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# **Constitution and By-laws**

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<sup>1</sup> Updated 3/14/2018

# CONSTITUTION OF OLD FORT BAPTIST CHURCH

## PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our Christian faith, and that this body may be governed in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches.

## ARTICLE I NAME

This body shall be known as the Old Fort Baptist Church of Summerville, South Carolina, located at 10505 Dorchester Road.

## ARTICLE II PURPOSE

The purpose of this church shall be to foster and maintain public worship of Jesus Christ, to carry out His great commission, and to promote Christian fellowship and growth among its members.

## ARTICLE III STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and is the basis for any statement of faith. We 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 Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We, as members of this church subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 (BFM2000). A summary of this doctrinal statement follows:

- I. The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. There is one and only one living and true God.
- II. God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God.
- III. Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation.
- IV. Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer.

Regeneration, or the New Birth, is the work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Jesus Christ.

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes.

Glorification is the ultimatum of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

- V. Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners.
- VI. A New Testament Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- VII. Christian Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.
- VIII. The first day of the week is the Lord's day.
- IX. The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as king.
- X. God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end.
- XI. It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.
- XII. The cause of education in the kingdom of Christ is coordinated with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches.
- XIII. God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are, we owe to Him.
- XIV. Christ's people should, as occasion arises, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the kingdom of God.
- XV. Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society.

XVI. It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness.  
The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord.

XVII. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His word or not contained in it.

XVIII. God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society.  
Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.

## ARTICLE IV CHURCH COVENANT

### **Old Fort Baptist Church Covenant**

The church is the vehicle by which God is accomplishing His purposes in the world. The church exists to display the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Followers of Jesus have been invited graciously into God's redemptive purposes for the world through the church. In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God and to be a microcosm of the universal household of God. Therefore, we will covenant together to fulfill these purposes and hold one another accountable to this high calling.

One of Old Fort's greatest convictions is that church membership should be meaningful. Therefore, we believe it is important to covenant together as a church family. As members of Old Fort Baptist Church, we affirm this covenant with one another, by God's grace, for our growth, and ultimately for the glory of our Triune God:

#### **a. Baptized Community of Believers that Makes Disciples**

Having been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 6:44; Acts 3:19, 16:31, 17:30, 20:21; Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-10;) and to surrender our lives to Him (Lk. 14:25-33), and having been baptized by immersion as born again Christians (Jn. 3:3; Acts 8:38, Acts 10:44-48) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:1-4), we covenant with one another as one body in Christ to glorify God (Isa. 43:7; 1 Cor. 10:31) by making disciples of Jesus Christ among all nations (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Ps. 67:1-2; Rev. 7:9-10).

#### **b. Worship Together Regularly around the Scriptures**

Together, we will draw near to God in worship (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:22). We will delight in the glory of God (Ps. 16:11, 37:4, 63:1-11), depend on the presence of God (Matt. 28:20; Jn. 15:5, 16:7; 1 Pet. 4:11), and grow in the knowledge of God (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:9-12; 2 Pet. 3:17-18) by submitting to the Word of God in all matters of life, as the all-sufficient authority in our lives and in His Church (Ps. 19:7-11, 119:105-112; 2 Tim. 3:14-4:5). Together, we will hold fast to the hope we profess (Heb. 10:23).

#### **c. Disciple and Care for One Another in Large and Small Groups**

The Gospel creates community - we are committed to living life together and challenging one another to grow as disciples of Christ. We are committed to living out the Gospel and its implications for everyday life (1 Pet. 3:15, Gal. 2:14). Together, we will spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24). We will meet with one another consistently in small groups and actively participate in the corporate gatherings of this local church, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). We will also pray for one another regularly (Ephesians 6:18-20) and serve one another selflessly (Romans 12:9-13).

**d. Submit to the Leadership of the Church**

We will cooperate with, submit to, and prayerfully support the leadership of the pastors (elders) who have been entrusted by God to serve and care for this body by teaching the Word of Christ to us and modeling the character of Christ before us (Heb. 13:7, 17; Ac. 6:1-7; 20:28-31; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-20; 1 Pet. 5:14).

**e. Good Stewards**

We covenant that we will give cheerfully, regularly, and generously to the support of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel both in our city and through all nations (2 Cor. 8-9). We affirm that we will give our spiritual gifts, time, resources and money in a sacrificial manner consistent with the Gospel and for its progress.

