



# Constitution & Bylaws

2024 Revision Proposal

## **CHURCH COVENANT OF FRUIT COVE BAPTIST CHURCH**

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 this 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 disciplines; 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 personal 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 dealing, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to be Christ-like in all our actions; 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 teaching of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove ourselves 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.

# **CONSTITUTION OF FRUIT COVE BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **PREAMBLE**

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

## **I. NAME**

This congregation shall continue to be known as the FRUIT COVE BAPTIST CHURCH, located at 501 State Road 13, St. Johns, Florida 32259, hereafter referred to as “The Church.”

The Church is incorporated under the laws of the State of Florida as a non-profit religious organization and is recognized by the state and federal government as a Section 501(C)(3) organization.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Church will be to fulfill the mission of a New Testament church as expressed in the following scripture:

Matthew 28:19-20: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (CSB).

Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (CSB).

2 Corinthians 5:18-19: “Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.<sup>19</sup> That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us” (CSB).

In order to accomplish our biblical mission, the Church hereby establishes the following mission statements:

- A. To be a dynamic spiritual body empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with the people of our church, community, state, and the world.
- B. To be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership.

- C. To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers through prayer and Bible study.
- D. To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man.
- E. To be a church which ministers to persons in the community and the world.
- F. To be a church whose purpose is to be Christ-like 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 written 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 2000. We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation with all mankind. The ordinances of the Church are Believer's Baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper.

### **IV. POLITY AND RELATIONSHIPS**

The government of the Church is vested in the members of the Church. All program organizations, or committees, empowered by the Church shall report to and be accountable to the Church, unless otherwise instructed by Church action or the Church Bylaws.

This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Southern Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical, the Church will cooperate with and support First Coast Churches, the Florida Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

### **V. AMENDMENTS**

Changes to this Constitution shall require a super-majority vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of the church members present and voting upon such changes.

**BYLAWS  
OF  
FRUIT COVE BAPTIST CHURCH**

**ARTICLE I: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1: General**

This is a sovereign and democratic Southern 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 the Church.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of the Church and the condition of such membership as outlined in this document.

**Section 2: Candidacy**

- A. Any person may present himself/herself as a candidate for Church membership by:
  - 1. Profession of faith and believer's baptism by immersion.
  - 2. Receipt of a letter of recommendation from another Southern Baptist church.
  - 3. Statement of a prior conversion experience and believer's baptism by immersion; or by statement that records of a prior membership in a Southern Baptist church have been lost or destroyed.
- B. Candidates for membership under circumstances other than those in paragraph (A) will be submitted to the Executive Leadership Team prior to recommendation to the Church in a regular business meeting.
- C. Should there be any dissent as to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the Lead Pastor and/or others as he may designate for review prior to recommendation to the Church by the Executive Leadership Team.

**Section 3: Membership Process**

Persons may be accepted into the full fellowship and privileges of Church membership when the following criteria are met:

- A. Receipt of request for candidacy as specified in Article 1, Section 2 of these bylaws;
- B. Meet with a member of the Ministry Leadership Staff to ensure evidence of salvation and baptism by immersion;

- C. Completion of a new members' orientation class;
- D. Affirmation of the Church's Purpose and Statement of Basic Beliefs (see Articles II & III of the Constitution);
- E. Election to Church membership by a simple majority vote (i.e., 50% plus 1) of the members present in a regular business meeting upon the recommendation of the Executive Leadership Team.

#### **Section 4: Duties of Church Members**

- A. Each member shall be expected to be in harmony with the Church's Purpose and Statement of Basic Beliefs (see Articles II & III of the Constitution).
- B. Members are expected to grow spiritually using the following goals:
  1. Meet with God daily in a time of prayer.
  2. Let God confront them daily through the Scriptures.
  3. Grow in love for the Christian community and all people, remembering the command, "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another" (John 13:34 CSB).
  4. Participate in worship weekly.
  5. Be a vital participating member of the ministries of the Church.
  6. Give proportionally, with the tithe as the minimum giving goal for each member.
  7. Share their faith individually by word and deed.
- C. Members are expected to attend worship services and other ministry offerings of the Church. Members who fail to regularly attend worship services and other ministry opportunities—or who fail to achieve the goals set forth in paragraphs (A) or (B) above—may be subject to losing their rights to vote and otherwise participate in church business.

#### **Section 5: Rights of Church Members**

Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, each member sixteen (16) years old and over shall have the right to vote in all Church business matters and shall have the right to make motions about all the business matters of the Church in accordance with Roberts' Rules of Order. Each member (family) will be given access to the Constitution and Bylaws. Regardless of the members' choice

to review such documents, the terms and provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws shall be binding upon all church members.

### **Section 6: Termination of Membership**

Membership shall automatically terminate should the member:

- A. Die.
- B. Request a transfer of their letter to another Southern Baptist church or join another church.
- C. Request termination.
- D. Be excluded by action of church discipline.

