



The Church Constitution





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To Constituent Recipients

Welcome to a new phase in the life of your church. As a church grows, each marker or significant step on the journey becomes an experience to be celebrated. As you create a covenant and adopt a constitution, celebrate the life you have together in Christ.

The Church Planting Group of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) designed *The Church Constitution Guide* for your church as it establishes relationships with other Baptist bodies. Some of the issues you are dealing with relate to formally adopting various documents. The components of this booklet will provide a process for this task.

Although this guide will help with the process, an additional study of biblical material will be beneficial. The New Testament, a primer for starting churches, focuses on the Christ event and the expansion of His kingdom on earth through establishing churches. As your church studies the New Testament, you will discover how to be a body of believers carrying out the commands of Christ in your context.

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BAPTISTS: A COVENANT PEOPLE

A church covenant defines relationships and is an objective document that Baptists can use to make decisions relating to membership. Churches may adopt several kinds of documents:

- A statement of faith that provides a biblical and spiritual foundation.
- A constitution that defines an organizational structure.
- Articles of incorporation that provide legal protection in certain situations.
- A covenant that defines the relational character of the church body.

Christians voluntarily associate together by covenant and thereby constitute—comprise, make up, form a church. The section on the church in “The Baptist Faith and Message” begins with this statement:

“A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.”¹

The word used to describe the believers’ connectedness with each other is covenant. A body of people becomes a church in a covenant relationship under the headship of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention are covenantal in nature. People constitute a church by coming together in a covenant relationship that is clearly identified, articulated, and affirmed. It is at the point of covenanting together that a church formalizes its existence. The moment a body of people understands that they are the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has indeed birthed His church in their midst. The people then begin to intentionally define their covenant with God and with each other.

The “one another” passages in the New Testament give us a clue to the relationship Christians should have in their commitment to each other to be the church. A covenant based on these passages would include relational statements. The following is an example of such a covenant.

We, the members of _____ Church, do hereby covenant with each other before God to:

Be family; to be committed to each other; to love, accept, and forgive each other until death or God’s call causes us to part.

Live in Jesus Christ and take His commands seriously.

Help one another grow toward Christian maturity by bearing one another’s burdens, encouraging one another, exhorting one another, praying for one another,

confessing our sins to one another, speaking the truth in love to one another, admonishing one another, building up one another, teaching one another, comforting one another, submitting to one another, serving one another, patiently bearing with one another, being hospitable to one another, greeting one another, living in peace with one another, regarding one another as more important than ourselves, caring for one another, exercising our spiritual gifts to serve one another, being kind and tenderhearted to one another, being devoted to one another, accepting one another, forgiving one another, loving one another.

We invite fellow members to pray for us, teach us, correct us, or rebuke us, if necessary, in a spirit of gentleness and humility should we stray from our Lord's commands, because the thing we desire most in life is to serve Christ. We voluntarily submit ourselves to one another and to the discipline of the church. Such discipline will always be for the loving purpose of restoration—restoration to fellowship with God and with the covenant community—and it will always be done in accordance with Matthew 18:15-22.

Bring honor to the body of Christ by maintaining a good testimony.

We enter into this covenant because we have the common purpose of obeying Jesus Christ, and because we believe that we need one another's help to do this.

As believers, and disciples of Jesus Christ, we have entered into a covenant relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—with the God who revealed Himself in Jesus. Since the blessings and promises of the covenant have been freely extended and given to us, out of wonder, love, thanksgiving, and reverence, we hereby accept and take up the covenant responsibilities that go with such a privilege. This is our reasonable service, and we should do nothing less.

God helps us all! We rely on His grace and hold fast to His promise that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

A new congregation should take the following steps toward adopting a covenant:

- Step 1:** Develop sensitivity to the Lord's leadership. There comes a time when the Lord "births" His church. At that point, the covenanting process should begin.
- Step 2:** Lead the congregation in a study of Scripture. Concentrate on the "one another" passages. Examine the New Testament for characteristics of Christians' relationships to each other in a local church.
- Step 3:** Identify the relational elements that are indispensable in the church. Structure these elements into a document that includes statements of introduction and conclusion.
- Step 4:** Secure unanimous and personal agreement by every church member. The covenant is a statement that defines the relationships into which new members are received.

It also becomes a clear statement for discipline.

