

Bylaws for Old Fort Baptist Church

A South Carolina Baptist Nonprofit Religious Corporation

Adopted: _____(date)

Article Seven

Church Officers and Other Leaders

Section 1 – Church Officers

The leadership structure of Old Fort Baptist Church is based upon the nature of the church as revealed in Scripture and the necessary legal requirements for a recognized religious organization. The intentional design of the church's leadership structure accommodates simplicity, growth, unity, and biblical teaching.

The primary offices of this church shall be Senior Pastor, Elder, Deacon, Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer, whose election, tenure, and duties shall be as provided for in the Bylaws and considered corporate officers of the church. The Elder Body will nominate Officers for election by the Church.

All officers of the church shall be covenant members of the church.

Section 2 – Officer's Functions

Senior Pastor, Elder and Deacon functions are described above in Articles 5, 4 & 6 respectively.

Moderator – Shall preside at all Church business meetings consistent with the guidelines for a presiding officer in the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order. The Senior Pastor shall not be the Moderator. A lay Elder, or an outside designee, will serve as the Moderator if necessary.

Clerk – Is responsible for recording minutes of business meetings, preserving historical records, correspondence to membership, and preparing annual information for the association, state convention, and Southern Baptist Convention. These duties may be performed by a Ministry Associate or other designated staff member under the supervision of an Elder. When deemed necessary, the Church may elect a Clerk to fulfill these responsibilities. An Elder may serve as the Clerk if necessary.

Treasurer – Shall be responsible for ensuring the proper receipt, deposit, disbursement, and accounting of all monies, and other funds of the Church in accordance with the financial policies of the Church. The administrative duties associated with this office, including deposits, payments, recordkeeping, and preparation of financial reports, may be performed by a Financial Secretary, Ministry Assistant, or other designated staff member under the supervision of an Elder and in accordance with established financial controls. When deemed necessary, the Church may elect a Treasurer to fulfill these responsibilities. An Elder may serve as the Treasurer if necessary.

Trustees – The Elder Body will serve as Trustees and shall, at the direction and discretion of the church, hold legal title to church property, sign all contracts/documents as approved by the church, and keep the official copies of the church Incorporation, Bylaws, and Policies and Procedures documents.

Other Major Leadership Positions – The Church shall have such other officers, ministry leaders, or task force leaders as the Holy Spirit may direct to carry out the purposes of the church.

Section 3 – Vacancies

Vacancies may be filled at any time of the year. Unexpired terms may be filled by the Elder Body. An unexpired term should not disqualify a member for re-enlistment or re-election. Elders shall select Officers to fulfill unexpired terms until the next Annual Church Conference.

Section 4 – Enlistment, Election, and Rotation

Moderator/Clerk/Treasurer – Shall be elected by the church annually and serve a one-year term, unless filled by an Elder or staff member.

An Officer and the Elders will jointly determine, annually, if that Officer will be nominated for another term.

Section 5 – Officer/Leadership Qualifications

Officers/Leadership shall be covenant members of Old Fort Baptist Church. Characteristics defined in Scripture serve as the basis for officer/leadership qualifications (John 12:26; 1 Cor. 11:1; Luke 22:22; 1 Peter 5:2-5).

Section 6 – Resignations

Officers, and Leaders shall serve a one-year or three-year term specific to the position, qualifications, and duties. During an annual review, re-enlistment or re-election, the individual and Elder Body may evaluate the continuance of service, considering the Biblical qualification and any personal factors that might affect service.

Any Officer, Deacon, or Leader may resign by written notification to the Senior Pastor and Elder Body.

The removal from office of any Officer or Leader may occur for 1) physical incapacitation, 2) spiritual or moral issues, 3) doctrinal issues, and 4) failure to fulfill responsibilities of the office. Matthew 18 serves as the basis to implement dismissal by the Senior Pastor and Elder Body.

Section 7 – Screening Officers, Leaders, and Workers

All Lay-Elders, Officers, Deacons, Leaders, and Age-Group Workers will complete criminal screening procedures before their name is presented to the church for election. Any information obtained during the screening process shall be considered highly confidential and shall be kept in a secure location, indefinitely with access limited to those identified by the Elder Body.