### **Section 7: Church Discipline**

It shall be the practice of the Church to make every reasonable effort to assist any troubled member. The Lead Pastor, Ministry Leadership Staff, and Deacons shall be available for counsel and guidance. The intent of church discipline shall be to effect reconciliation.

- A. In all cases of personal difficulty between members of the Church, the parties involved shall endeavor to bring about reconciliation in the manner prescribed by our Lord as recorded in Matthew 5:23-24: “So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift” (CSB). Also, Matthew 18:15-17: “If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he won’t listen, take one or two others with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. <sup>17</sup>If he doesn’t pay attention to them, tell the church. If he doesn’t pay attention even to the church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you” (CSB).
- B. For offenses which cannot be reconciled personally, member(s) may bring such cases to the Lead Pastor or Deacon Leadership. For any offense which may be against the best interest and general welfare of the Church, the Lead Pastor and Deacons shall seek to counsel with all parties involved and take every reasonable measure to resolve the charge. All such proceedings shall be guided by the Word of God and a spirit of Christian love, fairness, and reconciliation.
- C. In every case in which a member is charged with an offense not resolved under the provisions of paragraphs (A) and (B) above, the Lead Pastor and Deacon Leadership shall invite all concerned parties to meet and review the charges and offer such explanation and evidence as may be appropriate. After careful review

and prayer, the Lead Pastor and Deacon Leadership shall decide the recommendations (up to and including termination of Church membership) to be made to the Church. All parties shall be duly notified of the proposed course of action. The Church shall adopt or reject the recommendation without discussion through a secret ballot. If the Lead Pastor or Deacon Leadership are involved in the alleged offense, their roles (as set forth above) shall be performed by the Executive Pastor or Administrative Pastor/Director (to replace Lead Pastor) and Trustees (to replace Deacon Leadership).

- D. Restoration. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any reason, which has made it necessary for the Church to exclude him or her may, upon his or her request, be restored to membership by a vote of the Church upon evidence of his or her repentance and reformation.
- E. If any member disseminates any view of doctrine not in harmony with the statement in Article III of this Constitution (Statement of Basic Beliefs) and shall persist in the practice after proper effort to reclaim him/her, it shall be considered an offense subject to disciplinary actions.

### **Section 8: Dispute Resolution**

Understanding that church congregations are made up of human beings—each of whom was born with a sinful, self-centered nature—the church recognizes that disputes among members (as well as disputes between members and the church staff) are inevitable. All church members will use their best efforts to resolve such disputes, claims, questions, or disagreement in a manner that befits Christians, and they shall consult and negotiate with each other in good faith; recognizing their mutual interests not to disgrace the name of Christ and seeking to reach a just and equitable solution.

To that end, all disputes, claims, questions, or disagreements arising out of or relating to these bylaws—*or any other matter*— shall be subject to the dispute resolution framework laid out in these bylaws. Moreover, the members of this church expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bring any civil disagreement involving this church or any of its members before a court of law, except that any judgment upon an award rendered by an arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

In an effort to follow the scripture’s mandates regarding legal actions against fellow-believers—while simultaneously preserving the right to have one’s dispute heard and decided—the collective membership of this Church agrees (*to the extent possible*) to handle all disputes in the following manner:

- A. **Personal Attempts.** When any dispute arises between one or more members of this church, the involved member(s) will take time to pray about the basis for the dispute as well as the other members involved. After such prayer, the member(s) will approach the other member(s) with whom they have the disagreement and attempt to work through the dispute in a spirit of love and understanding as described in



Section 7, Paragraph (A). If the attempt to address the dispute directly does not result in a resolution, one or more of the members involved will approach the most senior member of the church staff (seniority determined by position) not involved in the dispute (or—if the entire staff is involved—the most senior member of the Deacon Leadership (seniority determined by position) not involved in the dispute), and explain the dispute. The person(s) approached will select an appropriate church leader to meet with the disputing members separately. If this effort does not result in a resolution of the dispute, the members involved will proceed to follow the formal dispute resolution procedure set forth in sections (B) through (G) below:

- B. Submission to Mediation.** Should the dispute resolution steps found in section (A) above not lead to a full and complete resolution of the issues in dispute, the parties shall submit any remaining dispute to mediation. The mediation (i.e., where a neutral third person acts to encourage the resolution of a dispute) is an informal, nonbinding, non-adversarial process with the objective of helping the disputing parties reach a mutually acceptable and voluntary agreement. Such mediation shall take place within thirty (30) days from the date any member involved in the dispute submits a written request for mediation to the Church office (but not before the procedure set forth in section [A] has been completed). The mediation shall be conducted and facilitated by a neutral third-party, chosen by the parties to the dispute. Should the parties not be able to agree upon a mediator, the Lead Pastor—provided he is not a party to the dispute—shall pick a mediator to facilitate the resolution. Should the Lead Pastor be a party to the dispute, the person to select a mediator will be the first in the following list not to be involved in the dispute: Executive Pastor, Administrative Pastor, Associate Pastor (determined in order of tenure), Deacon Leadership (in order of position), and then each active Deacon (such deacons listed in reverse order of seniority). The basic process for conducting the mediation shall be as adopted by the Lead Pastor and the body of active Deacons.
- C. Notice of Arbitration.** If the dispute is not resolved through the procedure set forth above within a period of sixty (60) days from the date mediation is requested, then either party may notify the other party(ies) of their desire to submit the disputes, claims, questions, or differences to binding arbitration. Arbitration, as used here, means a process by which a dispute is heard by an impartial third person (or several persons), chosen by the parties, whose decision the parties have agreed to accept.
- D. Limitations on Arbitration Decisions.** Should any dispute involve matters of church discipline, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures for church discipline were followed. Should any dispute involve the removal from office of the Lead Pastor or any church staff member or officer, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the appropriate procedures as outlines in these Bylaws were followed.
- E. Arbitration Procedures.** The Procedures for Arbitration shall be as adopted by the Lead Pastor and the Deacons.

- F. **Disputes Involving Parties Who Are Not Members.** The Church, its employees, and its members all agree to endeavor to employ these procedures in every situation in which a dispute arises—regardless of who or what may be the adverse party. While it is possible that non-members may refuse to abide by some or all of these procedures, the church and its members will make every effort to encourage the use of these procedures. In no event will a member refuse any non-member’s offer to follow the framework set forth above.
- G. **Disputes Involving Former Members.** The Church and its members hereby agree that the dispute resolution procedure outlined above shall apply to all members and shall survive the termination of their membership in the Church. Specifically, all members of the Church recognize and acknowledge that, should they resign their membership—or be removed from membership – such resignation or removal shall not negate that member’s obligation to follow the dispute resolution framework set forth above for any and all disputes arising out of their membership in the Church.

## **ARTICLE II: GENERAL CHURCH OFFICERS AND ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP**

All officers, Deacons, and Ministry Leadership Staff of the Church shall be members of Fruit Cove Baptist Church. The Church shall have other documents relating to policies and procedures, but should any conflict arise between such documents and these Bylaws, the Bylaws shall prevail.

### **Section 1: Lead Pastor**

#### **A. Duties**

1. The Lead Pastor is responsible for leading the Church to function as a New Testament Baptist church. The Lead Pastor will lead the congregation, organizations, and the Church staff to perform their assigned ministry tasks.
2. The Lead Pastor is the leader of pastoral ministries of the Church. As such, he works with the Deacons and the Church staff to:
  - a. Lead the Church in achievement of its mission;
  - b. Lead the Church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, and ministry;
  - c. Proclaim the Gospel to believers and non-believers;
  - d. Care for members and other persons in the community.
3. The Lead Pastor shall lead the Executive Leadership Team consisting of the Lead Pastor, Executive Pastor or Administrative Pastor/Director, Worship Pastor, and other Ministry Leadership Staff as needed.
4. The Lead Pastor shall meet with the Deacons annually to evaluate the spiritual life of the Church relative to its mission, ministries, and spiritual growth, and for prayer and planning.
5. The Lead Pastor will be the chief administrative officer of the Church. As such, he will:
  - a. Oversee administrative functions of the Church;
  - b. Serve as the President of the Corporation (Fruit Cove Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, Inc.).

B. Procedures for Selection:

1. A Lead Pastor shall be chosen and called by the Church whenever a vacancy occurs or is announced by Lead Pastor. The election shall take place at a business meeting called for that purpose.
  - a. A Lead Pastor Search Committee, consisting of at least seven members from the Church at large, shall be selected by the Nominating Committee, reviewed by the Deacons, and elected by the Church. The church shall vote on the entire slate of nominees at one time. If the slate is not approved by the membership, a new slate shall be presented.
  - b. The Search Committee shall seek out only those candidates for the position of Lead Pastor who:
    - 1) are cooperating Southern Baptists;
    - 2) are scripturally qualified (e.g. – I Timothy 3 and Titus 1);
    - 3) are exemplary in their daily life;
    - 4) and subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
  - c. The Lead Pastor Search Committee shall prayerfully seek a minister who will be interviewed by the Deacons before presentation to the Church for consideration. The Committee shall bring only one candidate at a time for the consideration of the Church.
  - d. Any member has the privilege of making recommendations to the Lead Pastor Search Committee.
  - e. Voting shall be at a called business meeting in conjunction with a regular Sunday service by secret ballot with an affirmative vote of three fourths (75%) of those church members present and voting to issue a call.
2. The Lead Pastor Search Committee will be directed by the Stewardship Committee and the Personnel Committee regarding the salary and benefits, moving, and miscellaneous expenses associated with calling a Lead Pastor. This will be set prior to the bringing of a candidate for consideration.
3. The Lead Pastor is called for an indefinite period of time.
4. The office of the Lead Pastor will be vacated by:
  - a. Death of the Lead Pastor.