A covenanting service should be a significant event in the life of a new church. It is not a goal to achieve. It is an outward expression of a church's internal awareness of its status before God and its spiritual birth as a local expression of the body of Christ. A church should celebrate its covenant often.

“One another” passages of the New Testament

Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another” (*Mark 9:50*).

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (*John 13:34*).

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (*John 13:35*).

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (*John 15:12*).

“These things I command you, that ye love one another” (*John 15:17*).

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (*Rom. 13:8*).

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (*1 Thess. 3:12*).

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (*1 Thess. 4:9*).

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (*1 Pet. 1:22*).

“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (*1 John 3:11*).

“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment” (*1 John 3:23*).

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (*1 John 4:7*).

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (*1 John 4:11*).

“No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (*1 John 4:12*).

“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another” (*2 John 1:5*).

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (*Rom. 12:10*).

“Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits” (*Rom. 12:16*).

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus” (*Rom. 15:5*).

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (*Rom. 14:19*).

“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (*1 Thess. 5:11*).

“Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (*Rom. 15:7*).

“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (*Rom. 15:14*).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (*Col. 3:16*).

“Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you” (*Rom. 16:16*).

“All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss” (*1 Cor. 16:20*).

“Greet one another with a holy kiss” (*2 Cor. 13:12*).

“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen” (*1 Pet. 5:14*).

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another” (*1 Cor. 12:25*).

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (*Gal. 5:13*).

“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (*Eph. 4:2*).

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (*Eph. 4:32*).

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (*Col. 3:13*).

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (*Eph. 5:21*).

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (*1 Pet. 5:5*).

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (*1 Thess. 4:18*).

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (*Heb. 3:13*).

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (*Heb. 10:25*).

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (*Heb. 10:24*).

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (*Jas. 5:16*).

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (*1 Pet. 3:8*).

“Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (*1 Pet. 4:9*).

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (*1 Pet. 4:10*).

“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (*Rom. 14:13*).

“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (*Gal. 5:15*).

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (*Gal. 5:26*).

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (*Col. 3:9*).

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge” (*Jas. 4:11*).

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (*Jas. 5:9*).

WHY CONSTITUTE?

As a rule, most church-type missions and new congregations should move deliberately and steadily toward constitution as New Testament churches.

Parents birth, support, and guide their children toward the time when, as adults, they can establish their own homes. In a similar way, a partner church births, supports, and guides the new church toward maturity. In this way its purpose is fulfilled.

Guiding the new congregation to constitute enables the partner church to assist and give direction to the growth of the new congregation. Together, the partner church and the new church can set realistic goals that will help the new church reach the constitution stage and beyond.

When the new church is constituted, the partner church experiences victory, joy, and accomplishment. The partner church can then focus on helping another new church.

Setting a date to constitute helps the new congregation establish a “mile marker” on its journey toward accomplishing what the Lord wants it to be and do. The new congregation has something to plan for, something to work toward, something to look forward to. Setting a date for constitution helps the new church to establish a pattern for planning and working that will bring both stability and growth.

The constitution service is a way of formally recognizing the new church. It acknowledges the maturing congregation and provides a way for the new church to be a full partner within the association. The constitution service gives the new church personal identity in the community and in the denomination.

When a church constitutes, the congregation experiences a sense of accomplishment. It underscores, in a formal way, its autonomy and responsibility for self-support and kingdom expansion through establishing new congregations. The constitution service is a significant event in the church's history. The congregation will reach additional mile markers as it explores God's unique purpose.

The partner church and the new congregation plan for, pray for, and work toward the strength and maturity needed for a new church to constitute. The result likely will be a strong, growing church that accomplishes much for Christ.

HOW TO CONSTITUTE A CHURCH

Purpose These suggestions are to help a new congregation project director give guidance to a mission congregation as it moves toward constituting as a church.

Procedure Involve new congregation members in the following actions during the 12 months before constituting.

Actions Before Constituting

12 Months

- Secure a copy of *The Church Constitution Guide* from NAMB. Date ordered _____
- Work with the partner church's On Mission Team to set a date for the constitution service.
- Propose date for constituting _____
- Elect a Constitution Committee to develop a constitution and bylaws for the new church. This committee should investigate the process for affiliating with the association and state convention, as well as the legal aspects of incorporating the new church.

