



## **BYLAWS OF CONVERGE**

(as amended June 23, 2022)

### **ARTICLE I NAME**

The name of this organization shall be Converge (formerly known as the Baptist General Conference).

### **ARTICLE II IDENTITY STATEMENT**

Converge is a voluntary fellowship or association of Baptist churches in the United States and Islands of the Caribbean and Bahamas. Converge is a fellowship of churches whose theology is biblically evangelical; whose character is multiethnic; whose spirit is positive and affirmative; whose purpose is to fulfill the Great Commission through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting; and whose people celebrate openness and freedom in the context of Christ's Lordship.

### **ARTICLE III AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

#### **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 in 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 all people, 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 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 people 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 Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves 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 into 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 these 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 it is Converge or a district, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in Converge 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 IV PURPOSE AND MISSION STATEMENT

### SECTION A. PURPOSE

The purpose of Converge is to glorify God by making disciples of all peoples, as stated in Matthew 28:18-20: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (NIV).

### SECTION B. MISSION

The mission of Converge is to glorify God by helping member churches fulfill Christ’s mission for his church in all the communities God calls them to serve.

## ARTICLE V ADMISSION AND DELETION OF MEMBER CHURCHES

### SECTION A. REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Churches are eligible for membership in Converge, upon the following conditions:

1. The church shall subscribe without reservation to the Affirmation of Faith found in Article III of these bylaws;
2. The church shall subscribe without reservation to the doctrinal distinctives;
3. The church shall practice only believer’s baptism by immersion;
4. The church shall affirm Converge’s mission and purpose statements as found in Article IV of these bylaws, and shall affirm the mission statement of the region with which it is affiliated;
5. The church shall practice Baptist polity, having some form of congregational government; and
6. The church shall participate through prayer, financial, and personal involvement in the mission and ministries of Converge and its particular regional districts.

### SECTION B. ADMISSION INTO CONVERGE MEMBERSHIP

Upon vote of the membership thereof at a duly announced business meeting, and following written request, any church may be accepted into the fellowship of a duly recognized region and Converge, provided that the status of said church has been reviewed and approved by a committee from the region. In conducting this review, the committee shall follow policies and procedures established by the Converge Leadership Team in conjunction with the Board of Overseers of Converge to determine that the church fully meets the prerequisites set forth in Section A of this Article. A church accepted into the fellowship of a duly recognized region becomes a member of Converge.

### **SECTION C. DELETION FROM CONVERGE MEMBERSHIP**

1. Voluntary Withdrawal. Upon vote of the membership thereof at a duly announced business meeting, and following written notice, any church may withdraw from the fellowship of a duly recognized regional district and Converge.
2. Removal Upon Cause. A church may be removed or deleted from Converge membership based upon its willful and consistent failure to adhere to prerequisites for membership set forth in Section A of this Article. The determination to remove a church from Converge membership shall be made by the regional district with which such church is affiliated or by the board of overseers. In determining whether to remove a church from Converge membership under this section, a regional district or the board of overseers shall follow procedures and policies established by the Converge Leadership Team in conjunction with the board of overseers.

## **ARTICLE VI RELATIONSHIP WITH REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND BETHEL UNIVERSITY**

### **SECTION A. MINISTRY PARTNERS**

To best serve its member churches, Converge will work in cooperative and coordinated ways with other ministry organizations that have been established by, and are accountable to, the member churches of Converge. Converge's ministry partners are:

1. Regions. It is acknowledged that churches that have met the prerequisites of membership in Converge have also joined together in fellowships of churches based on state or other geographic boundaries. These fellowships of churches are known as "Regions."
2. Bethel University. The member churches of Converge have established Bethel University, a Christian university comprised of colleges, schools, and a seminary offering a combination of baccalaureate and/or graduate professional curricula and degree programs.

### **SECTION B. CONVERGE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The primary leadership of Converge is the national president and the regional presidents. The national office incorporates a bottom-up, servant-leader model of ministry that aligns vision, inspires leaders at the church, regional, national and international levels and multiplies resources to accomplish our mission. The regional presidents are key leaders in the implementation of our agreed upon vision and mission.