- b. Resignation of the Lead Pastor (actual or announced).
  - c. Termination of the Lead Pastor by action of the Church in a business meeting called for that purpose.
5. The office of Lead Pastor will be temporarily vacated:
- a. In the event of long-term illness or the disability of the Lead Pastor. The Deacons will make interim recommendations to the Church at a called business meeting.
  - b. In the event a leave of absence is recommended by the Deacons and approved by Church action.
6. If a desire to remove the Lead Pastor arises, it shall be brought to the active body of Deacons for assessment. The Deacons shall have up to thirty (30) days to study the reasons suggested for removal. Such study efforts may involve interviewing church members and other individuals. If requested by the Deacons, the Lead Pastor shall cooperate with the Deacons consistent with these Bylaws and Matthew 18:15-17 to bring both clarity and resolution to the situation and/or issue. The 30-day study period will culminate in a vote of the Deacon Body, and result in one of three outcomes:
- a. If three fourths (75%) or more of the voting body of active Deacons find that there is good cause to call for the removal of the Lead Pastor, the Deacon Chairman will work with the Moderator to call for and schedule a meeting of the church membership. At such meeting, a formal recommendation of removal from the body of active Deacons will be made to the Church. At such a meeting, the church members will vote on the removal of the Lead Pastor. Removal will result if a majority of votes cast by the membership approves such removal.
  - b. If less than three fourths (75%), but more than a simple majority, of the body of active Deacons find that there is good cause to call for the removal of the Lead Pastor, the Deacon Chairman will work with the Moderator to call for and schedule a meeting of the church membership to:
    - 1) Notify the Church of the result of the study (i.e., they are not recommending removal of the Pastor), and
    - 2) Recommend any other appropriate action they deem necessary or advisable to address and repair any relational or spiritual damage that may have occurred because of the allegation/study.

- c. If less than a simple majority of the votes cast find there are sufficient grounds for removal, no further action is required.
  - d. In any event, the Deacons may accept the resignation of the Lead Pastor in lieu of removal. In the event of resignation, no further action regarding removal will be required unless the situation involves a confirmed allegation of:
    - 1) a moral failure;
    - 2) an act which amounts to a violation of law.
  - e. In such instances, the Church should be notified of the underlying reason(s) for the resignation. Such notice to the Church will not violate any privileges or confidentiality that may apply to some or all of the particular situation.
7. In the event of the death of the Lead Pastor, continuing compensation and benefits for the family shall be determined by the Personnel Committee, Stewardship Committee, and the Deacons. Upon the resignation or dismissal of the Lead Pastor, compensation and benefits will ordinarily be continued for a maximum of thirty days from the effective date of resignation/dismissal. In the event the Church dismisses the Lead Pastor, his responsibilities will terminate upon dismissal.

## **Section 2: Interim Pastor – Procedures for Selection**

### **A. Selection**

The Interim Pastor Search Committee shall consist of a committee selected from the Deacon body. This committee shall prayerfully seek a suitable minister as Interim Pastor. He will be interviewed by the full Deacon body before presentation to the Church for consideration. Provided a majority of the Deacons approve of the candidate, he will be presented to the membership of the Church. The Church will consider one minister at a time. The Interim Pastor shall be a cooperating Southern Baptist, scripturally qualified, and exemplary in his life.

### **B. Duties and Restrictions**

- 1. Preach Sunday morning message;
- 2. Do pastoral visitation (as requested);
- 3. Attend staff meetings (by invitation);
- 4. Assist in worship planning;

5. Does not have administrative oversight of the Church.

### **Section 3: Other Ministry Leadership Staff**

#### **A. Duties**

1. The Ministry Leadership Staff is comprised of Pastors, Ministers, and Directors who oversee and/or lead ministry areas or departments within the Church.
2. The duties of the Ministry Leadership Staff shall be formulated by the Personnel Committee and the Executive Leadership Team and approved by the Church. A copy of their job descriptions shall be in the Staff Structure Handbook.
3. The Ministry Leadership Staff is ultimately responsible to the Lead Pastor. They are expected to effectively perform their work according to their job descriptions, and to lead the Church in the achievement of its mission. New ministry leadership staff positions ultimately require Church approval.
4. Oversight of the Church staff may be delegated by the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor and Executive Leadership Team shall seek the counsel and approval of the Personnel Committee when changing or creating new staff positions.

#### **B. Procedures for Selection**

1. When vacancies in the Ministry Leadership Staff occur, the Lead Pastor and the Personnel Committee shall search out qualified Ministry Leadership Staff replacements or recommend to the Nominating Committee the creation of a Search Committee for such. They shall seek out only such candidates who:
  - a. are cooperating Southern Baptists,
  - b. are scripturally qualified,
  - c. are exemplary in their daily life,
  - d. and subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
2. Each candidate shall be interviewed by the Personnel Committee and the Deacons, as well as the standing committee(s) with whom they will work, if any. Upon such review and affirmation, the candidate may then be presented by the Personnel Committee or appropriate Search Committee to

the Church for consideration. Voting shall be at a called business meeting in conjunction with a regular Sunday service by secret ballot with an affirmative vote of three fourths (75%) of those church members present and voting to issue a call.