**f. Display God's Glory through Unity and Discipline**

Unity - Together, we will seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). We affirm that we are God's church and not our own; therefore, our preferences, needs, and desires are secondary to the mission and vision of the church. Part of maintaining unity and peace means we will adhere to Old Fort's "Basic Beliefs" and will not be divisive over Old Fort's Theological Distinctives as laid out in the BFM2000.

Restorative Discipline - We will humbly and gently confront one another and receive correction from one another in accordance with a New Testament understanding of church discipline and restoration (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Gal. 6:1). We will submit to and prayerfully support the leadership of our pastors (elders) as they seek to oversee discipline among our church.

**g. Christian Growth**

We affirm our responsibility to grow in Christ and his Gospel through the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Scripture reading, worship, service and others. We affirm, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to exercise our Christian liberty with responsibility, remembering that because of the Gospel, we have a special obligation to lead a new and holy life. Certain life choices such as cohabitation and extra-marital sex (Acts 15:20; Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Jude 7), homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9), drug addictions and alcohol abuse (Ephesians 5:18; Proverbs 23:29-35; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:19; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 1 Corinthians 10:31), etc. are not consistent with this special obligation to lead a new and holy life.

**h. Gospel-Centered Families**

We will endeavor to build Gospel-Centered homes. Husbands will seek to lead their wives and children sacrificially as Christ leads the church, meaning husbands are ready to lay down their lives for their families (Eph. 5:22-33). Wives will seek to submit to their husbands, as the church does to Christ. As parents, we will raise the children under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

## ARTICLE V RELATIONSHIPS

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It 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. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the Screven Baptist Association, the South Carolina Baptist State Convention affiliated with The Southern Baptist Convention.

### BY- LAWS OF OLD FORT BAPTIST CHURCH

#### ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP

##### Section 1. General

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

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

##### Section 2. Candidacy

Any person professing faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior may offer himself as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates shall be presented to the church at any regular worship service for membership in any of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith and for baptism.
2. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist church.
3. By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and scriptural baptism.

##### a. Watch-care Membership

All candidates for membership shall be accepted in a watch-care program during which time they will be required to complete a New Members Orientation class and (if applicable) a New Christian Class. Upon completion of this training and approval by the Elders Body, the member shall have the watch-care status removed and enjoy all rights and privileges of covenant membership.

##### b. Covenant Membership

A Covenant Member is expected to fulfill the covenant responsibilities while enjoying the privileges of church membership.

##### Section 3. New Member Orientation

New church members will be required to participate in the church's new member orientation plan. The Discipleship Pastor shall be responsible for insuring that new member orientation be provided on a continuing basis.

#### Section 4. Voting Rights of Members

Every covenant member of the church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present. (See Article II, Section 6 regarding "corporation").

#### Section 5. Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways: (1) death, (2) transfer to another church, (3) any person who does not have a record of attendance in any 12 month period may be notified and given the opportunity to state whether he desires to remain a member. If no response is received, his name shall be automatically dropped from the church, (4) exclusion by action of this church. (see Section 6. Discipline)

#### Section 6. Discipline

1. It shall be the basic purpose of our church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The Pastor and elders are available for counsel and guidance. Redemption should be the guideline which governs the attitude of one member toward another.

2. Should some serious condition exist which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, every reasonable measure will be taken by the Pastor and by the deacons to resolve the problem. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. But, finding that the welfare of the church will best be served by the exclusion of the member, the church may take this action by a three-fourths vote of the members present at a meeting called for this purpose and the church may proceed to declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the church.

3. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any condition which has made it necessary for the church to exclude him may, upon his request, be restored to membership by a vote of the church upon evidence of his repentance and reformation.

### ARTICLE II CHURCH OFFICERS

All church officers shall be members of and elected by the church. The officers of the church shall be as follows:

#### Section 1. Pastor

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

The Pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such, he works with the Elders and the church staff to:

- 1) Lead the church in performing its tasks.
- 2) Lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, and ministry.
- 3) Proclaim the Gospel to believers and unbelievers.
- 4) Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

A written agreement, including considerations, shall be executed between the Pastor and the church in conjunction with his call. The terms of this by-law shall automatically be incorporated in that agreement by reference. A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one weeks notice has been given.

A pulpit committee shall be elected by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and its recommendation will constitute a nomination. Any member has the privilege of making other nominations according to the policy established by the church.