To foster cooperative and coordinated ministry approaches of Converge, the regions, and Bethel, the executive leadership of these ministry partners shall meet periodically as the "Leadership Team." The Leadership Team shall consist of Converge's president, vice presidents and designated representatives, the regional president of each region, and the Bethel president's designated representatives. The Leadership Team shall seek to coordinate and strengthen the unified efforts of the ministry partners and to increase the mutual accountability of these ministry partners.

### **SECTION C. REGIONS**

1. Region and Converge Relationship. While Converge and the regions are separately incorporated, they have been created by and are responsible to the local churches. Converge national and the regions are also involved in a mutual purpose and mission, as described in Article IV of these bylaws, with an accompanying obligation for cooperation and communication. Cooperation shall be encouraged by the following guidelines and procedures:
  - a. In general, services, ministries, and programs shall be implemented as close to the local church level as possible.
  - b. In sharing stewardship and promotional information with the churches, mutual concern shall be expressed for both region and Converge budgets, observing the spirit of a cooperative ministry for Christ.
  - c. Should differences of viewpoint arise between a region and Converge regarding the assumption or assignment of responsibility, the parties involved are encouraged to amicably discuss and prayerfully seek agreement. In the event that such agreement cannot be reached, the following sequential steps should be used, if necessary: 1) consultation between representatives of the appropriate Converge ministry and region; 2) recommendation by regional presidents and the vice president of the ministry acting jointly; 3) recommendation of the board of overseers or the regional governing board; 4) action of the biennial meeting of Converge. However, nothing in this section should be construed to curtail, abridge, or violate the powers, duties, authority, or autonomy of either Converge or the regions.
2. Regional Presidents Council. The regional presidents council shall be comprised of the regional presidents of each region conference. The general purpose of the regional presidents council shall be to serve as a liaison between the various regions and between the regions and Converge.
3. Recognition of New Regional Districts. New regions may be recognized by Converge after the board of overseers and the governing board of a sponsoring region have reviewed and approved the proposed region, based on the prerequisites for establishing new region as determined by the Converge Leadership Team in conjunction with the board of overseers. A new region shall be duly recognized upon a majority vote of delegates at Converge's biennial meeting.

## **ARTICLE VII BIENNIAL MEETING**

### **SECTION A. TIME AND PLACE OF BIENNIAL MEETING**

The biennial meeting of Converge shall convene at a time and place to be determined by its board of overseers. Notices of the time and place of the biennial meeting shall be delivered to each member church in ways that will encourage attendance and participation as well as comply with Illinois law.

**SECTION B. REPRESENTATION AT BIENNIAL MEETING**

1. Representation of Churches.
  - a. Member churches shall be represented at the biennial meeting of Converge by delegates selected by each church. Each church shall be entitled to two delegates for the first 50 members or fewer, one additional delegate for from 51 to 100 members thereafter, and one additional delegate for the major fraction of each 100 members thereafter. However, the maximum number of delegates that any church may send to a biennial meeting shall be ten delegates.
  - b. A church plant that has not yet been admitted as a member church of Converge, but has been established with the support or endorsement of a region or member church, shall be represented at the biennial meeting by its pastor and the pastor's spouse as its delegates.
2. Questions Regarding Representation. Any question involving the representation of a church at the biennial meeting of Converge for failure to cooperate in the objectives and purposes of Converge, or for departure from the life and historic teachings of Baptist churches, shall be acted upon at the biennial meeting upon the recommendation of the board of overseers.
3. Ex Officio Delegates. Members of the board of overseers, the president of Converge, the president of Bethel University, the vice presidents/executive directors of Converge, the officers of the biennial meeting, the regional president of each region, and duly confirmed full-time faculty members of Bethel Seminary, shall serve as delegates to the biennial meeting of Converge with voice and vote.

**ARTICLE VIII  
BOARD OF OVERSEERS**

**SECTION A. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY**

The affairs of Converge shall be managed by or under the direction of its board of overseers. The board of overseers shall constitute the policy-making board of Converge, and shall be responsible for the administration of all mission activities and business affairs of Converge and shall be responsible to ensure that the spiritual and charitable objectives of Converge are fulfilled. The board of overseers shall have the responsibilities and the authority normally granted to the board of directors of like corporations organized under the laws of the State of Illinois.

