elders to a consensus of the vision and direction of the church.
- B. Is the primary teacher/preacher and is responsible for the overall preaching of God's Word in the church. (1 Tim 3:2 and 1:3, 2 Tim 4:1-2, Titus 1:9, Acts 6:4)
- C. Is responsible to oversee the disciple making activities of the church. (Eph 4:11-16, 2 Tim 2:2)
- D. Sets the example of mission by being the lead missionary of the church. (Acts 20:18-21, 2 Tim 4:5)
- E. The lead elder/pastor, with input from the Elders, shall oversee the selection, supervision, and removal of any paid or volunteer staff.

### **Selection**

The Elders are responsible for determining the process of searching for, interviewing, and hiring the lead elder/pastor.

Once a man is hired, he is immediately installed as the lead elder/pastor.

### **Term**

Once a man becomes the lead elder/pastor at Gateway Old Brooklyn it is expected that he will continue to serve in this position indefinitely.

The Elders may determine that the lead elder/pastor needs a Sabbath for a set period of time.

### **Salary/Benefits**

The Elders, with consultation with the financial team, will determine the salary and benefits of the lead elder/pastor.

### **Removal**

To resign as the lead elder/pastor, he must notify the Elders of his decision in the form of a letter of resignation.

Any credible charge of wrongdoing in matters of morality, legality, or both, and in matters related to doctrine against the lead elder/pastor, based on the biblical qualifications of an elder, shall be investigated by the Elders or a delegated committee. During the investigation, the lead elder/pastor shall not be allowed to carry on his responsibilities and shall be placed on temporary leave. If the investigating body finds credible evidence of wrongdoing, the lead elder/pastor shall be tried by the Elders according to the criteria of Scripture (e.g., James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19–21). A consensus of the Elders is necessary in order to find the lead elder/pastor guilty of the charges. If such a verdict is rendered by the Elders, the consequences for such a finding shall be determined by the Elders, with any action (up to and including removal) requiring another consensus of the Elders. In such instance, the members of Gateway Old Brooklyn shall be notified of the process and results.

The lead elder/pastor's position on the Elders is pursuant to his employment with the church and any voting or leadership right within the church is immediately revoked upon dismissal or if he is called elsewhere to pastor.

### **ARTICLE 3 – DEACONS**

A deacon shall also be known as a ministry leader. Together, the deacons form the Ministry Leadership Team. The following by-laws also apply to any paid or non paid staff or volunteer positions in the church .

#### **Qualifications**

Deacons may be men or women. They must meet the biblical requirements found in 1 Timothy 3 and be active members in good standing of Gateway Old Brooklyn for a minimum of one year or by special appointment by the Elders.

#### **Responsibilities**

The primary role of the deacons is to implement the direction and vision of the Elders. Under the Elders' leadership, the deacons care for and maintain the orderly administration of our congregation. Some deacons and ministry leaders focus more on care, others on the carrying out of church ministry, others more on administration. Some are paid staff and some are volunteers.

The Ministry Leadership Team will meet on an as needed basis.

#### **Selection**

The Ministry Leadership Team is selected on an annual basis by the Elders.

#### **Term**

Deacons will serve for one year at a time.

#### **Removal**

Deacons may be removed from leadership by a consensus of the elders for any of the following reasons:

- A. Resignation
- B. Behavior which violates the biblical qualifications for the office
- C. Continued agreement with doctrine that violates the doctrinal position of our church
- D. Abandonment of the office or assigned duties
- E. Ineffectiveness in assigned responsibilities

### **ARTICLE 4 – CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

A member of Gateway Old Brooklyn shall be known as a church member. Church membership, or belonging to the recognized body of Christ and serving that body, is found in the Bible and strongly affirmed and supported by the Bible (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, Acts 2:42-47, 1 Cor 5:9-13). In Scripture, becoming a Christian and belonging to the body of Christ is a spiritual reality that plays itself out in joining the recognized body of believers in Christ, the local church.

#### **Qualifications**

To be a member, an individual must have:

- A. Responded to the good news of Jesus Christ with personal **repentance** from sin and **faith** in the Lord Jesus. A person is saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 11:26, Acts 2:38-40, 16:30-31, Romans 10:9-10)

This is characterized by a person having made a life commitment to trust in and follow Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

- B. Been baptized as a *believer* by *immersion*. Baptism cannot save a person, only repentance and faith in Christ saves a person (Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism serves as the outward sign of an inward change, it is symbol that the

Lord Jesus commands us to follow in obedience to himself in identifying with Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives (Matthew 28:18-20).

- C. Read and be in agreement with the vision, mission, beliefs, and values of Gateway Old Brooklyn.