The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one name at a time. Election shall be by ballot with an affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of those present being necessary for a choice. The Pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or by the church's request.

A request by a church member or members for termination of the Pastor shall be brought to the attention of the Personnel Committee which shall investigate the request(s) and the reason(s) therefore and shall bring the matter to the attention of the Body of Elders and the deacons. Each of those bodies (i.e., Personnel Committee, Body of Elders, and deacons) shall then determine independently whether to recommend retention or termination and, if at least two of the three recommend termination, the chairman of the Personnel Committee shall bring a motion to that effect before the congregation at a specially called business meeting of the church, together with such termination provisions as the Personnel Committee may recommend and any minority reports desired. The church will then vote on a motion to terminate and the terms of the termination. If a majority of those present vote for termination, the Pastor's relationship will be terminated in accordance with those terms. In the event of resignation by the Pastor, he shall be required to give at least two weeks notice at the time of his resignation before terminating his responsibilities as pastor. The Pastor shall preside at all meetings of the church except for those matters dealing with his own employment or the terms thereof, or, if he desires, with the employment or terms of employment of other members of the ministerial staff.

## Section 2. Church Staff

The church shall call, in the case of ministers, or employ such staff members as the church shall need. A job description shall be written when the need for staff members is determined or re-evaluated and shall become a part of the considerations of employment of staff members, along with the provisions of this by-law, which shall be automatically incorporated therein by reference. Paid ministerial staff other than the Pastor shall be recommended to the church by the

Personnel Committee, utilizing whatever procedure that committee may deem appropriate, and employed by church action, requiring at least a majority vote of those present. Non-ministerial staff members will be hired by action of the Personnel Committee upon recommendation of the Pastor or Associate Pastor. The Personnel Committee, in accordance with the by-laws Article III, Section 2, will determine the need for all additional staff positions. Staff members, thus called or employed, shall serve until their relationship is terminated in accordance with the following procedures:

a. Ministerial Staff - Each minister, other than the Pastor, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his/her request or at the church's request. A request by a church member or members for the termination of one of the ministerial staff shall be brought to the attention of the Personnel Committee, which shall investigate the request(s) and the reasons therefore and shall bring the matter to the attention of the Pastor and the Elders. Each of those three bodies (i.e., Personnel Committee, Pastor, and Elders shall then determine independently whether to recommend retention or termination and, if at least two of the three recommend termination, the chairman of the personnel committee shall bring a motion to that effect before the congregation at the next regularly scheduled or specially called business meeting of the church, together with such termination provisions as the Personnel Committee may recommend and any minority report(s) desired. The church will then vote on the motion to terminate and the terms of the termination and, if a majority of those present vote for termination, the minister's relationship will be terminated in accordance with those terms. In the event of resignation by a member of the ministerial staff, he shall be required to give at least two weeks notice at the time of his resignation before terminating his responsibilities.

b. Non-ministerial Staff - All paid staff members, except for ministers, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his or her request or by the Pastor and Elders, in consultation with the Personnel Committee, acting on behalf of the church. In the event of a resignation by a member of the non-ministerial staff, he/she shall be required to give at least two weeks notice at the time of resignation before terminating his/her responsibilities.

### Section 3, Elders

1. Understanding that the Word of God affirms Elders as anointed leaders of the church, many decisions and responsibilities regarding the life and direction of the church are left to their spiritual oversight. (Acts 11:30, 14:23; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:17) The Elders shall serve as the administrating body of the church, equipping and overseeing the ministries of the church (John 21:16-17; Acts 20:17; Eph. 4:11-12; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-2). The Elders shall oversee the ministries of the body of Christ to ensure soundness of doctrine and to maintain the biblical and practical integrity of the overall ministry of the church. The Elders shall be empowered to make any and all decisions related to the life of the church of a business, legal, or doctrinal nature not directly designated for congregational approval.

2. The Body of Elders shall consist of the ordained pastoral staff and at least five spiritually mature and tested men elected by the church. The current chairpersons of the Deacon

Ministry, Personnel Committee and Stewardship Committees will serve as ex officio members of the Body of Elders.

