

Bethlehem PBC OKC

Articles of Faith

- Article 8

# What are the Articles of Faith?

Articles of Faith (AOF) are short summaries of doctrines that a church publishes and holds to as a statement of belief. Most PB Churches still have them, and most are similar (but not identical).

When the Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church of Jesus Christ in Oklahoma City was constituted in November 1900, the body of believers there adopted these articles as a public declaration of "those things which we most surely believe."

AOF do not rise to the level of Scripture, but they are central points upon which anyone who joins our assembly must believe and affirm.

Bethlehem PBC AOF: <https://pbokc.org/us/articles-of-faith/>

# Article 8

We believe that no minister has the right to administer the ordinances of the gospel but such as have been regularly baptized and called by God and comes under the hands of a presbytery.

What does this Article mean?

# Initial Thoughts on “Ministry”

The word “Minister” (noun) means servant. To minister (verb) is to serve. To “administer” means to take a leading role (manage) in serving.

We often use the term “Minister” to refer to our preachers and pastors (Elders). This is fine, but we should always keep in mind that everyone who is a member of the local church is a minister (servant). Mark 10:44.

The household of Stephanos in Corinth was “addicted to the ministry of the saints.” 1 Corinthians 16:15. This does not mean they were all ordained elders, but it means they were taking a leading part in using their spiritual gifts in being of service to others.

The terms “gifts of instruction” or “gifts of administration” are helpful to distinguish those gifts given by God to teach the Word of God and equip the church to perform its ministry of service. Eph 4:12; 2 Cor 9:2.

So, our “Ministers” teach the rest of the ministers (church members) how to minister, and our “Ministers” administer the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

# Qualifications for the Ministry

AOF 8 sets forth the qualifications for Ministers (ordained elders).

There is a great deal of wisdom and Biblical teaching in this short article.

The founders who adopted these articles in 1900 took great care in selecting these words, and it is incumbent upon us to consider what is stated. It sets forth several important principles taught by the Word of God.

There are three (3) qualifications listed in AOF 8 for someone to be an ordained elder, and hence, be qualified to administer the ordinances of Jesus Christ (water baptism and communion):

1. The man has been “regularly baptized”
2. The man has been “called of God” to preach the gospel
3. The man has come “under the hands of a presbytery”

# Regularly Baptized

What does it mean to be “regularly baptized?”

AOF 6 identifies immersion as the apostolic mode, so at a minimum, “regularly baptized” at least means “scripturally” baptized, that is, a proper candidate, mode, motivation and administrator. But “regularly baptized” appears to mean more than that.

“Regularly” means, in essence, in accordance with accepted, definite, and constant patterns, standards and procedures.

So AOF 8 means that our ordained elders are ordinary believers and church members. They come out from among us.

We will accept converts (like the Apostle Paul) but they must be “regularly baptized” and show themselves to be one of us. No one from outside can come in and just assume authority over us.

# Called of God

What does it mean to be “called of God?”

AOF 8 clearly means that the man, in addition to being shown to be a faithful member, has given evidence that he has been given a special “gift of instruction” to teach the Word of God. Our custom is to have men speak from time to time to see if God has given them such a gift. This can take an extended period of time.

The person most likely to know whether a man has been “called of God” is that man himself. Experience and Scripture both show that, if a man is called, he will know it. It is a very unpleasant experience to deny this calling (see e.g., Jonah, Jeremiah, Paul).

At the same time, the church body is the ultimate judge whether a man is called. We all have a duty to be continually evaluating, watching, praying for and asking God to send laborers into his gospel field, and to discern the answer to these prayers. Ordaining a man without a gift to preach will wear all of us out.



# Coming Under the Hands of a Presbytery

A “presbytery” (presbyterion) is a convened group or council of rulers. It is at least made up of ordained elders who take the leading role in carrying out the certification of the candidate.

The laying on of hands is a pattern found throughout the NT. It serves to show that a man is accepted of God and has been separated to a new work. Ananias placed his hands upon Paul at his conversion (Acts 9:17). Timothy received the laying on of hands at his ordination (1 Timothy 4:14). The disciples at Antioch laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas before their journey (Acts 13:3). Peter and John laid their hands upon the Samaritans, and a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 8:14-17).