3. Ministry Leadership Staff may have the following designations:
  - a. Associate Pastor or Executive Pastor, for ordained men;
  - b. Minister or Director, for ordained men and non-ordained staff.
4. Ministry Leadership Staff are called for an indefinite period of time.
5. Vacancies will occur by:
  - a. Death of a staff member.
  - b. Resignation of the staff member (actual or announced).
  - c. Termination of the staff member by action of the Church in a business meeting called for that purpose. Procedures for termination of Church staff shall be defined in the Employment Handbook.
6. Temporary Vacancies will occur:
  - a. In the event of long-term illness or the disability of the staff member. The Personnel Committee will make interim recommendation(s) to the Church at a called business meeting.
  - b. In the event a leave of absence is recommended by the Personnel Committee and approved by the Church.
7. In the event of the death of a Ministry Leadership Staff member, continued compensation and benefits for the family shall be determined by the Stewardship Committee and the Personnel Committee. Upon the resignation or dismissal of a Ministry Leadership Staff member, compensation and benefits will ordinarily be continued for a maximum of thirty days from the effective date of resignation/dismissal. In the event the Church dismisses a Ministry Leadership Staff member, his/her responsibilities will terminate upon dismissal.

#### **Section 4: Deacons – Procedure for Election, Duties and Term of Office**

- A. There shall be a minimum of at least 12 active Deacons.
- B. The Deacons shall be elected by the Church to serve a three (3) year term.



- C. Deacon vacancies shall be filled by the Lead Pastor and the Deacon Leadership from a pool of men who have previously served the Church as Deacons or Yokefellows should a vacancy reduce the body of active Deacons to less than 12 men. Such men shall be presented to the Church for its approval at the next business meeting.
- D. Deacon Leadership. The Deacon Leadership shall be comprised of the three officers: Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary. These officers shall be elected annually by the body of active Deacons. Term of office begins January 1, of the calendar year following election. Deacon officers are limited to two (2) consecutive years per position. Should a vacancy in the office of Chairman occur during the year, the Vice Chairman shall assume the position of Chairman. Vacancies in the offices of Vice Chairman or Secretary shall be filled by a vote of active Deacons at the next regularly scheduled deacons' meeting. Deacons who serve a partial term may still be eligible to serve an additional two (2) consecutive years in that position if reelected.
- E. Process for Selection of Deacons
  - 1. Active Deacons, church members, and the Ministry Leadership Staff are charged with identifying and recommending "Yokefellows" (i.e., members who may, in time, become deacons). Yokefellows shall be Church members for no less than one [1] year prior to selection and must be at least twenty-one (21) years old or older). Prior to selection, Yokefellows shall be screened to determine if they appear to meet the biblical qualifications for Deacon as set forth in the Scripture (e.g., I Timothy 3:8-13 "Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, <sup>9</sup>holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup>They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons. <sup>11</sup>Wives, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything. <sup>12</sup>Deacons are to be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently. <sup>13</sup>For those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" [CSB]). Once selected, Yokefellows will come alongside active Deacons and take on only such responsibilities as given them by the active Deacons. After a period of no less than one (1) year, Yokefellows may be nominated by the body of active Deacons to the Church for election as a deacon, followed by ordination (if necessary) and appointment to serve a three (3) year term.
  - 2. Should any church member have a concern about one or more Yokefellows (i.e., oppose their selection and/or ultimate installation as a deacon), such member should come to the Chairman of the Deacons or the Lead Pastor and explain such concerns. Any concerns raised by one or more members

will be brought to the active Deacons for consideration. If the concerns prove meritorious, the Deacons may choose to remove the Yokefellow in question, or extend his time of training as a Yokefellow.

F. Duties

In accordance with the meaning of the work and practices of the New Testament, Deacons are to be servants of the Church. The task of the Deacon is to assist the Lead Pastor and Ministry Leadership Staff in performing ministry tasks for and with the membership; proclaim the Gospel to believers and unbelievers; care for members and other persons in the community; lead the Church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, and ministry; lead the Church in achieving its missions; and perform any other duties and responsibilities assigned in these Bylaws.

G. Meetings

The Deacons will ordinarily meet monthly.

**Section 5: Elected Church Officers– How and When Elected**

The Church shall have the following elected officers: Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Trustees, and Moderator. All Church officers are nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church. All Church officers must have been a member of the Church for a minimum of three (3) years and be eighteen (18) years old or over prior to becoming eligible for nomination.

**Section 6: Elected Church Officers**

A. Clerk

1. Election

- a. The Clerk shall be elected for a term of three years.
- b. Term of office begins January 1, of the calendar year following election.

2. Duties

- a. The Clerk shall be responsible for the recording, processing, and communicating of all records of church business. Some of these duties are:
  - 1) Ensuring accurate minutes of each business meeting.
  - 2) Recording all actions voted by the Church.
  - 3) Preserve the records for present and future use.

