

**CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
GREAT LAKES BAPTIST CONFERENCE
(Affiliated with the Baptist General Conference)
Revised October 2016**

ARTICLE I – NAME AND ORGANIZATION

1. Name and organization: The name of this organization shall be “Great Lakes Baptist Conference, Inc.”, conducting affairs and hereinafter referred to as “Converge Great Lakes” or “CGL”.
2. Incorporation: The original incorporation was known as the Swedish Baptist Conference of Wisconsin and was incorporated under the laws of the State of Wisconsin on June 27, 1889 and recorded at Phillips, WI.

ARTICLE II – DOCTRINAL POSITION

1. The Word of God: We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully 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. The Trinity: We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal to every divine perfection and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.
3. God the Father: We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.
4. Jesus Christ: We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, 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 personal visible return to earth.
5. The Holy Spirit: We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide.
6. Regeneration: We believe that all men are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
7. The Church: We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work, and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

8. Christian Conduct: We believe that a Christian should live for the glory of God and the well-being of his fellowmen; that his conduct should be blameless before the world; that he should be a faithful steward of his possessions, and that he should seek to realize for himself and others the full stature of maturity in Christ.
9. The Ordinances: We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that those two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. Religious Liberty: We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.
11. Church Cooperation: We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary, independent basis.
12. The Last Things: We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.

ARTICLE III – MISSION

Converge Great Lakes exists to glorify God by strengthening churches so that they may reach those who do not know Jesus Christ locally, nearby, and around the world.

ARTICLE IV – VALUES

1. Spiritually Dynamic: We are a movement that will always be focused on biblical convictions and values. We are more than a social agency or nonprofit entity. We are the people of God who have been called to represent Him to a lost and dying world that desperately needs the truth of God's Word.
2. Relationally Devoted: We care for one another and for those who do not know Jesus.
3. Missionally Driven: Our mission of reaching lost people for Christ and planting missional churches is paramount in our thinking and practice.
4. Culturally Diverse: We are a racially and culturally diverse group of individuals who desire to overcome our differences so as to rally around a common mission for the sake of Jesus Christ.

5. Generously Desirable: We desire to be a generous people who seek to grow and develop generous hearts and lifestyles in order to advance the work of the church so that we may reach those who do not know Jesus Christ locally, nearby, and around the world.

ARTICLE V – OBJECTIVES

1. To strengthen churches so that they may reach lost people for Jesus Christ locally, nearby, and around the world.
2. To encourage and resource individual churches and groups of churches to start healthy reproducing congregations locally, nearby and around the world.
3. To provide resources that will contribute to the effective ministry of the local church.
4. To promote a wider missionary outreach by encouraging our churches to be responsibly involved with the Baptist General Conference conducting affairs and hereinafter referred to as “Converge Worldwide”.
5. To solicit, collect and invest monies and other property as necessary to carry out the above objectives.
6. To stretch member churches to be involved in areas of compassion ministries, short-term mission partnerships and urban-ethnic ministries.

ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP

1. Converge Great Lakes as a corporate body constitutes a voluntary fellowship of regularly organized Baptist churches which subscribe to the doctrinal position, purpose and objectives set forth in Articles II, III, IV and V.
2. A church desiring to unite with Converge Great Lakes shall make formal application to the Board of Overseers. When the Board of Overseers is satisfied that the church fully complies with the minimum expectations for all Converge Great Lakes churches as noted below and has processed all parts of the application for affiliation, the Board of Overseers shall recommend the church for membership at the next Annual Meeting of Converge Great Lakes. The following are minimum expectations for all Converge Great Lakes and Converge Worldwide churches.

Membership Expectations:

- a. All member churches shall adhere theologically with the tenets of the Converge Worldwide Affirmation of Faith.
- b. All member churches shall affirm Converge Worldwide’s position on baptism as it relates to church membership.
- c. All member churches shall affirm the mission statements of Converge Great Lakes and Converge Worldwide.
- d. All member churches shall practice Baptist polity, having some form of congregational governance.
- e. All member churches will be committed to reaching lost people for Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Gospel locally, nearby, and around the world.

- f. All member churches shall contribute to the Converge Great Lakes Core Ministry Fund as they are fiscally able aiming for CGL recommended giving levels.