Names for the Constitution Committee:

Date Elected _____

11 Months

- Study "The Baptist Faith and Message" with the pastor or associational missionary as leader.
- Individuals responsible:

Date Completed _____

9 Months

- *Study Baptist Polity As I See It* with the pastor or associational missionary as leader.
- Persons Responsible:

Date Completed _____

8 Months

- Elect a Calendar of Activities Committee to develop an annual calendar of activities. The Church Council of the new congregation may fulfill this function.
- Names of those on the Calendar of Activities Committee:

Date Elected _____

- Elect a Budget Committee to develop an annual budget. The budget should provide for calendared activities, missions giving, and other needs.
- Names of those on the Budget Committee:

Date Elected _____

3 Months

- Elect a Program Committee to:
 - (1) Plan the constitution service.
 - (2) Invite other churches in the association to send representatives to form a Constituting Council.
 - (3) Invite your association's director of missions, state director of missions, and local civic officials.

Names of those on the Program Committee:

Date Elected _____

- Elect a Nominating Committee to recommend church officers and committees. Person elected:

Date Elected _____

2 Months

- Discuss and approve the constitution and bylaws by the congregation.
- Date of Approval _____
- File incorporation papers.
- Date Completed _____

1 Month

- Approve calendar of activities, budget, and nominees for church officers and committees.
- Date Completed _____

Constitution Day

At the meeting to constitute the mission into a church, form a Constituting Council of representatives from churches. Choose a moderator and a clerk. This meeting may be held just before the constitution service. The Constituting Council hears the reasons for the mission congregation to constitute into a church and recommends that the congregation constitute. This action can be done with only the partner church(es) participating.

A Sample Constitution Service*1. Devotional Period*

- Hymn: "The Church's One Foundation"
- Scriptures: Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:41-43; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:11-13; Colossians 1:18
- Prayer

2. Business Session

- Constituting Council report. The council recommends to proceed with constituting the mission congregation into a church. This report is not necessary if the Constituting Council consists only of the partner church(es).
- Recommendation from the partner church(es). The Constituting Council approves this recommendation. Adoption of this recommendation formally constitutes the new church.
- Election of church officers and committees
 - a. The moderator of the Constituting Council may serve as temporary moderator
 - b. Call a pastor according to a previously adopted plan
 - c. Names of church officers and committees may be presented by the Nominating Committee for election.
- Presentation of property title by partner church(es)
- Adoption of constitution and bylaws
- Adoption of calendar of activities and budget

3. Worship Service

- Hymn: "To God be the Glory"
- Offering for the Cooperative Program
- Sermon (Include a charge to the pastor and the people. Emphasize cooperative privileges.)
- Invitation for new members
- Presentation of names of members who are transferring from the partner church to the new church membership roll
- Reception of new members
- Benediction
- Right hand of fellowship given members of the new church by Constituting Council members and visitors

A Second Sample of a Constitution Service

- Hymn
- Scripture reading

- Prayer
- Reading of the mission congregation's history
- Welcome and guest recognition
- Statement of meeting's purpose
- Recommendation to constitute (The partner church recommends that the mission congregation constitute.)
- Vote to constitute (Members of the new church vote.)
- Adoption of church covenant
- Adoption of articles of faith, constitution, and bylaws
- Vote to affiliate (Vote is not necessary if the constitution states that the church is affiliated with the local association, state convention, and Southern Baptist Convention.)
- Recognition of charter members
- Election of officers (Nominating Committee should present names of moderator, clerk, pastor, teachers, and other officers.)
- Partner-church vote (Partner church votes to recognize the new congregation as a constituted church.)
- Music
- Message or charge to new church
- Invitation for new members
- Offering
- Benediction
- Right hand of fellowship (to members of the newly constituted church.)
- Fellowship time

The new Baptist church should immediately petition to affiliate with the association for fellowship and support. Some associations provide petitionary letters. The church clerk may send a news article and pictures to the Baptist state paper and local newspapers.

HOW TO HELP A NEW CHURCH

Purpose This resource awareness sheet is to help the associational church extension director assist new congregations as they plan to constitute.

Procedure Materials. Order or make available, through the associational library, resource items that will be helpful to congregations preparing to constitute.
Date Ordered _____

Become Informed

- Examine resource materials and be able to point congregations to needed references.
- Attend several church constituting services.
- Be aware of local legal requirements for incorporating a church or changing its name.