- 4) Preserve the Constitution and Bylaws of the Church.
- 5) Function as the Secretary of the corporation.
- 6) Some of these responsibilities may be assigned to office staff to be performed under the direction of the Clerk.

B. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

1. Election

- a. The Church shall elect a Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer for a term of three years, after which they must remain inactive for one year.
- b. The term of office will begin January 1, of the year following election.

2. Duties

- a. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to oversee the Church budget and all money, or things of value paid or given to the Church. The Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring an itemized account of all receipts, designations, and disbursements is kept. Some of the above duties may be assigned to office staff to be performed under the direction of the Treasurer.
- b. The Treasurer shall render to the Church at each business meeting a report of receipts and disbursements for the period since the last report.
- c. In the absence of the Treasurer, or by request of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer shall assume all responsibilities of the Treasurer.
- d. In order to assume timely payment of budgeted accounts payable, the Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, or the Chair of the Stewardship Committee will be authorized to sign checks. Two signatures are required.
- e. Anyone who is authorized to sign checks shall be bonded by the Church.
- f. Upon rendering the annual account at the end of each fiscal year (December 31) and its acceptance and approval by the Church, the annual statement shall be delivered by the Treasurer to the Financial Secretary, who shall keep and preserve the account as part of the permanent records of the Church.

C. Trustees

1. Election

- a. Trustees shall be elected for a term of three years and shall be composed of three members, one of whom will rotate off each year. A Trustee may be re-elected after one year's absence from service.
- b. The term of office will begin January 1, of the year following election.
- c. At the first meeting of the year, the Trustees will elect a chairman, vice chairman and secretary and notify the Church office of their election.

2. Duties

- a. Trustees shall serve as corporate directors of the Church. Nevertheless, they shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer this real estate except by an affirmative vote of the Church at a called church business meeting for this purpose. They shall execute any and all contracts, deeds, negotiable instruments, and/or other legal instruments pertaining to real property, but only when so directed by the proper and recorded action of the church body. Likewise, the Trustees shall insure that proper and adequate general liability insurance coverage and property insurance coverage are maintained at all times. Some of the above duties may be assigned to the Executive Pastor or Administrative Pastor/Director and/or other office staff to be performed under the direction of the Trustees and subject to approval by the church body.
- b. Every action of the Trustees on behalf of the Church shall be recorded in business meeting minutes. A copy of the Trustee meeting minutes will be given to the Clerk for filing and history.

D. Moderator

1. Election - A Moderator and a Vice Moderator shall be elected for a three (3) year term of office. The Moderator shall not be the Lead Pastor or any other member of the Church staff.
2. Duties - The Moderator shall normally chair business meetings. If he/she is unable to perform this duty, the Vice Moderator shall chair the meeting(s). The Moderator may enlist the assistance of a parliamentarian should the Moderator deem such assistance helpful or necessary. The Parliamentarian's role shall be limited to assisting the Moderator in

questions of procedure only. Should any disagreement arise between the Moderator and the Parliamentarian, the Moderator shall prevail.

E. Corporate Officers

1. Membership - The Church shall have five (5) corporate officers which are listed on the Annual Report to the Secretary of State. The President of the Corporation shall be the Lead Pastor. Vice-President shall be selected from the Trustees of the Corporation (each Trustee elected shall take on the role of the Trustee whom he or she was elected to replace). The third officer shall be Executive Pastor or Administrative Pastor/Director. The fourth officer, the Secretary, shall be the elected Church Clerk. The fifth officer, the Treasurer, shall be the elected Church Treasurer.
2. Duties - The officers shall perform only those duties of corporate officers for non-profit corporations which are not assigned to other church leaders elsewhere in these bylaws. Any and all such authority is subject to the oversight and control of the Executive Leadership Team and, ultimately, the Church.

## **ARTICLE III: CHURCH COMMITTEES**

### **Section 1: Purpose of Committees**

- A. The committees of the Church shall serve as representatives of the membership for the purpose of fulfilling the duties defined in these Bylaws.
- B. The recommendations of all committees shall coincide with the mission and ministries of the Church. (see Constitution, Article II).
- C. Committees provide a written or oral update to the Church in any regularly scheduled business meeting following a meeting of the committee.

### **Section 2: General Committee Structure**

- A. Unless otherwise indicated in these Bylaws, the number of members for each committee shall be determined by the Nominating Committee and subject to revision by the Committee Chair in coordination with the Nominating Committee. All committee members shall be members of the Church for no less than one (1) year and be eighteen (18) years old and over. A majority of committee members must be present to conduct business and make recommendations.
- B. The Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor or Administrative Pastor/Director (or other members of the church staff as assigned by the Lead Pastor) shall be ex-officio members of each committee. Ex-officio members shall not vote on committee business unless necessary to break a tie.
- C. From time to time, committees may enlist the assistance of non-committee members as needed. Such persons are to provide advice only. No voting privileges are extended to any non-members of the committee.