**SECTION B. COMPOSITION OF BOARD**

The board of overseers shall be comprised of 22 to 30 persons, who shall be selected as follows:

1. The regional president of each region;
2. Persons nominated by the board of overseers to serve as "at-large" members;
3. The president of Converge; and

4. The president of Bethel University; and
5. The president of the Wesleyan Investment Foundation

The members of the board of overseers shall be confirmed by vote of the delegates at Converge's biennial meeting as described in the provisions of Article IX of these bylaws.

#### **SECTION C. OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

1. Officers. The board of overseers shall elect from among its members a chair and a vice chair. The chair shall preside at all meetings of the board of overseers, shall have a right to vote on all questions, shall appoint to all committees the members who are not appointed by the board of overseers, and shall have such other duties and authority as may be prescribed by the board from time to time. In the absence of the chair, the vice chair shall perform the duties of the chair.
2. Executive Committee. The chair, vice chair, president of Converge, and three or more other board members elected by the board of overseers, shall serve as an executive committee. The executive committee shall have such duties and authority between board meetings as may be delegated to it by the board of overseers.

#### **SECTION D. SPECIFIC DUTIES AND AUTHORITY**

Specifically, the duties and authority of the board of overseers shall include the following:

1. To receive reports and review objectives from Converge leadership. Such reports shall include the investments, financial obligations, pledges of contributions, indebtedness, encumbrances on properties and contracts, pending, in process, or about to be negotiated.
2. To be responsible for each Converge ministry, its objectives, operations, and policies in light of previously approved goals and policies in the best interests of Converge.
3. To review and approve the administration and management of funds budgeted and designated to Converge ministries.
4. To approve and monitor the annual Converge budget.
5. To review all fund-raising efforts of Converge.
6. To issue official calls to those who have been elected by Converge to positions listed in these bylaws.
7. To fill on an interim basis vacancies in the elective positions listed in these bylaws, which vacancies may occur between biennial meetings of Converge.
8. To see that adequate facilities are provided for all Converge ministries.
9. To recommend to the biennial meeting, in accordance with Article I of these bylaws, the recognition of new regions.

10. To officially welcome, on behalf of Converge, all churches after they have become members of a regions.
11. To give the authoritative interpretation of the Articles of Incorporation and the bylaws and of all action of Converge in its biennial meeting.

## **ARTICLE IX SELECTION AND CONFIRMATION OF BOARD MEMBERS**

### **SECTION A. SELECTION OF AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBERS**

The board of overseers shall work with the president and the Regional Presidents Council with the goal of securing highly qualified nominees who will assure a balanced representation of pastors from and lay persons, men and women, and ethnic individuals from rural, urban, and suburban churches across the regions.

### **SECTION B. ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE ON BOARDS**

Any person who is an active member in good standing of a member church of Converge shall be eligible to serve Converge as an at-large member of the board of overseers.

### **SECTION C. TERM OF OFFICE**

At-large members of the board of overseers shall be confirmed at biennial meetings of Converge to serve for four-year terms. Upon renomination by the board of overseers, a board member may be reconfirmed for up to one additional four-year terms.

### **SECTION D. VACANCIES**

Vacancies on the board of overseers that occur between biennial assemblies shall be filled by the board of overseers, but persons thus elected shall serve only until the expiration of the original board member's term of office.

### **SECTION E. REMOVAL OF BOARD MEMBERS**

A board member may be removed for cause, in accordance with policies adopted by the board of overseers and in accordance with Illinois law.

## **ARTICLE X COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF OVERSEERS**

### **SECTION A. STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF OVERSEERS**

1. Names of Committees. There shall be the following standing committees, which shall have such duties and responsibilities as assigned by the board of overseers:
  - a. The executive committee;
  - b. The personnel and compensation committee; and

- c. The audit committee.
2. Composition of Committees. Except for the executive committee, which is elected by the board of overseers, members of the standing committees shall be appointed by the board of overseers, after consultation with the president of Converge. Each standing committee shall elect a chair and vice chair and shall report to the executive committee of the board of overseers.