Self-Evaluation:

- a. Member churches will periodically participate in a self-evaluation process as defined by the Core Expectations document.
 - b. This evaluative process will be based on a member church's perception of where they align to the overall mission of Converge Great Lakes. Each church will use the levels of engagement, as defined by the Core Expectations document, as basic criteria to substantiate their perceptions.
3. The Regional President/Executive Minister shall send written notice of the action of Converge Great Lakes to the church applying for membership and to the headquarters of Converge Worldwide.
 4. Each church with a membership of fifty or less shall be entitled to three delegates to the annual meeting of Converge Great Lakes, and one additional delegate for each additional membership of fifty or fraction thereof.
 5. Converge Great Lakes shall have no authority concerning the internal affairs of the member churches however, Converge Great Lakes has authority to disaffiliate any church who chooses to violate the Affirmation of Faith, Ministerial Code of Ethics, or is in noncompliance of the minimum membership expectations outlined in Article VI 2a-f. Converge Great Lakes' authority is limited to any violation of the Affirmation of Faith, Ministerial Code of Ethics or noncompliance of the minimum expectations outlined in this document. One of the ways this will be discerned is through the church self-evaluation process.
 6. Procedures for Deletion of Churches:
 - a. Any church may voluntarily withdraw its affiliation with Converge Great Lakes and Converge Worldwide. Converge Great Lakes and Converge Worldwide shall take appropriate action to remove the church from their membership records.
 - b. Upon the dissolution of a church, Converge Great Lakes and Converge Worldwide shall take appropriate action to remove the church from membership records.
 - c. A church may be dismissed from Converge Great Lakes when it demonstrates noncompliance with the minimum expectations for membership as described in paragraph 2 of this Article, or the moral and ethical convictions practiced by the church being deemed illegal or in opposition of the ethical standard of being a Christ follower as described in Galatians 5:16-26, Matthew 5-7 and 1 Peter 3:14-17.
 - i. Action for dismissal shall be initiated by a written, signed grievance. This action will be taken only after Converge Great Lakes Board of Overseers has determined that one or more of the conditions stated above are true and accurate. A copy of the written grievance shall be sent to the church. It shall also be sent to the office of Converge Worldwide President. Upon the action of Converge Great Lakes Board of Overseers, an Examination Council, appointed by Converge Great Lakes, shall meet with the church,

or its appointed representatives, to consider the charges and any appeal that the church may want Converge Great Lakes to consider. A representative of Converge Worldwide appointed by its President, shall be a member of the Examination Council. The Examination Council shall recommend appropriate action to Converge Great Lakes Board of Overseers.

- ii. The church shall be properly notified in writing by Converge Great Lakes of any pending or proposed action and Converge Great Lakes shall take every precaution to insure that due process is involved. A copy of any written notification sent to the church shall also be sent to the office of Converge Worldwide President.
- iii. Final action to dismiss shall be the responsibility of Converge Great Lakes. Converge Great Lakes shall also be responsible to notify Converge Worldwide Board of Overseers of the action it has taken to dismiss the church.

“Doctrines and standards” shall be defined in this Constitution and By-laws as the principles and truths set forth in the Affirmation of Faith and the Code of Ethics statements of Converge Worldwide.

ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS

The fiscal year of Converge Great Lakes shall be from September 1 through August 31. The Annual Meeting shall be held in September or October as deemed by Converge Great Lakes in Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VIII – BOARD OF OVERSEERS

The Board of Overseers shall:

1. Consist of one representative from each area and up to fifteen At Large members from across the district, elected at the Annual Meeting of Converge Great Lakes by simple majority vote, to serve a three-year term. A person may not serve more than two consecutive full terms.
 - a. The Board of Overseers is composed of members who give attention to specialized areas. Each specialized ministry will be served by at least three board members who have gifting in that area. The total number of board members may fluctuate between 15 and 25, depending on the needs of the Board on yearly basis.
 - b. Pastors from the Converge Great Lakes district shall make up at least one third of the Board.
 - c. Each area of Converge Great Lakes shall have a minimum of one person representing it on the Board of Overseers. Each area need not have the same number of representatives.
2. Nominate a Regional President/Executive Minister, and/or other executive-level personnel, to be elected at the Annual Meeting of Converge Great Lakes.
3. Be responsible for Converge Great Lakes business between the Annual Meetings of the Converge Great Lakes.