### **Section 3: Election of Members**

- A. Committee members will be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church for an appropriate term, and shall serve on a rotation system with roughly one third to be elected each year as necessary. After a three-year term, a member must remain off the committee for one year before re-election.
- B. An exception to the three-year appointment would be to fill vacancies on committees. Additional exceptions to the three-year appointment may be granted by church vote in order to maintain committee continuity during personnel searches or special projects.
- C. The Nominating Committee will specify who will serve the three-year term, the two-year term, and the one-year term in the event a new committee is recommended.

#### **Section 4: Staff Liaison(s) for Committees**

The Lead Pastor or his designee shall appoint a staff liaison for each committee (the liaison may or may not be the staff members who are ex-officio members of the committee).

#### **Section 5: Specific Church Committees**

##### **A. Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee shall consist of four (4) members from the Church at large and two (2) active Deacons. The Nominating Committee shall be responsible to select, interview, and recommend to the church committee members and church officers, only after careful prayer and consideration and in consultation with Lead Pastor and Ministry Leadership Staff.

##### **B. Personnel Committee**

This committee shall be made up of six (6) members. The Personnel Committee, in coordination with the Executive Pastor or Administrative Pastor/Director, shall perform the following duties:

1. Ensuring that position descriptions for new and existing staff members are available and up-to-date. The committee, in conjunction with the Executive Leadership Team shall review and rewrite descriptions as needed. An up-to-date organization chart is also the responsibility of the Personnel Committee.
2. Survey the need for additional and new staff positions in consultation with Executive Leadership Team and staff and make recommendations to the Church.
3. Recruit, interview, and recommend prospective Ministry Leadership Staff members, other than Lead Pastor or recommend to the Nominating Committee the creation of a Search Committee for such.
4. Develop, recommend, and review annually the salaries and benefits of all church staff after an annual evaluation.
5. Update and maintain an employment handbook for all church staff.

##### **C. Stewardship Committee**

This committee shall be made up of six (6) members of the Church at large. The Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer shall also serve as ex-officio members who

may vote when used to achieve a quorum. The Stewardship Committee shall, in cooperation with the church staff, perform the following functions:

1. Stewardship:
  - a. Develop understanding of and commitment to associational missions and the Cooperative Program.
  - b. Plan and support church ministries through budget development, promotion, and commitment.
2. Budgeting:
  - a. Challenge members to make giving commitment in support of the church budget.
  - b. Prepare an annual budget and present it to the Church for approval.
3. Administration:
  - a. Work with the staff to oversee the disbursement of funds in accordance with the Church approved budget.
  - b. Make recommendations to the Church concerning disbursement of funds not included in the budget.
  - c. Review expenditures periodically in terms of budget allocations.
  - d. Review and, if appropriate, approve any requests for special offerings.
  - e. Secure an annual review of the Church's financial records by an independent accountant. Report to the Church the results of the annual review.

D. Ad-Hoc Committees

The Nominating Committee and the Church staff shall periodically review whether any other Committee(s) are needed to facilitate the ministries of the Church. If such additional committees are needed, such committees shall be recommended to the church, along with a slate of proposed committee members. The creation of the committee, and its members, shall be voted upon by the Church. The recommendation of the Nominating Committee shall indicate whether the ad-hoc committee shall be created for a finite or indefinite period of time.



#### **ARTICLE IV: CHURCH MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS**

The Church will create organizations and programs as needed to support and facilitate its ministry efforts. Such organizations may include, but are not limited to, discipleship ministries, worship ministries, family ministries, missional outreach ministries, support ministries, etc.

## **ARTICLE V: CHURCH MEETINGS**

### **Section 1: Worship**

- A. The Church shall meet regularly for the worship of Almighty God.
- B. Special worship services shall be scheduled in the church calendar of activities.
- C. Cancellation of regular worship services will ordinarily require Church action. In the case of an emergency (hurricane, tornado, fire, pandemic, etc.), the Executive Leadership Team shall determine such cancellations.

### **Section 2: Business**

- A. The regular business meeting of the Church shall be held quarterly.
- B. Special meetings of the Church for transactions of business may be called by the Lead Pastor or Chairman of the Deacons (upon a written request from any committee), or from the Church at large if such written request is signed by not less than fifty (50) members. At least one week's notice shall be given for all special meetings. Notice shall specify the purpose, date, time, and place for such meeting at each Church service (both verbally and in the regular Church print or digital announcements) leading up to the special meeting. In such meetings, no items of business will be discussed or transacted that were not listed specifically in the notice.
- C. The business meetings of the Church will be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Roberts' Rules of Order. This fact notwithstanding, should any conflict arise between these Bylaws and Robert Rules, these Bylaws shall prevail.
- D. Members present and voting shall constitute a quorum to transact any Church business. Unless otherwise noted, a simple majority vote is necessary to pass a motion. There shall be no absentee or proxy voting. Members must be present during the meeting to vote on the business being handled during that meeting. However, members wishing to participate in the voting, but who are serving elsewhere on the church campus during any meeting (e.g., serving in the preschool or children's ministries, etc.), shall be given the chance to register their vote before the meeting is concluded and the votes are tallied.

