

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH 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.

1. NAME

This body shall be known as the Bethel Baptist Church of Oakway, located at 160 Bethel Church Road, Westminster, Oconee County, South Carolina, and is so incorporated by the State of South Carolina and recorded in the office of the South Carolina Secretary of State.

2. MISSION

The mission of Bethel is to connect with God and build relationships with others, leading ourselves and others to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, souls and minds, and love our neighbors as ourselves. We become disciples of Christ who make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that He has commanded. We prepare others to use their gifts to serve the community and the Lord faithfully in order to be Great Commission Christians in a Great Commission Church.

3. 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 2000. 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.

We believe the word "marriage" means only a legal union between one naturally born man and one naturally born woman as husband and wife, and the word "spouse" refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or wife. Marriages outside of these parameters will not be performed by church ministers or on church property. The use of church facilities is not a right of membership but is limited to Covenant Members and shall only be approved by the Pastor or his designee that are in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

4. CORE VALUES

4.1 Biblically Faithful

The Bible is our guide, given to us, and written for us by God himself. The Bible is our source of truth and the foundation for everything we do. It explains how life is designed to work including how we should relate to God and to all people.

4.2 Passionate About Worship

We believe our weekly worship time should be an overflow of our daily walk and time with the Lord. We worship and honor God with our whole heart, mind, body and spirit. We support our pastor's allocation of his time to studying the Bible and praying so that he can lead us in Bible centered preaching that comes from an overflow of what God is doing in his life. We lead our weekly worship times to honor and praise God in ways that will bring unity in our church and attract those in our community that are not yet in our church family. We are passionate about worship and passionate about effectively bringing the message to all people. We do this by staying relevant and adaptive within biblical parameters to best reach our community with a special focus on reaching the teens and young adults. Though we have set times to worship as a church family, we also make worship our everyday lifestyle; our daily actions are inspired by our desire to worship the Lord.

4.3 Spiritually Growing

We are passionate about growing spiritually in our relationship with God. We are intentional about studying Scripture, praying, and training to prepare ourselves to be effective followers of Christ. We conduct each ministry to grow our relationship with God by following our mission (connect, love, disciple, and serve) and using our discipleship process. To grow spiritually we have ministries, programs and activities that motivate all of us to walk with the Lord all the time.

4.4 Discipling the Next Generation

We let God use us to raise up God-centered, Jesus-magnifying, Bible-saturated, culturally-winsome disciples of Jesus Christ in the next generation. Ministry to the next generation will never be pushed to the margins at Bethel. We are not content just to offer “something” to keep our children occupied. We want God to give them hearts full of wonder, awe, and fascination with the bigness and power and beauty of God, with affections that will not be overwhelmed by the pleasures and promises of the world. That is why we are committed to developing an intentional, gospel-infused strategy aimed at winning the heart, mind, and will. Our aim is to partner with parents, who have the primary responsibility to disciple their children, and help them lead their children to connect, love, disciple, and serve God by faith in Jesus Christ.

We believe one of the primary reasons those in the next generation stay in church after their teen years is because they develop meaningful relationships and a sense of community. We also believe they are more likely to be engaged in church if they have a mentor; a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. Therefore, we devote significant resources of time and money to build these mentor relationships.

4.5 Committed to the Uncommitted

Because we have a personal relationship with God it motivates us to help others experience that same relationship. God sent His Son to seek and save the lost. We choose to live in such a way that when others see our daily lives, they want to have the same relationship that we have with God also. As we grow more and more in our relationship with God our lives will reflect this conviction. We are passionate about meeting the spiritual needs in our community and sharing the love of Christ with those, both young and old, who may not know Him.

4.6 Connected through Ministry Teams and Prayer-Bible Study Teams

We believe spiritual growth and uncommon unity with each other happens best in the context of deep and honest relationships. These kinds of relationships can be developed and maintained best in Ministry Teams and Prayer-Bible Study Teams. In our Prayer-Bible Study Teams (PBS Teams) of caring people, individuals share and encourage one another in their walk with God. By engaging in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship within these teams. We develop these uplifting relationships with other Christians who will pray, support, and mentor however needed. Here, individuals come together, build one another up during the week, sharing life together at a time that best fits their schedule and their communication method. Ministry Teams minister in ways that use their God given gifts, talents, and interest to help move people through the discipleship process.