#### **SECTION B. OTHER COMMITTEES OR COMMISSIONS**

The board of overseers may appoint other committees or commissions to aid in its work or the work of any department. Members of appointed committees or commissions may be from within or without the board of overseers.

## **ARTICLE XI OFFICERS AND PERSONNEL**

#### **SECTION A. OFFICERS**

The officers of Converge shall be a president, one or more vice presidents, a treasurer, a secretary, and such other officers as may be appointed by the board of overseers. Officers whose authority and duties are not prescribed in these bylaws shall have the authority and perform the duties prescribed, from time to time, by the board of overseers. Any two or more offices may not be held by the same person.

#### **SECTION B. PRESIDENT**

The president shall be the chief executive officer of the board of overseers to which he shall be responsible for his duties and activities. The president shall also be the chief executive officer of Converge. The president shall be elected at a biennial assembly of Converge upon nomination of the board of overseers, pursuant to the provisions of these bylaws. The president shall represent Converge or provide representation at all events or occasions where a representative spokesman is expected from our total Converge fellowship, whether within the fellowship or in external relationships. The president will coordinate and direct the administration of the program, promotion, and activities of the total Converge work. The president shall give leadership to the planning process for Converge and shall challenge Converge leaders to identify opportunities for ministry and develop ways and means for their participation in Converge plans. The president will provide information about the total Converge program for pastors and churches. The president will encourage spiritual fellowship among pastors, and will, upon the request of a pastor, local church or region, provide for representation of the total Converge fellowship to local churches seeking information toward possible affiliation. As the chief administrative officer, the president will ensure effective implementation of the decisions of Converge and of the board of overseers as defined in these bylaws. The president will be an ex officio member of all boards and standing committees of Converge with full voting rights and will provide liaison between the boards and committees.

### **SECTION C. VICE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS**

Vice presidents and executive directors may be appointed to administer programs such as (but not limited to) development and financial administration and other ministries that support organization objectives. These vice presidents and executive directors shall also perform such other duties and have the powers and restrictions as from time to time may be assigned to them by the president or the board of overseers. These vice presidents and executive directors will be appointed as provided for in these bylaws.

### **SECTION D. TREASURER**

The treasurer shall be the principal accounting and financial officer of Converge. The treasurer shall (a) have charge of and be responsible for the maintenance of adequate books of account for Converge; (b) have charge and custody of all funds and securities of Converge, and be responsible therefore, and for the receipt and disbursement thereof; and (c) perform all the duties incident to the office of treasurer and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the president or the board of overseers. If required by the board of overseers, the treasurer shall give a bond for the faithful discharge of duties in such sum and with such surety or sureties as the board of overseers shall determine. The treasurer shall be appointed by the board of overseers upon recommendation of the president.

### **SECTION E. SECRETARY**

The secretary shall (a) record the minutes of the board of overseers in the board's official record books; (b) see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws or as required by law; (c) be a custodian of the corporate records and of the corporate seal of Converge; (d) keep a register of the addresses and other pertinent information of member churches and regions; and (e) perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the president or by the board of overseers. The secretary shall be appointed by the board of overseers upon recommendation of the president.

### **SECTION F. Assistant Treasurers and Assistant Secretaries**

Assistant treasurers and assistant secretaries may be appointed by the board of overseers, and shall perform such duties as shall be assigned to them by the treasurer or the secretary, respectively, or by the president or board of overseers.

### **SECTION G. SELECTION OF CONVERGE OFFICERS AND PERSONNEL**

1. Elected Officers.
  - a. President.
  - b. Procedures of election.
    - i. Nominations for president shall be presented by the board of overseers to the biennial meeting of Converge for election.
    - ii. All elections shall be by ballot.
    - iii. Nominees as defined in this bylaw provision must receive a majority vote for election. In the event of a ballot consisting of more than two nominees for a

position, and in which none receives a majority, the two with the highest number of votes shall appear on a subsequent ballot for election.