4. Give a report at the Annual Meeting of the Converge Great Lakes.
5. Receive the reports of, and act upon, the recommendations of all Converge Great Lakes Committees.
6. Approve or disapprove all grant aid requests other than those found in the annual budget.
7. Have the power and authority to invest funds or reinvest funds, to purchase and acquire property, to sell and convey property, for such price, and upon such terms as they may consider proper under the circumstances, for the purpose of carrying out any of the provisions of the powers given and imposed upon the Board of Overseers by the Converge Great Lakes.
8. Designate the Regional President/Executive Minister of Converge Great Lakes as an ex-officio (non-voting) member of the Board of Overseers. The Board of Overseers has the authority to designate other individuals to set as ex-officio (non-voting) members on any Converge Great Lakes' committees.
9. Be empowered, in accordance with the annual budget adopted at the Annual Meeting of Converge Great Lakes.
 - a. To employ and support full and part-time Converge Great Lakes personnel.
 - b. To be responsible for the receiving and disbursing of Converge Great Lakes funds.
 - c. To be responsible for raising the total Converge Great Lakes budget.
10. Be the official voice of Converge Great Lakes, competent to begin and to answer judicial actions in its behalf.
11. Provide for the bonding of any Converge Great Lakes officers and employees who receive and disburse funds.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be changed or altered by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present at the Annual Meeting of Converge Great Lakes, providing a request for such changes has been provisionally approved at the previous Annual Meeting by a simple majority vote.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I – RULES OF ORDER

1. Parliamentary – All questions of order not otherwise covered in the Constitution and By-laws shall be determined according to Robert's Rules of Order, revised.
2. Polity – Our polity shall be baptistic in nature and subject to its member churches.

ARTICLE II – AREAS

1. Converge Great Lakes, for representation purposes, shall be divided into areas, identified by geographical designation, and member churches shall affiliate with these areas as follows:

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| a. North | f. Bay |
| b. West Central | g. Southeast |
| c. Central | h. Fox Valley |
| d. West | i. Southwest |
| e. Upper Peninsula | |

2. Churches affiliating with Converge Great Lakes will be assigned by the Board of Overseers to an area as part of the action admitting such church to Converge Great Lakes. A church wishing to change its area affiliation may petition the Board of Overseers, which shall submit the request, with recommendations, to the Annual Meeting of Converge Great Lakes for final action.

ARTICLE III – OFFICERS AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. The Nominating Committee shall be the Executive Committee of the Board of Overseers. The Executive Minister shall be an ex-officio member.
2. The Nominating Committee shall:
 - a. Prepare a ballot of at least two candidates for each of the following offices: Vice-Moderator, Secretary and Vice-Secretary. The Vice-Moderator shall become Moderator the following year. From this ballot Converge Great Lakes elects its officers for the next Annual Meeting.
 - b. Nominate at least one person for each vacancy occurring on the Board of Overseers. They shall seek to keep a balance on the Board of Overseers between pastors and laypersons.
 - c. Converge Worldwide Positions:
Nominate for election two persons (familiar with the district and Converge Worldwide) for the position of Converge Worldwide Overseer (4-year term). An alternate should also be nominated for a four-year term.
 - d. Contact each nominee to secure an affirmation of their willingness to serve, before placing the name of the nominee on the annual ballot.
 - e. Submit a sample ballot to the moderator prior to the Annual Meeting.
3. Nominations from the floor may be added to the ballot, provided each nominee has affirmed their willingness to serve.
4. Any individual elected or appointed as an area representative, upon moving from said area, shall automatically vacate the office. Any vacated office (for whatever reason) shall be filled by the Board of Overseers until the next Annual Meeting.

5. Elected, appointed or employed personnel may be dismissed from their positions for any of the following reasons:
 - a. Moral and/or theological incompatibility with Converge Great Lakes doctrines and standards*
 - b. Mental or physical incapacity of a nature making it impossible to fulfill the responsibilities of the office
 - c. Failure to be in agreement with Converge Great Lakes objectives and purposes
 - d. Failure to carry out duties as described in the job description

Procedure for the dismissal of such personnel shall be in accordance with the policy manual.

* "Doctrines and standards" shall be defined in this Constitution and By-laws as the principles and truths set forth in the Affirmation of Faith and the Code of Ethics statements of Converge Worldwide.