We grow spiritually when we study God’s word in community and share what God is teaching us. We nurture and care for each other in these PBS Teams. In these teams we share what is going good in our lives and where we need help. In the Ministry Teams we carry out an intentional outwardly focused ministry regularly and consistently.

We use these Ministry Teams to carry out the ministries of our church. The God focused disciplines of prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and ministry are the foundation of our discipleship process. Because of this, our leadership team aligns our ministries, programs, and activities so that personal prayer and Bible study, family prayer and Bible study, and the team prayer and Bible study, and the outwardly focused

ministry are maintained. This ensures that the people and financial resources God has entrusted to us are used effectively.

5. CHURCH COVENANT

Having been convicted by the Holy Spirit, we 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 commit, 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 commit to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in God's truths; to seek the salvation of our family and friends; to walk uprightly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our commitments and exemplary in our lifestyle; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further commit to watch over one another in Christian 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 commit that when we, as Christians, depart from this fellowship 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.

6. 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.

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 Baptist churches. In so far as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the Beaverdam Baptist Association, the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

7. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

7.1 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP 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.

Membership in the body of Jesus Christ is a sacred duty, involves full commitment to Jesus Christ, and has significant meaning, privileges, and responsibilities. It is the responsibility of Covenant Members of Bethel Baptist Church to ensure that every person accepting Jesus Christ as their savior and deciding to join the body of Christ at Bethel Baptist Church has a clear understanding of the life changing decision they are making.

Any person may offer themselves as a candidate for membership in the body of Christ at Bethel Baptist Church. A person requesting membership in Bethel Baptist Church will be accepted as a "Membership

Candidate under watch care” of the church. A “Membership Candidate” may request this membership in following ways:

- (1) By profession of faith in Jesus Christ and requesting to be baptized by immersion.
- (2) By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist church of like faith and practice.
- (3) By acceptance upon a statement of a prior conversion experience and baptism by immersion.

If baptism by immersion is physically not possible for an individual, the pastor and the deacons will evaluate the situation and reach a conclusion that best meets the needs of that individual to be agreed upon by the church body.

A Membership Candidate will be mentored thorough a New Member Process to ensure they understand and agree with the meaning, privileges, and responsibilities of membership in the body of Christ at Bethel as well as the beliefs, mission, and core values of Bethel Baptist Church.

The Pastor will direct this New Membership process through the appropriate Ministry Teams (See the Bylaws for Ministry Team details).

Upon successful completion of this process, upon committing to the mission, core values, covenant, and beliefs as stated in this Constitution, and after being baptized by immersion (if not done previously) the Membership Candidate will be presented to the church in a church conference. It shall require a majority vote of those Covenant Members present for the person to be accepted as a Covenant Member or Watchcare Member.

7.2 MEMBERSHIP TYPES: There are three types of membership in Bethel Baptist Church:

Covenant Member – Persons who are 12 years of age or older who qualify as stated in the following section of the Constitution. Only Covenant Members have the privilege and responsibility to vote on all matters brought before the church in church conferences when they are present in the conference.

Inactive Member – Persons who are 12 years of age or older, who at one time, were Covenant Members but have not renewed their Covenant Membership as stated in the following section of the Constitution. Inactive Members do not vote on matters brought before the church in church conferences.

Watchcare Member – Persons who are less than 12 years of age who qualify as stated in the following section of the Constitution. Watchcare Members do not vote on matters brought before the church in church conferences.

7.2.1 Covenant Membership Requirements

It is the desire of Bethel Baptist Church to freely extend its fellowship to all individuals. At the same time, Bethel Baptist Church desires to uphold the principles of commitment to Christ and to His church that Scripture teaches must accompany true membership in the body of Christ.