## Responsibilities

Members strive to **live out their faith and new life in Christ** through:

- A. Ongoing personal repentance from sin and submission to the Lordship of Christ (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- B. Regular personal Bible intake and prayer (Psalm 119:11, Romans 10:17)
- C. Regular attendance in worship (Hebrews 10:23-25)
- D. Consistent giving that displays generosity. We give because Jesus gave everything for us. (2 Corinthians 8 and 9, especially 9:6-15)
- E. Developing Christ like character (holiness, obedience, discernment, etc.) (Ephesians 5:1-21)

Members strive to **Share that life in Community** through:

- A. regular participation in a Community Group for the purposes of mutual accountability, transparency, encouragement, spiritual growth, and care for both spiritual and physical needs (Acts 2:24-47, Hebrews 10:23-25)
- B. using the gifts and abilities that God has given us to serve in the ministries of the church (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, Ephesians 4:11-16). **At Gateway Church Old Brooklyn, it is required that a person be a recognized member of the church in good standing (not undergoing church discipline) in order to serve in our children's ministries, music ministries, as a community group leader, or any other church ministries as the Elders may deem fit.** Exceptions to this may be made only at the discretion of the Elders.
- C. promoting unity within the church (being quick to forgive, refusing to participate in gossip, and dealing with conflict in a biblical manner) (Ephesians 4:25-32)
- D. submitting to one another and to the leadership of the church (Ephesians 5:21, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:5)

Members strive to **bring new life** through:

- A. Living out the gospel in their lives and sphere of influence (1 Peter 3:15-16)
- B. Personally sharing your faith with others and inviting them to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, so fulfilling the Great Commission. (Acts 4:31, 5:42, 8:4, Matthew 28:18-20)
- C. Helping to serve and meet the needs of those who live in Old Brooklyn and the greater city of Cleveland (Galatians 2:10, Ephesians 2:10, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, especially 9:6-15)
- D. bringing others with us to Gateway Church Old Brooklyn
- E. having a heart for what God is doing all around the world for the sake of His Kingdom. (Acts 1:8)

Member meetings are scheduled on an as needed basis.

## Selection

In order for an attendee or guest to become a member, the following steps are taken:

- A. Joining a community group and being in regular, committed attendance and participation.
- B. A Church Member Covenant is requested.
- C. The guest or attendee reads the covenant, signs the Church Member Covenant, and requests a membership interview.
- D. The Elders (or a designated Community Group leader) interviews the potential member to affirm salvation, baptism, doctrinal agreement, and ministry commitment.
- E. Upon approval, the member is presented to the congregation.

## Removal

Members may be removed from membership for the following reasons:

1. Death
2. No attendance for six months-exceptions being made for missionaries, physical illnesses that prevent members from attending, or for members in nursing homes.
3. Withdrawal requested by the member
4. Dismissal by church discipline as outlined below in Article 5

## Restoration

Members who are dismissed by the congregation of church members under the leadership of the Elders shall be restored by a majority vote of the congregation of church members under the leadership of the Elders when ongoing repentance and faith in Jesus Christ has been exemplified and it is deemed appropriate by the Elders to reinstate them according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.

## **ARTICLE 5 – CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

Church discipline is a necessary mark of a healthy church and shall be applied in cases of sexual misconduct, gossip, divisiveness, failing to walk in love towards others, dishonesty, and various other expressions of sin. In accordance with the biblical pattern generally outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, a person who evidences such sin will be confronted in an initial one-on-one meeting, followed by escalating engagement by the elders and church members.

Where the steps of discipline are exhausted in cases of unrepentant and/or habitual sin in failure to follow the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the congregation of church members under the leadership of the Elders will consider removing a person from membership by a majority vote with the hope of eventual reconciliation and restoration. This removal may or may not include a prohibition to attend Church services and events, depending on the circumstances. In addition, it might include public disclosure of removal from membership and the circumstances leading to this decision to the corporate membership of the Church. Those so disciplined will in turn be restored to fellowship where the Elders have determined that appropriate repentance has occurred.

## **ARTICLE 6 – MISCELLANEOUS STATEMENTS OF FAITH AND POLICIES**

### ***Statement of Faith and Policy regarding Marriage***

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment before God. It is intended by God to last a lifetime with exception only for reasons given in Scripture. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

***It is the policy of Gateway Church Old Brooklyn for its Pastors/Elders to marry only those who are 1) in agreement with the above statement of faith regarding marriage and 2) Recognized members of the church in good standing as outlined above in the Gateway Church Old Brooklyn membership policies. Exceptions to this may be made only for official members of another local church who are 1. in agreement with our above statement of faith regarding marriage and 2. with approval from their local church pastors where their membership is current.***

## **ARTICLE 7 – LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

- A. Gateway Old Brooklyn is a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the state of Ohio and is organized under the Ohio Business Organization Code, as amended (the "Code"). Federal tax exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).
- B. The fiscal year of the corporation shall be January 1 – December 31.
- C. The corporation will not discriminate in employment policies for reasons of race, religion, or sex, except in those situations that are in clear disagreement with Scripture.
- D. No compensation shall be paid to Elders unless a resolution authorizing such remuneration shall have been adopted by the corporation before the services were rendered.
- E. The Elders have the freedom to hire assistants or office staff without seeking congregational approval.

- F. Gateway Old Brooklyn agrees to indemnify the Elders against any claims by third parties arising from conduct of the Elders under this agreement.
- G. The corporation may later amend, revise, add to, repeal or rescind these by-laws and/or adopt new by-laws at will by a consensus of the Elders.