Establish a Church Constituting Resource File

This file could include:

- A collection of church constitutions.
- Sample constitution services.
- Resource items listed in these materials.
- Suggestions from recently constituted churches related to developing a constitution and planning a constitution service.
- Legal requirements for incorporating a church. This file should be available to congregations through the associational library or media center.
- Information from your state missions department on constituting, a sample church constitution, and a sample constituting service.

Develop Awareness

- Prepare a list of unconstituted congregations and partner churches with their new congregation project directors.
- Contact these congregations and the new congregation project directors to inform them of available resources related to constituting a church.
- Be prepared to offer guidance as to the proper involvement of the association's director of missions and other leaders related to constituting a church.
- Share with new congregations the procedure to affiliate with the association, state convention, and Southern Baptist Convention (usually the association can supply a form).
- Be available to help new congregations plan constitution services, as well as the sequence of events leading up to the constitution.
- Help advertise constitution celebrations within the association.

SAMPLE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

CONSTITUTION

Preamble

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

I. Name

This body shall be known as the _____ Baptist Church of _____ located at _____.

II. Objectives

To be a dynamic spiritual organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world.

To be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership.

To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.

To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man.

To be a church that ministers unselfishly to people in the community and the world in Jesus' name.

To be a church with the purpose of being Christlike in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the lordship of Christ.

III. Statement of Basic Beliefs

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired word of God and the basis for our beliefs. This church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of "The Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963. We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the

good news of salvation to lost mankind. The ordinances of the church are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. (See Article VI of the Bylaws.)

IV. Church Covenant

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

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we move from this place we will as soon as possible unite with

some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

V. Polity and Relationships

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership. (See Article I of the Bylaws.) All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.

This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation common among Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the association, the state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

BYLAWS

I. Church Membership

Section 1. General

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

Section 2. Candidacy

Any person may offer himself or herself as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates shall be presented to the church at any regular church service for membership in any of the following ways:

- (1) By profession of faith and for baptism according to the policies of this church.
- (2) By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist church.
- (3) By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and baptism in a Baptist church when no letter is obtainable.

Should there be any dissent as to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the membership

committee for investigation and the making of a recommendation to the church within thirty (30) days. A three-fourths vote of those church members present and voting shall be required to elect such candidates to membership.

Section 3. New Member Orientation

New members of this church are expected to participate in the church's new member orientation.

Section 4. Rights of Members

(1) Every member of the church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present or provision has been made for absentee balloting.

(2) Every member of the church is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the church.

(3) Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.

Section 5. Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- (1) Death of the member.
- (2) Transfer to another Baptist church.
- (3) Exclusion by action of this church.
- (4) Erasure upon request or proof of membership in a church of another denomination.

Section 6. Discipline

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastor, other members of the church staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

Should some serious condition exist that would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the pastor and the deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accordance with Matthew 18. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to exclude a member, a two-thirds vote of the members present is

required; and the church may proceed to declare the person to be no longer in the membership of the church. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance.

The church may restore to membership any person previously excluded, upon request of the excluded person, and by vote of the church upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation.

II. Church Officers and Committees

All who serve as officers of the church and those who serve on church committees shall be members of this church.

Section 1. Church Officers

The officers of this church shall be:

- (1) The pastor
- (2) The church staff
- (3) The deacons
- (4) A moderator
- (5) A clerk, a treasurer
- (6) The trustees

The pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff to perform their tasks.

The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such he works with the deacons and church staff to:

- (1) Lead the church in the achievement of its mission.
- (2) Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
- (3) Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given.

A Pastor Selection Committee shall be elected by the church to seek out a suitable pastor, and its recommendations will constitute a nomination. Any church member has the privilege of making other nominations according to the policy established by the church. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one name at a

time. Election shall be by ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present being necessary for a choice. The pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request. He shall preside at meetings of this church, and if so designated may serve as moderator in all business meetings in keeping with the rules of order authorized in these bylaws.

The pastor may relinquish the office as pastor by giving at least two weeks notice to the church at the time of resignation. The church may declare the office of pastor to be vacant. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given. The meeting may be called upon the recommendation of a majority of the Personnel Committee and the deacons or by written petition signed by not less than one-fourth of the resident church members. The moderator for this meeting shall be designated by the members present by majority vote, and he shall be someone other than the pastor. The vote to declare the office vacant shall be by secret ballot; an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present being necessary to declare the office vacant. Except in instances of gross misconduct by the pastor so excluded from office, the church will compensate the pastor with not less than one-twelfth of his total annual compensation. The termination shall be immediate and the compensation shall be rendered in not more than 30 days.