Article Eight

Standing Committees

Section 1 — General Overview

All committees are advisory groups and have no powers except those authorized and approved by church vote. Standing committees will be approved, and members elected from the Church body. The Elder Body presents each committee's specific duties and responsibilities, as approved by a church vote. Committee membership rotation occurs after service of a three-year term.

When necessary, the Elder Body may form ad-hoc teams for short-term purposes. All committee and team members shall be Covenant Members in good standing. Committees and teams will elect their own leadership.

The Church shall have the following standing committees: Personnel, Stewardship, and Buildings/Facility John 12:26; I Corinthians 11:1; Luke 22:22; I Peter 5:2

Section 2 — General Responsibilities

Personnel Committee: The Personnel Committee assists and represents the church congregation in matters related to employed personnel administration along with the Senior Pastor and the Elder Body. Its work includes areas such as recommending staff needs, employment, salaries, benefits, and personnel services. The personnel committee serves as advocates for the staff, having no supervisory responsibilities.

Stewardship Committee: The Stewardship Committee shall be responsible for financial promotion throughout the year, for budget planning, for budget subscription and for budget administration. All checks written by the church financial secretary shall be counter-signed by one of its members. The treasurer's report shall be audited annually by an auditing committee or public accountant. The treasurer shall be bonded.

The Stewardship Committee, using input from the Elder Body, shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for all local expenses and world-wide missions. This budget is to be presented at the Annual Church Conference.

Building/Facilities Committee: This committee shall have general charge of the administration and maintenance of the church's facilities and grounds. It shall regularly inspect and inventory all church property and recommend repairs and improvements as needed. It shall be responsible for the policies and procedures for the use of church facilities. It shall maintain adequate property/casualty insurance on all church property.

Section 3 — Election and Qualifications

Standing committee members shall be elected by the church upon nomination by the Elder Body. Standing committee members shall be active Covenant Members over the age of 21 who have been Covenant Members for at least one year. Standing committee members shall serve three-year terms on a rotation basis.

All reasonable efforts will be made to avoid the appearance of a conflict of-interest involving church committee members. To that end, spouses may not serve on the same or separate committees at the same time. Wives of sitting Elders may not serve on standing committees.

Section 4 — Vacancies

Vacancies shall be filled by the Elder Body. In instances where the Elder Body fills a vacancy the committee position will be opened for church election at the next occurring annual conference. Individuals filling vacancies may be nominated for election if they choose.

Section 5 — Screening

All Lay-Elders, Officers, Deacons, Leaders, and Age-Group Workers will complete criminal screening procedures before their name is presented to the church for election, as outlined in the Bylaws. Any information obtained during the screening process shall be considered highly confidential and shall be kept in a secure location with access limited to those identified by the Elder Body.

Article Nine

Church Programs

Section 1 – General Overview

A team is an organization to carry out a specific task needed by the church. Team members can volunteer to serve and meet the need/task based on expertise, talents, passion, and calling. Team members may serve an indefinite term.

Section 2 – Teams/Program Enlistment and Election

All team chairmen and program leadership will be chosen by said team and approved by the Elder Body. Team and Program members are determined by those who volunteer or through the recruitment by a leader or team member.

Section 3 – Team/Program Rotation

Team chairpersons and program leadership may serve for a period of one year. Chairpersons and Leadership may succeed themselves upon Elder Body approval. Team members may serve indefinitely.

Section 4 – Team/Program Qualifications

All chairpersons and program leadership shall be covenant members in good standing and represent Christ to all who come to worship, learn, and participate at Old Fort Baptist Church.

Section 5 – Resignations

Any team/program member may resign by notification to team/program leader who will notify the Elder Body.

The removal from office of any team/program member may occur for 1) physical incapacitation, 2) spiritual or moral issues, 3) doctrinal issues, 4) failure to fulfill office responsibilities. Matthew 18 serves as the basis to implement dismissal by the Elder Body.