ARTICLE IV – BOARD OF OVERSEERS

The Board of Overseers shall:

1. Elect from its members a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and two other members who serve as the Executive Committee every year.
2. Nominate for Conference election an Executive Minister of Converge Great Lakes for a term not to exceed five years. He shall:
 - a. Be accountable to the Board of Overseers.
 - b. Represent Converge Great Lakes at events and occasions where a representative spokesman is expected, whether within the fellowship or in external relationships.
 - c. Be responsible for coordination of the program, promotion and activities in the total Converge Great Lakes work.
 - d. Provide information about Converge Great Lakes program for pastors and churches, and encourage spiritual fellowship among pastors.
 - e. Upon request, represent Converge Great Lakes to any local church seeking information toward possible affiliation.
 - f. Supervise and coordinate efforts relating to pastoral placement and counseling with churches seeking assistance in the calling of a pastor.
 - g. Be responsible for the management of the business affairs of Converge Great Lakes, including the supervision of personnel. He shall be empowered to:
 - i. Sign all papers of a legal nature involving trusts assigned to him by the Board of Overseers.
 - ii. Sell or purchase Converge Great Lakes property and equipment in accordance with policies previously approved by the Board of Overseers.

- h. Discharge such other responsibilities as may be set forth by the by-laws or by Converge Great Lakes in Annual Meeting.
- i. Be authorized to sign checks in the absence or inability of the bookkeeper or other authorized personnel.
- j. Be responsible for the editing, printing and distribution of Converge Great Lakes publications and coordinate all Converge Great Lakes promotion.

ARTICLE V – DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. The Moderator of Converge Great Lakes, or if this person is not available, the Vice-Moderator, shall lead all sessions of the Annual Meeting.
2. The Secretary of Converge Great Lakes, or if this person is not available, the Vice-Secretary, shall make a detailed report of all discussions and actions taken by the churches, and in turn submit the record to the Converge Great Lakes office for safekeeping. The Converge Great Lakes office shall be responsible to send a copy of this report to each of the member churches within 60 days of the Annual Meeting.
3. Committee for Annual Meeting. The committee for the Annual Meeting shall consist of: Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Secretary, Vice-Secretary, and host pastor. They shall be responsible for executing the program, which shall be in print prior to the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VI – CONFERENCE COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. All committees and organizations within Converge Great Lakes are subject to the Constitution and by-laws of Converge Great Lakes, and the annual Converge Great Lakes meeting in session. Members of all committees and organizations must be active members in good and regular standing of a Converge Great Lakes church.
2. Each committee shall organize itself (except where provision is made in the Constitution and by-laws) as it may deem necessary for efficient service. All organizations shall conduct their annual elections at their first meeting following the Annual Meeting of Converge Great Lakes.
3. All committees and organizations shall submit written reports, as requested by the Board of Overseers, to the Annual Meeting.
4. All committees and organizations shall submit annual budgets to the Board of Overseers, for recommendation at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VII – INDEMNIFICATION STATEMENT

Converge Great Lakes shall indemnify any and all persons who may serve or who have served at any time in an executive-level position or as a member of the Board of Overseers or of any Committee or Organization of Converge Great Lakes, against any and all expenses, including amounts paid on judgments, counsel fees, and amounts paid in settlement (before or after suit is commenced) actually and necessarily incurred by such persons in connection with the defense or settlement of any claim, action, suit, or proceeding in which they, or any of them, are made parties, or a party, or which may be asserted against any of them or any of them by reason of being or having been in one or more of the aforesaid positions of responsibility with Converge Great Lakes, except in relation to matters as to which any such person shall be adjudged in any action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for his own

negligence or misconduct in the performance of his duties. Such indemnification shall be in addition to any other rights to which those indemnified may be entitled under any law, agreement, or otherwise.

ARTICLE VIII – REGULATIONS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

1. The Converge Great Lakes Office, working with the host church, shall appoint a registration team, whose duty shall be to receive credentials presented by delegates and to register all delegates and visitors. Voting privileges shall be extended only to all duly registered delegates.
2. Visitors are privileged to participate in the deliberation of Converge Great Lakes at the invitation of the moderator, but have no authority to vote on any motion.
3. There shall be no voting by either proxy or absentee ballot.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS

These by-laws may be amended or revised by a two-thirds majority vote of delegates present at any annual meeting; such changes shall be proposed to the Board of Overseers ninety (90) days before the annual meeting, and notice shall have been sent to the clerk and pastor of each member church one month prior to the annual meeting.