The ministerial staff shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for such offices. A job description shall be written when the need for a staff member is determined. Those staff members of whom the church requires evidence of a personal call of God to minister shall be recommended to the church by the Personnel Committee and called by church action. At the time of resignation, not less than a two-week notice shall be given to the church. The church may vote to vacate such positions upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee, such termination being immediate, and the compensation conditions being the same as for the pastor, except that the amount shall relate to the individual's compensation.

Non-ministerial staff members shall be employed as the church determines the need for

their services. The Church Personnel Committee shall have the authority to employ and to terminate services of non-ministerial staff members. Such employment and termination of services shall be with the recommendation of the supervising staff member and, as appropriate, with the consultation of related committees of the church.

The church shall elect deacons by ballot at regular business meetings of the church. There shall be one deacon elected for assigned service for every 12 to 15 church families.

Deacons shall serve on a rotation basis. Each year the assigned term of office of one-third of the number of deacons shall expire, and election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the deacons such numbers as the church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect a deacon to fill the unexpired term. After serving a three-year term assignment, a deacon shall be eligible for reelection only after the lapse of at least one year. There shall be no obligation to constitute as an assigned deacon one who has been a deacon in another church; but in such instances as one might be chosen by this church for assignment as a deacon, his previous ordination by another church of like faith and order shall suffice for this church.

In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice in the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. Their task is to serve with the pastor and staff in performing the pastoral ministry tasks of:

- (1) Leading the church in the achievement of its mission.
- (2) Proclaiming the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
- (3) Caring for church members and other people in the community.

The church shall elect annually a moderator as its presiding officer. In the absence of the moderator, the chairman of deacons shall preside; or in the absence of both, the clerk shall call the church to order and preside for the election of an acting moderator.

The church shall elect annually a clerk as its

clerk officer. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a register of names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal, death, or erasure, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall issue letters of dismission voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give required notice of all meetings where notice is necessary, as indicated in these bylaws. The clerk shall be responsible for preparing the annual letter of the church to the association.

The church may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to a church secretary who will assist the elected clerk. All church records are church property and shall be kept in the church office when an office is maintained.

The church shall elect annually a church treasurer as its financial officer. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of vouchers approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to render to the church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements of the preceding month. The treasurer's report and records shall be audited annually by an Auditing Committee or public accountant. The treasurer shall be bonded, the church paying for the bond.

Upon rendering the annual account at the end of each fiscal year and its acceptance and approval by the church, the records shall be delivered by the treasurer to the church clerk, who shall keep and preserve the account as a part of the permanent records of the church.

The church shall elect three or more trustees to serve as legal officers for the church. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote of the church authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property. When the signatures of trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of

property, or other legal documents related to church-approved matters.

Trustees shall serve on a rotation basis, with one new trustee being elected every three years.

Section 2. Church Committees

The committees of this church shall be a Nominating Committee, a Personnel Committee, a Church Property and Space Committee, a Stewardship Committee, a Missions Committee, and such other regular and special committees as the church shall authorize. Additional regular committees may be added by the amendment procedure prescribed within these bylaws. All church committee members shall be recommended by the church Nominating Committee and elected by the church unless otherwise specified within these bylaws. Committee members shall serve on a three-year rotation basis with one-third to be elected each year.

(1) The Nominating Committee coordinates the staffing of all church leadership positions filled by volunteer workers, unless otherwise specified herein. Individuals considered for any such positions shall first be approved by the Nominating Committee before they are approached for recruitment. The Nominating Committee shall present to the church for election all who accept the invitation to serve.

(2) The Personnel Committee assists the church in matters related to employed personnel administration, including those called by church action. Their work includes such areas as determining staff needs, employment, salaries, benefits, other compensation, policies, job descriptions, and personnel services.

(3) The Church Property and Space Committee assists the church in matters related to properties administration. Its work includes such areas as maintaining all church properties for ready use, recommending policies regarding use of properties, consulting with the Personnel Committee and the church staff regarding the needs for, and the employment of, maintenance personnel, and regarding the assignment of supervisory responsibility to appropriate personnel.