The general principle is that elders from other churches certify and agree that a particular man has, in fact, been called of God to preach. It is not just the local church that decides this in isolation.

# Additional Qualifications of an Ordained Elder

AOF 8 is not intended to be exhaustive of all of the qualifications for a man to administer water baptism and the Lord's Supper. Rather, these are the three (3) bare minimum requirements necessary to conform to the NT pattern.

Additional qualifications for an ordained elder include:

1. He must be a man (not a woman) – 2 Timothy 2:12
2. He must meet behavioral qualifications such as in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (blameless, one wife, vigilant, sober, good behaviour, hospitable, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy, patient, not contentious or covetous, rules his own house well, is not a novice, must have a good reputation in the community at large, etc.)
3. He must not teach heresy/divisions – 1 Timothy 1:20

# Why is it Important that our Articles of Faith Address this Topic?

Each local church is independently accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ for being faithful to Him and His Teachings. There is no separate governing body or authority, other than Jesus Christ, above the local church.

At the same time, each local church is accountable to its sister churches in maintaining proper order and doctrine in order to remain in fellowship. Differences in custom and practice can be easily tolerated, but deviations from Scriptural patterns, commands and doctrines must be avoided.

A local church calling for the ordination of a man is “unleashing” that man upon the body at large. There have been many instances of men ordained in the past who caused problems among many other churches. In other words, the decision whether to ordain a man affects more than just the local body.

Ministers are subject to discipline just like all other members. In grievous cases, men have lost the ability to continue preaching as credentialed ministers, even if they were restored as members.

# Final Thoughts and Points

It is our custom at OKC PBC to use presbyteries of both ordained elders and deacons during the ordination of both elders and deacons. It is understood that the elders take the primary role. Other churches do not include deacons in their presbyteries. This is fine as well, and is not a problem or point of contention.

AOF 8 does not mention deacons at all, but it is understood that deacons are ordained to assist the local church. If a deacon moves his membership to another local church, he is not a deacon at that new church unless the church asks him to serve in that capacity. No new ordination service is needed.

“Liberation” is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, but it is a good way to officially identify men whom the local church believes may have a gift to preach and encourages other churches to invite the same to fill appointments to evaluate their gift. Some churches liberate, some do not. It is fine either way.

Young preachers usually have one or more mentors, as older Ministers, who teach them and guide them as they grow, as Paul did for Timothy, Titus and many others. The PBs follow this practice as well. There is no time limit, but a young man may exercise his gift for years before being ordained.

What are some Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 8?

# Some Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 8

1 Timothy 3:2-7: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know now how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Jeremiah 1:5: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

# Some more Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 8

Galatians 1:15-16: “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”

1 Timothy 4:14: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”

Titus 1:5: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:”

Acts 14:23: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”

# Some more Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 8

2 Timothy 2:2: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

Luke 10:2: “Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”

Jeremiah 20:9: “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”

2 Corinthians 9:16: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”



# A Further Listing of Scriptures from the Group On Article 8

- Acts 9:11-18
- Acts 8:14-17
- 1 Tim 3:1-7
- Titus 1:3-9
- 2 Tim 1:6
- 2 Tim 1:2
- 1 Tim 4:13-15
- Mark 3:13-15
- 1 Peter 5:1

\* And there are many, many more.

# Conclusion

The Bible teaches that God will raise up faithful men to teach the Word of God and administer the ordinances of Jesus Christ (water baptism and the Lord's Supper). We are to pray that God will send laborers into His gospel fields.

Such men are to be regularly baptized, which means that they come up from the ranks of the believers and show themselves to be faithful members and followers of Jesus Christ.

Such men are to show evidence that they are called of God to preach the gospel, which will be evidenced by their exercising in the Word of God under the direction and watch care of an older Minister, as Timothy was guided by Paul.

Such men are also to come under the hands of a presbytery, to demonstrate that the body at large recognizes and certifies the man's gift to preach and teach.

Like all things, the gospel pattern in this matter is the best.