7.2.1.1 The family of Christians at Bethel Baptist Church serve God through their relationship with God, with each other and strive to let Jesus live through them to reach other people with the gospel. We covenant together to do this by holding each other responsible to live according to God’s word in the life of our church. To this end we will maintain our **Covenant Membership** in Bethel Baptist Church. We will do this by

establishing the following responsibilities to be a Covenant Member.

7.2.1.1.1 Must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration

7.2.1.1.2 Must complete the Bethel New Member class for Covenant Membership

7.2.1.1.3 Must have been baptized by immersion in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration

7.2.1.1.4 Must be twelve years of age or older

7.2.1.1.5 Must commit to the mission, core values, covenant, and beliefs as stated in this Constitution

7.2.1.1.6 Must renew their Covenant Membership annually

7.2.1.1.7 Are strongly encouraged to be an active participant in a Prayer and Bible Study Group and to minister through a Ministry Team.

7.2.2 Watchcare Membership Requirements– Persons less than 12 years of age but meet all other items under section **7.2.1 Covenant Membership Requirements**. Watchcare Members do not vote.

7.2.3 Membership Records System – Covenant Membership renewal and Watchcare Membership renewal is accomplished each year in person in any regular scheduled worship service.

This is done by recommitting to the Bethel Baptist Church mission, core values, covenant, and beliefs as stated in this Constitution. This is accomplished by signing a statement of this and placing it in the designated receptacle or in an offering plate during a regular schedule worship service.

Covenant Membership and Watchcare Membership are effective for the calendar year, January 1 through December 31. During January and February of each year members are encouraged to make this renewal. During the first week in March each year, any member not renewing their Covenant Membership/Watchcare Membership during the period January to February of that year will be removed from the Covenant Membership/Watchcare Membership Role of the church and placed on the Inactive Membership Role of Bethel Baptist Church.

At any regular scheduled worship service during the remaining months in that calendar year an Inactive Member can renew their Covenant Membership/Watchcare Membership for the remaining days of that calendar year.

The Deacon Ministry Team (see the Bylaws) will evaluate situations where it is not reasonably possible for a member of any status to renew their membership due to situations beyond their control (sickness, rest home, etc.). Through appropriate interaction with the individual, a Deacon may complete the renewal on behalf of member.

A list of Covenant Members, Inactive Members, and Watchcare Membership will be available in the church office at any time.

8. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- (1) Death of the member

- (2) Letter of recommendation to another Baptist church
- (3) Exclusion by action as defined in Section **9. Discipline**
- (4) Deletion upon request
- (5) Deletion upon proof of membership in a church of another denomination
- (6) Deletion upon proof of a church member uniting with another church

9. 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 which 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 matter in accord 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.

10. LICENSE TO PASTORIAL MINISTRY

When a Covenant Member announces to the church that he feels the call to the ministry, the church, by majority vote, may license him as an acknowledgment of his call to the ministry and an encouragement to make preparation for it. The pastor of the church will furnish the Covenant Member with a certificate of license as his credentials. It is understood that the performance of civil duties by the member shall be governed by state law.

11. ORDINATION TO PASTORIAL MINISTRY

In the event this church, be requested to ordain a member who has been called as a pastor of a Baptist church, the following procedure shall be followed. The pastor will establish an Ordination Council. Then the church shall invite pastors and deacons from sister Baptist churches to form an Ordination Council to examine the candidate concerning his fitness for the ministry. If the report of the Council is favorable, the church shall proceed with the ordination. The church will express its approval by a vote of three-fourths of the members present at a church conference for this purpose.

12. BYLAWS

Additional details of the operation of Bethel Baptist Church are maintained in the Bethel Baptist Church Bylaws.

13. CONSTITUTION CHANGE PROCESS

Changes in the Constitution shall be made at any regular church conference of the church provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous church conference 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.

Approved in Conference April 21, 1996
Amended in Conference October 11, 2015
Amended in Conference April 14, 2019