### **Section 3: Ordinances**

- A. Believer's Baptism

A person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith; who professes Him publicly; and who indicated a commitment to follow Christ as Lord, may be received for baptism.

1. Baptism shall be by means of immersion in water.
2. Baptism shall be administered by a Pastor of the Church or whomever the Executive Leadership Team shall authorize.
3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service or corporate gathering of the Church body.
4. A person professing Christ and failing to be baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the Lead Pastor and/or Ministry Leadership Staff. If no interest is ascertained or if a time of more than twenty-four (24) months has passed, his or her name may be deleted from the list of those awaiting baptism.

B. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby Christians, through partaking of the bread and the cup, commemorate the saving death of Jesus Christ and anticipate His Second Coming.

1. The Lord's Supper shall normally be observed quarterly; or more often, as the Lead Pastor may deem appropriate.
2. The Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor(s), and the Deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper.
3. Incapacitated members may request the Lead Pastor or Associate Pastor(s) and Deacons to administer the Lord's Supper at their residence.
4. Anyone deeming himself or herself eligible according to biblical standards may partake of the Lord's Supper.

## **ARTICLE VI: MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Section 1: Indemnification**

Should any member(s) of the church staff or leadership be faced with actual or threatened litigation as a result of the performance of his or her proper and normal duties, the Church will provide a sufficient and appropriate legal defense and/or indemnify such staff member(s) for costs and expenses relating to such actual or threatened litigation. This obligation to indemnify and/or provide a defense shall cease if at any time it is discovered that the staff member(s) in question acted contrary to Holy Scripture, in violation of law, or otherwise acted in any way that was dishonest or lacking complete candor.

### **Section 2: Use of Church Facilities**

The church staff and other appropriate leadership shall oversee implementation of a Church Facilities Use Policy. Such policy will ensure that the facilities of the Church are used in a manner which is consistent with the Holy Scriptures and the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. The policy shall be drafted to ensure that any use of all or part of the church grounds or facilities (whether by members or by outside interests or entities) will be done in a manner consistent with our beliefs as a Church. Moreover, any and all use of church property shall be sufficiently documented and memorialized so as to protect the Church from unnecessary exposure to liability.

### **Section 3: Inspection of Records, Reports, and Documentation**

In accordance with Florida law, every member of the Church shall have the right to inspect certain records, reports, documents, and the physical properties of the Church. Such inspection shall be accomplished in accordance with applicable Florida Statutes. In accordance with existing law, the Church may restrict and limit the number of inspections or establish an orderly manner for such to be conducted.

### **Section 4: Designated Gifts**

The Church recognizes the wish of some members to designate the way in which contributions are used. However, the Church also recognizes that all we have comes from God and should be used to further His Kingdom. Therefore, the Church will accept gifts and contributions that are intended for a designated purpose. However, if the purpose designated on the gift or contribution is not to an existing account and/or ministry of the Church, the designation shall be deemed advisory only (versus mandatory). In such an instance, the Church, in consultation with the donor, may choose to return the gift, use the gift in accordance with the designation, or it may choose to use the gift elsewhere. All donors to the Church recognize the necessity and propriety of this discretion. The Church's discretionary authority includes the right to refuse to accept any gift at any time, for any reason.

## **Section 5: Existence of Reversionary Interest**

Subject to the concept of the autonomy of the local church (which is an integral part of Southern Baptist polity), this Church hereby establishes that it will not allow its property and other assets to be usurped or otherwise taken from it by other individuals or denominations. Thus, the true and rightful members of this church shall be comprised of individuals who adhere to, maintain, and propagate the traditional and historical doctrines, faith, and practices of the Southern Baptist denomination (such doctrine, faith, and practices set forth in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000)—even though such members may comprise only a minority of the overall membership. To the extent that this Church votes to cease cooperating with a Baptist Convention that adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, or the Church otherwise refuses to adhere to, maintain, and propagate the doctrines, faith, and practices of the Southern Baptist denomination (as such are defined in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000), the equitable and legal title to the church's property and fixed assets shall vest in and be used for the benefit of the minority who remain true to the teachings and beliefs of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. A Reverter clause exists in the chain of title to all church property to protect this provision from dilution or omission in future versions of these Bylaws.

## **ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS**

The Church officers shall periodically appoint a Constitution and Bylaws Review Committee to review the Constitution and Bylaws, recommending to the Church any modifications or revisions for Church action.

Changes in the Constitution and Bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting of the Church provided each amendment shall have been presented electronically or in writing at a previous business meeting and copies furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting. Amendments to the Constitution shall be made in accordance with the current Constitution. Amendments to the Bylaws shall require a super-majority vote of sixty-six percent (66%) of the members present and voting.