Article Ten Indemnification

Section 1 — Definitions and Proceedings

It is the intent for the church to carry coverage for indemnity unless the named party exceeds authority or is guilty of reckless or willful misconduct in ministry, in accordance with existing insurance coverage based on church liability.

Agent

Any person designated as a trustee of Old Fort Baptist Church and listed in the Articles of Incorporation of Old Fort Baptist Church.

Proceeding

Any threatened, pending, or completed action or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative.

Expenses

Include, without limitation, all attorneys' fees and any other costs incurred in defense of any claims or proceedings against an agent because of his position or relationship as an agent and all attorneys' fees, charges, and other expenses incurred in establishing a right to indemnification.

Section 2 — Successful Defense

Insofar as an agent of the church has been successful in defense of any proceeding or the defense of any claim, issue, or matter therein, the agent shall be indemnified against expenses actually and reasonably incurred by the agent in connection with the claim.

Section 3 — Good Faith Conduct

Agents must act in good faith, in a manner they believe in the church's best interests, and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, as an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would use in similar circumstances.

Section 4 — Insurance

The Elder Body may adopt resolutions authorizing the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of any church agent against any liability asserted against or incurred by the agent in such capacity, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify the agent. The church shall have no authority to purchase and maintain such insurance to indemnify any church agent who violates State or Federal laws.

Article Eleven

Mediation of Disputes

Section 1 — Disputes

Old Fort Baptist Church will follow the biblical formula for the redemptive resolution of disputes as found in Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6. Covenant Members must pursue every effort to live at peace and resolve disputes in private.

Section 2 — Church Conflict

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its Covenant Members that every reasonable measure will be taken to resolve conflict using the principles of Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6. The use of biblically based and legally binding Christian mediation is required if parties cannot settle their disputes using this guideline.

Section 3 — Agreement Procedures

Should circumstances arise that result in a Covenant Member becoming a liability to the church's welfare, the church will exercise every reasonable effort to resolve the problem in a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. If the exclusion of the Covenant Member is determined to serve the church's welfare best, the church may take action at a special called meeting for this purpose. (See Article 2-Section 7.)

Section 4 — Petitions

Any Covenant Member may create a petition to gain attention to a grievance or concern. The petition must state the grievance or concern, be dated, and include a signature line for each Covenant Member. Active petitions require the signatures of 1/3 of the Covenant Membership. A petition that meets the requirements listed above shall be considered active and will be formally received and addressed by The Elder Body.

Article Twelve

Licensing, Ordaining, and Commissioning

Section 1 — Licensing and Ordaining Ministers

Licensing – When a man announces to the church that he feels the call to the ministry, the Elder Body may recommend him to the church and may, by a majority vote, license him to the ministry.

Ordaining – The church shall observe the following procedures when asked to ordain a man called to serve as a Baptist church Senior Pastor or ordained staff member.

1. The church will express its approval with a two-thirds vote of the Covenant Members present at any regularly called church business conference.
2. The Senior Pastor shall organize a council to examine the candidate concerning his fitness for the ministry. Upon receiving a favorable report, the church shall proceed with the ordination.

Note: Licensing is a designation indicating the candidate is a minister for tax purposes and complies with federal income tax reporting and withholding rules.

Section 2 — Commissioning Missionaries

When a Covenant Member requests to be commissioned to missions, the Senior Pastor shall nominate a Commissioning Council to be voted on by the Elder Body.

After being approved by the Elder Body, the Commissioning Council will be convened to examine the candidate(s). The council may conduct the examination in a manner it deems appropriate under the leadership of the Senior Pastor. Upon completion of the examination, the candidate(s) will be dismissed, and the council will vote on whether to recommend – or not. The council will properly report its recommendations to the church. If the candidate(s) is approved for commissioning with 2/3 vote by the church in conference, the Commissioning service will take place as soon as feasible.

Note: Short Term Commissioning to Missions does not require a formal council. This Commissioning can take place by calling the candidate(s) forward, in any worship service for a prayer of dedication.

Article Thirteen

Annual Responsibilities

Section 1 — Accounts and Records

The fiscal year and church year of Old Fort Baptist Church begins on January 1 and ends on December 31 of each year.