(4) The Stewardship Committee develops and recommends an overall stewardship development plan, a unified church budget, and budget subscription plans. It advises and recommends in

the administration of the gifts of church members and others, using sound principles of financial management. It works with the treasurer in the preparation and presentation to the church of required reports regarding the financial affairs of the church.

(5) The On Mission team (also known as Missions Committee) seeks to discover possibilities for local missions projects, shares findings with church program organizations, and serves the church in establishing and conducting such missions projects as may be assigned to it.

III. Church Program Organizations

The church shall maintain programs of Bible teaching; church member training; church leader training; new member orientation; mission education, action, and support; and music education, training, and performance. All organizations related to the church programs shall be under church control, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church, and all program activities subject to church coordination and approval. The church shall provide the human resources, the physical resources, and the financial resources for the appropriate advancement of these programs.

(1) The Sunday School shall be the basic organization for the Bible teaching program. Its tasks shall be to teach the biblical revelation, reach people for Christ and church membership, perform the functions of the church within its constituency, provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

The Sunday School shall be organized by departments and/or classes, as appropriate for all ages, and shall be conducted under the direction of the Sunday School director elected by the church.

(2) The church training organization shall serve as the training unit of the church. Its tasks shall be to train church members to perform the functions of the church; train church leaders; orient new church members; teach Christian theology, Christian ethics, Christian history, and church polity and organization; and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

Church training shall be organized by departments for all ages and conducted under the direction of a general director.

(3) Woman's Missionary Union shall be the mission education, mission action, and mission support organization of the church for women, young women, girls, and preschool children. Its tasks shall be to teach missions, engage in mission action, support world missions through praying and giving, and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

Woman's Missionary Union shall have such officers and organizations as the program requires.

(4) The Brotherhood shall be the church's organization for mission education, mission action, and mission support for men, young men, and boys. Its tasks shall be to teach missions, engage in mission action, support world missions through praying and giving, and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

The Brotherhood shall have such officers and organization as the program requires.

(5) The Church Music organization, under the direction of the church-elected music director, shall be the music education, training, and performance organization of the church. Its tasks shall be to teach music; train people to lead, sing, and play music; provide music in the church and community; and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

The Church Music program shall have such officers and organization as the program requires.

IV. Church Program Services

The church shall maintain media center services and recreation services for the purpose of enriching and extending the ministries and programs of the church.

(1) The media center service will be the resource center for the church. Its personnel will seek to provide and promote the use of printed and audiovisual resources. They also will provide consultation to church leaders and members in the use of printed and audiovisual resources.

(2) The church recreation service will seek to meet the recreational needs of members and groups. Its personnel will provide recreation activities, consultation, leadership assistance, and resources.

V. Church Council

The Church Council shall serve the church by leading in planning, coordinating, conducting, and evaluating the ministries and programs of the church and its organizations.

The primary functions of the Church Council shall be to recommend to the church suggested objectives and church goals; to review and coordinate ministry and program plans recommended by church officers, organizations, and committees; to recommend to the church the use of leadership, calendar time, and other resources according to program priorities; and to evaluate achievements in terms of church objectives and goals.

Regular members of the Church Council shall be the pastor, other church staff members, directors of church program organizations, media center director, recreation director, chairman of deacons, church officers, and chairmen of church committees.

All matters agreed upon by the council that call for action not already approved shall be referred to the church for approval or disapproval.

VI. Church Ordinances

Section 1. *Baptism*

This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

(1) Baptism shall be by immersion in water.

(2) The pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism. The deacons shall assist in the preparation for, and the observance of, baptism.

(3) Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.

(4) A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastor and/or staff or deacons. If negative interest is ascertained on the part of the candidate, he or she shall be deleted from those awaiting baptism.

Section 2. *The Lord's Supper*

The church shall observe the Lord's Supper quarterly, the first Sunday of the quarter, unless

otherwise scheduled by the church. The observance shall alternate between the morning and the evening services of worship. The pastor and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper, the deacons being responsible for the physical preparations.

VII. Church Meetings

Section 1. *Worship Services*

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening for the worship of Almighty God. Prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services. The pastor shall direct the services for all the church members and for all others who may choose to attend.

Section 2. *Special Services*

Revival services and any other church meetings essential to the advancement of the church's objectives shall be placed on the church calendar.

Section 3. *Regular Business Meetings*

The church shall hold regular business meetings monthly on a designated Wednesday night.