2. **Approved Officers and Personnel.** All vice presidents and executive directors shall be approved by the board of overseers.
3. **Character of Personnel.** All elected and approved personnel shall be avowedly Christian men and women who are in agreement with the Affirmation of Faith set forth in Article III of these bylaws.
4. **Multiethnic Diversity of Personnel.** It shall also be the policy of Converge to employ leadership and staff who represent the multiethnic character of Converge.

#### **SECTION H. TERM OF OFFICE AND TENURE FOR CONVERGE OFFICERS AND PERSONNEL**

1. The president shall serve for a specific period of time but not to exceed six years, at which time the president may stand for reelection if recommended by the board of overseers.
2. **Evaluation and Termination of Converge Personnel.**
  - a. The board of overseers shall approve policies and procedures in connection with the annual performance evaluation of all staff positions, for the updating of job descriptions, and the termination and renewal of non-elected personnel.
  - b. The executive committee of the board of overseers shall review the performance of the president prior to the expiration of the terms of office. Based on the recommendation of this committee, the president may be recommended by the board of overseers to the biennial meeting to be reelected for another term.
  - c. If at any time the vice president or executive director is not performing up to job expectations or for other reasons becomes ineffective, the president shall take appropriate action up to and including termination. In the case of the president, the board of overseers shall take appropriate action, up to and including termination.

### **ARTICLE XII CARE AND INVESTMENT OF FUNDS**

#### **SECTION A. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

The utmost care shall be exercised in the handling and depositing of funds. Books of account shall be maintained, which books shall at all times be open for inspection by the board of overseers or its authorized representatives, or to authorized representatives of Converge.

#### **SECTION B. CONTRACTS**

The board of overseers may authorize any officer or officers, agent, or agents of Converge, in addition to the officers so authorized by these bylaws, to enter into any contract or execute

and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of Converge and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.

**SECTION C. CHECKS, DRAFTS, ETC.**

All checks, drafts, or other orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of Converge shall be signed by such officer or officers, agent, or agents of Converge and in such manner as shall from time to time be determined by resolution of the board of overseers. In the absence of such determination by the board of overseers, such instruments shall be signed by the treasurer or an assistant treasurer and countersigned by the president or a vice president of Converge.

**SECTION D. DEPOSITS**

All funds of Converge shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of Converge in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the board of overseers may select.

**SECTION E. GIFTS**

The board of overseers may accept on behalf of Converge any contribution, gift, bequest, or devise for the general purposes or for any special purpose of Converge.

**SECTION F. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Audit Committee, appointed by the board of overseers, will approve the auditors used by Converge. The acceptance of the financial statements of Converge by the Audit Committee and Board of Overseers shall be upon the basis of such audit reports.

**SECTION G. BONDING OF CONVERGE OFFICERS**

All Converge officers, as well as employees of Converge entrusted with cash or securities, or having access to safety deposit boxes, may be required to execute fidelity bonds in favor of Converge and for such amounts as the board of overseers shall determine. The expense of such bonds shall be borne by Converge. It shall be the responsibility of the board of overseers to provide adequate insurance against all financial losses.

**ARTICLE XIII  
DEFINITIONS**

As used in these bylaws where appropriate, the masculine includes the feminine, the singular includes the plural, and vice versa.

**ARTICLE XIV  
INDEMNIFICATION**

Each member of a Converge board, committee, or commission, and each executive officer of any of such boards, departments, or divisions shall be indemnified by Converge against all expenses actually and necessarily incurred by such member or officer in connection with the defense of any action, suit, or proceedings to which he/she has been made a party by reason of his/her being or having been such member or officer except as to matters as to which such

member or officer shall be adjudicated in such action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of duty.

## **ARTICLE XV AMENDMENT**

Except for Article III, Affirmation of Faith, these bylaws may be amended at the biennial meeting of Converge by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present, provided that a copy of the proposed amendment has been presented to the board of overseers at least three months prior to the biennial meeting and notice has been delivered to all member churches at least one month prior to the biennial meeting. With regard to Article III, Affirmation of Faith, amendments may be effected at any biennial meeting of Converge by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present, provided that a proper motion embodying such amendment has been presented, discussed, and provisionally adopted (by a simple majority) at the previous biennial meeting of Converge.