The church shall have an annual budget to serve as the guide for the financial operations of the church. The budget shall be presented to the church at the annual church conference for discussion and approval.

Section 2 — Policy and Procedure Manuals

The church shall develop and maintain the following Policy and Procedure Manuals:

- Personnel Policy and Procedures/Staff Handbook
- Finance Policy and Procedures
- Stewardship Committee Policy and Procedures Manual
- Building/Facilities Use Policy and Procedures Manual
- Preschool/Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures
- Youth Ministry Policies and Procedures

Section 3 — Inspection of Records

A copy of the Incorporation, Bylaws, and Policies & Procedures of Old Fort Baptist Church will be available on the church's website for viewing by Covenant Members.

Every Active Old Fort Baptist Covenant Member, in good standing, has the right to inspect all records, reports, and documentation of every kind, except that which is deemed confidential. No copy, including photos, of viewed reports or documents will be allowed to leave the church office.

Every household should have a copy of the Bylaws of Old Fort Baptist Church.

Section 4 — Auditing Procedure

The Elder Body shall ensure an annual audit is conducted and secure an independent audit every other year.

Section 5 — Political Activities

In order to maintain the exemption from Federal Income Taxes, the church and other religious organizations must comply with requirements in Section 501 C 3 of the tax code. One of these restrictions is that the church not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate running for public office or any one political party. The church is not to engage in substantial efforts to influence legislation by way of any lobbying process. If the church wishes to have political personalities attend and speak to the congregation it is suggested to have equal representation of both political parties. The same is true for any political brochures offered to the congregation. This applies to Local, State and National political campaigns and personalities.

Section 6 — Conflict of Interest

All reasonable efforts will be made to avoid the appearance of a conflict-of-interest involving church staff, church leadership and church volunteers. This includes involvement with current and potential vendors and bidding organizations. All staff and Covenant Members must refrain from participating in, or influencing, any decision, ministry or church action in which the individual or family member is materially affiliated. Potential areas of conflict should be disclosed to the Elder Body prior to finalizing agreements, decisions or church action.

Article Fourteen

Property

Section 1

If at any time the church shall consider to alter its denominational affiliation, if the decision is by less than a three-quarter (3/4) vote of the Covenant Members present, and voting at a properly called business meeting of the church, the rights to the property of the church shall remain with the part of the congregation that agrees to continue to use the property for the purposes for which it was purchased and has been to that time maintained.

Article Fifteen

Article of Dissolution

Dissolution Statement

Being organized and incorporated, Old Fort Baptist Church operates as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under the United States Internal Revenue Code. In the event of dissolution of Old Fort Baptist Church, the assets thereof shall be liquidated and distributed for payment of all outstanding debts and obligations. Remaining assets shall be distributed to the South Carolina Baptist Convention for the purpose of Kingdom work.

No church assets shall be distributed to any member, officer, or staff of Old Fort Baptist Church or any other individual.

Article Sixteen

Amendments To Bylaws

Section 1 — General Procedures

Any of these Bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by a 2/3 majority vote at any special called conference, provided the Elder Body receives and approves the amendments, alterations, or repeals, and presents them to the church thirty days before being offered for a vote.

The vote shall be by secret ballot, 2/3 majority vote by Covenant Members, 18 years of age and over. This can be a Special Called meeting or at the Annual Church Conference.

Section 2 — Amendment Styles

All amendments shall be made by striking through the original amendment and noting the change in capital lettering.

The bottom of each page that contains an amendment must have a notation of the last revision date.

New bylaws/amendments need a complete reprint of the document annually with a footnote on each page showing the current edition.

Section 3 — Notification and Reviews

Upon approval of amendments by the Elder Body, a church conference shall occur to present such modifications no less than 30 days before the time for a congregational vote.

Section 4 — Presentation and Vote

A vote on approved amendments shall occur in a regular church conference following the questions and comments presentation three weeks prior. A 2/3 majority vote of Old Fort Baptist Church Covenant Members present shall constitute acceptance of amendments.

Section 5 — Documentation Distribution

New documents or sections of amended documents, properly footnoted, shall be available in the church office or mailed to members.