Section 4. *Special Business Meetings*

The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. A one-week notice must be given for the specially called business meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The notice shall include the subject, the date, and time and place; and it must be given in such a manner that all resident members have an opportunity to know of the meeting.

Section 5. *Quorum*

The quorum consists of those members who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called.

Section 6. *Parliamentary Rules*

Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church.

VIII. Church Finances

Section 1. *Budget*

The Stewardship Committee, in consultation with the Church Council, shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for all local and other expenses. Offering envelopes will be provided for members' use.

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts. Annually there shall be opportunity provided to secure worthy commitments of financial support from the church members.

Section 2. *Accounting Procedures*

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer, or financial secretary, and be properly recorded on the books of the church. Those who have responsibility that involves actual handling of funds shall be bonded, the church paying the bond. (See Article II, Section 1 regarding the church treasurer.)

A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the Stewardship Committee.

Section 3. *Fiscal Year*

The church fiscal year shall run concurrently with the church year which begins on October 1 and ends on September 30.

IX. Church Operations Manual

A special committee of the church shall develop a church operations manual to include church policies and procedures and organization charts depicting lines of responsibility in the administration of the church. The manual shall be kept in the church office and made available for use by any member of the church. The church secretary shall maintain the manual. The Church Council or a special committee shall review the manual at least annually, with authority to recommend changes for the church to consider. Any church member or church organization may initiate suggested changes in the manual.

Addition, revision, or deletion of church policies requires:

- (1) Recommendation of the church officer or organization to whose areas of assignment the policy relates.
- (2) Discussion by the church council.
- (3) Approval by the church.

Procedures may be added, revised, or deleted by:

- (1) Recommendation of the church officer or organization to whose areas of assignment the procedures relate.
- (2) Approval by the church council.
- (3) Approval of the church, if the church council deems it necessary.

X. Amendments

Changes in the constitution and bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting. Amendments to the constitution shall be by two-thirds vote of church members present. Amendments to the bylaws shall have a concurrence of a majority of the members present and voting.

Prepared by Charles A. Tidwell, professor of Church Administration, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. Used by permission from LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, Tenn.

SAMPLE BUDGET

SAMPLE MINISTRY ACTION BUDGET OF _____ BAPTIST CHURCH

Expense Report

<i>I. Our World Missions Ministry</i>	This Month	Year-to-Date
Cooperative Program _____ %	_____	_____
Association Missions _____ %	_____	_____
Local Missions _____ %	_____	_____
 <i>II. Pastoral Ministry</i>		
Personal Income		
Pastor's Income	_____	_____
Pastor's Housing	_____	_____
Protection Benefits		
Medical Coverage	_____	_____
Retirement Program	_____	_____
 <i>III. Education and Outreach Ministries</i>		
Bible Study Program: Literature and Supplies	_____	_____
Discipleship Training: Literature and Supplies	_____	_____
Mission Education: Literature and Supplies	_____	_____
Leadership Development	_____	_____
Outreach	_____	_____
Worship, Resources and Music Ministry	_____	_____
 <i>IV. Supportive Ministries</i>		
Office Supplies	_____	_____
Postage, Printing, et cetera	_____	_____
Publicity	_____	_____
Office Equipment	_____	_____
Secretary's Salary	_____	_____
Secretary's FICA	_____	_____
Worker's Compensation Insurance	_____	_____

	This Month	Year-to-Date
<i>V. Ministry Related Expenses</i>		
Auto Expense	_____	_____
Convention Expense	_____	_____
Hospitality Expense	_____	_____
Library Expense	_____	_____
Continuing Education Expense	_____	_____
<i>VI. Building and Grounds Ministry</i>		
Janitor's Salary	_____	_____
Janitor's FICA	_____	_____
Utilities	_____	_____
Insurance	_____	_____
Debt Retirement	_____	_____
Rental	_____	_____
Equipment and Supplies	_____	_____
Total	_____	_____
Income Report		
Local Undesignated Income	_____	_____
Income from other Sources	_____	_____
Total Undesignated Income	_____	_____
Designated Income	_____	_____
Total Income	_____	_____
Checkbook Balance (BOM)	_____	_____
Plus Deposits for Month	_____	_____
Less Expenditures for Month	_____	_____
Checkbook Balance (EOM)	_____	_____
Balance in Other Accounts	_____	_____

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