3. In the case of the need to elect new elders, the Senior Pastor and at least three other Elders, appointed by the Senior Pastor, shall serve as the selection team. This team will (1) prayerfully determine which potential candidates to contact regarding the office of elder based on the current number needed, (2) ask the candidates of their desire to consider this office based on the scriptural qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, (3) ask permission of the candidate and then perform a background check on each one, (4) examine each candidate according to the scriptural qualifications to prayerfully determine their appointment to this office. Once the Elder Selection Team determines the needed/qualified candidate(s), the names will be submitted to the entire Elder Body for discussion and approval. Upon Elder Body approval, the list of names will go before the congregation for a vote of affirmation. A vote of affirmation will require a two-thirds majority vote from those members present. Elders will serve in this role until they submit their resignation or until the role is terminated by a two-thirds majority vote by the Elder Body.

#### Section 4. Deacons

1. Deacons should be selected from among those men who have proven themselves to be qualified scripturally. Scriptures that apply particularly to deacons are found in Acts 6, Tim. 3, and Titus 1.

2. After each year of service, deacons will be interviewed, evaluated and given the opportunity to continue active service for the following year or to step down and take at least one year off before serving again. An election shall be held to fill the vacancies. Those who are elected that have not been previously ordained will serve the first year as an apprentice before ordination. The number of active deacons for any given year is to be determined by the ministry need and the availability of qualified men.

3. In accordance with the meaning of the work and practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. The task of the deacon is to serve with the Pastor and staff in performing pastoral ministries; proclaim the Gospel to believers and unbelievers; care for the church members and other persons in the community; lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, and ministry. While deacons may serve in administrative and managerial functions of the church, their primary function shall be spiritual leadership and service.

4. It will be the responsibility of the current deacons to develop and administer the election process for the following year. Every candidate will be thoroughly tested and must be approved before presented to the church body. Final election will be by ballot vote at the annual church meeting.

### Section 5. Moderator

The moderator shall be the Pastor unless otherwise designated. In the absence of the Pastor, the Associate Pastor shall preside.

### Section 6. Corporation Officers

This corporation shall be known as "Old Fort Baptist Church" and shall be composed of all members of the church in good standing, male and female over twenty-one years of age. (Due to requirements of S.C. state charter of incorporation). The officers of the corporation shall be a president and a secretary, who shall perform such duties usually appertaining to said offices; and they shall sign and execute all conveyances, mortgages, and other deeds and evidences of debt, whenever authorized by the corporation. They shall be elected from the Body of Elders and hold office for one year, or until their successors are elected. The corporation seal shall be a stamp containing the words and figures "Old Fort Baptist, 1969" in a circle, with the word "seal" in the center.

## ARTICLE III COMMITTEES AND MINISTRY TEAMS

### Section 1. General

All special and standing church committee members will be church members, and elected by the church unless otherwise indicated in the following description. The committee members shall serve on a three-year rotation system with approximately one third to be elected each year. Each committee will vote each year to decide who their chairman will be. Ministry Teams are to be appointed by the Body of Elders and will serve the church in all areas deemed necessary by the leadership until the need is no longer prevalent. The Pastor or designated Staff Member shall serve as ex officio members of all committees.

### Section 2. Personnel/Constitution & By-laws Committee

The Personnel/Constitution By-laws committee assists the church in matters related to employed personnel administration. Its work includes areas such as recommending staff needs, employment, salaries, benefits and personnel services. It will also be responsible to recommend to the church any changes, revisions or additions to the constitution and/or by-laws.

### Section 3. 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 Body of Elders, 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.

#### ARTICLE IV: CHURCH MEETINGS

##### Section 1: Annual Church Conference

The church will hold an annual conference each December to hear reports from the previous year, to approve the following year's budget and to conduct any other business deemed necessary at that time. A quorum will consist of those present. Robert's Rules of Order will be the guide for parliamentary procedure.

##### Section 2: Called Business Conferences

The Body of Elders can call the church to conference with a notice of one week in order to conduct any business necessary at that time.

##### Section 3: Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall be from January 1 –December 31.

#### ARTICLE V AMENDMENTS

Changes in this constitution and by-laws may be made at any regular meeting of the church, provided such amendments shall have been presented in writing at a previous meeting, and copies of the proposed amendment be furnished to each member present. Changes to this constitution and by-laws must be presented to the Elders at least one month in advance and will be made available to the church membership if approved by the Elders before the Annual Church Conference. Amendments to the constitution shall be by two-thirds vote of all members present entitled to vote. Amendments to the by-laws shall have a concurrence of a majority of the members present and voting.