

ORAL BAPTIST CHURCH

CONSTITUTION and BYLAWS

General Revision 1994/1995

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

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

I. NAME

This body shall be known as the "ORAL BAPTIST CHURCH", located at 4850 Kingston Highway, Lenoir City, Tennessee 37771.

II. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the basis for this 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 this church are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of "The Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963.

III. CHURCH COVENANT

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

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

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our

dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of, and use of, intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to 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 offence, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove 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.

IV. **CHURCH POLITY**

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 Loudon County Baptist Association, the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

BYLAWS

I. MEMBERSHIP

1. **General**

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive 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 the church and the conditions of such membership.

2. **Candidacy**

Any person 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 according to the policies of this church.
- (2) By promise of a letter from another Baptist church of like faith and practice.
- (3) By a statement of prior conversion experience and subsequent baptism by immersion in a Baptist church of like faith and practice. Presentation of a candidate by statement shall only be made when no letter is obtainable and after counseling with the pastor.

A three-fourths vote by those members present at the worship service grants "watchcare" membership to the candidate and authorizes the church clerk to request a letter from another Baptist Church if appropriate. The candidate is then expected to participate in the church's new member orientation program. The candidate becomes eligible for full membership only after baptism in this church, reception of letter, or on recommendation of the pastor after counseling. Full membership is granted only after an affirmative three-fourths vote of those members present at a regular business meeting.

If at any time before the vote the candidate should find that his/her beliefs and practices are inconsistent with church doctrine, the candidate may remove his/her name from consideration for membership. Similarly, should there be any dissent within the church as to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred in confidence to the pastor and the deacons for counseling and inquiry. If the counseling and inquiry reveals a basis for the dissent, in that the candidate's stated beliefs and practices are found inconsistent with church doctrine, the pastor and deacons shall make a recommendation to the church concerning the candidate's membership. Any recommendation shall be made at a regular business meeting within forty-five (45) days of the first objection. A three-fourths vote of those members present at a regular business meeting shall be required to elect such candidates to membership.

3. **Rights of Members**

- (1) Every member of the church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided that the member is present.
- (2) Every member of the church is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the church.
- (3) Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.

4. **Termination of Membership**

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- (1) Death
- (2) Dismission to another Baptist church of like faith and practice
- (3) Exclusion by action of this church as provided below
- (4) Upon proof of affiliation with another evangelical church.

5. **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, in the spirit of Galatians 6:1, 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 deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accord with Matthew 18. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to exclude a member, a three-fourths 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 three fourths vote of the church upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation.

II. CHURCH OFFICERS

All church officers must be active members of the church. The officers of this church shall be as follows:

1. **Pastor**

The pastor is responsible for leading the church in functioning as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff in performing their tasks. A major concern of the pastor is to perform pastoral responsibilities. The pastor is the spiritual leader in worship, proclamation, education, and pastoral ministries.

2. **Staff**

This church shall call or employ such staff members as the church shall need for performing its tasks. Staff members will function at the direction of the pastor in a cooperative effort at accomplishing the ministry of the church. In absence of pastor, such direction shall be made by the deacons.

3. **Deacons**

In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. The task of the deacon is to serve with the pastor in performing the pastoral ministry. This includes to proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers; care for church members and other persons in the community, lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, ministry, and application and lead the church in performing its tasks.

4. **Moderator**

The church moderator shall be the pastor. In the absence of the pastor, the chairman of the deacons shall preside. In the absence of the two, the clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator shall be elected.

5. **Clerk**

The church shall annually elect a church clerk. The clerk shall keep a suitable record of all the actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The clerk is responsible for keeping a register of the names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal, or death, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary, as indicated in this constitution. The church may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to a church secretary. All church records are church property and shall be filed in the church office.

6. Treasurer

The church shall annually elect a church treasurer and an assistant treasurer. It shall be the duty of the treasurer and the assistant to receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of vouchers, approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money, or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements for the preceding month. The treasurer's report may be audited annually by an auditing committee or public accountant and are open to review by any member of the church. The church may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to a church financial secretary.

7. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall be employed by the church. He/she shall be responsible for keeping a record of individual contributions and reporting such record to the individuals annually. He/she shall do any other work as directed by the treasurer.

8. Church Ushers

The church ushers shall be led by two ushers nominated by the nominating committee and elected by the church annually. The ushers are to greet people as they enter and leave the church, seat people at the proper time, and provide bulletins and/or other materials. The ushers will be attentive to the needs of the congregation and the pastor. The elected ushers shall be responsible for assuring that an adequate number of ushers are available for all meetings.

9. Trustees

Three trustees elected by the church will hold in trust all church property. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. It shall be the function of the trustees to affix their signatures to legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property or other legal documents where the signatures of trustees are required. Trustees shall serve on a rotation basis with one replacement member to be elected each year.

III. COMMITTEES

The governing body of the church is the congregation and all church committees are accountable to the congregation for proper functioning and efficient operation. The following permanent committees shall be elected by the church on an annual basis. Permanent committees may be added or deleted by the amendment procedure prescribed within these bylaws. Other special (temporary) committees may be established and elected by vote as required by the church.

The pastor shall be ex officio member of all committees, and his leadership is to be recognized in them. An active Deacon shall be assigned by the Deacon body to serve on each church committee in an advisory, non-voting capacity. A list of Deacon committee assignments for the following year shall

accompany the annual recommendations of the Nominating Committee. All other committee members shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church. If sufficient qualified workers are available, elected committee members should serve on a rotation basis with one replacement member to be elected each year.

1. **Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee shall recommend workers to staff all volunteer positions in the church. Persons considered for any such position shall first be approved by the nominating committee before they are approached for recruitment. The nominating committee shall present to the church for election all who accept the invitation to serve. Should vacancies occur after positions have been staffed, the nominating committee shall be responsible to make further recommendations to the church. This committee shall consist of the Sunday School director and director-elect, Church Training director and director-elect, and two other elected members.

2. **Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee shall administer the funds of the church in accordance with the budget, using sound principles of financial management. The committee shall recommend any unbudgeted expenditures. It shall develop and recommend an annual budget to the church. This committee shall consist of the treasurer and three other elected members.

3. **Building and Grounds Committee**

The Building and Grounds Committee shall have responsibility for the care and maintenance of the physical property of the church. The committee shall give prompt attention to maintaining the buildings and grounds of the church in usable and attractive condition. The committee will be responsible to recommend to the church a custodian and will supervise his/her work. This committee shall consist of one trustee, and three other elected members.

4. **Benevolence Committee**

The Benevolence Committee shall oversee the church's acts of benevolence to persons in need in the name of Christ and His Church. These needs may be physical, social, mental, or spiritual. This committee shall consist of the active deacon body in accordance with the precedent of the New Testament.

5. Flower Committee

The Flower Committee shall attend to the needs of the church in expressing the church's concern in the events of hospitalization and/or death. The Flower Committee shall develop, maintain, and recommend for approval a flower and card policy which meets the needs of the church and its members. The committee shall consist of three elected members.

6. Constitution Committee

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall annually review the church constitution and bylaws for the purpose of keeping the document current. During this review, any church approved changes recorded in business meeting minutes shall be incorporated. The committee shall submit any additional recommendations to the church for approval in accordance with the "Amendments" section of these bylaws. Committee members shall act as Parliamentarians during business meetings to assure that all terms of this Constitution and Bylaws are followed. This committee shall consist of four elected members.

7. Membership Review Committee

The Membership Review Committee shall be responsible for reviewing the church membership roll to determine the status of each member. The Committee or its designated representative(s) shall attempt to contact all inactive members. It shall be the primary goal of this committee to attempt to restore all inactive members to active participation in the fellowship through Christian outreach. A list of names of only those members found to be deceased or to have joined another evangelical church shall be compiled. This list shall be presented at a regular business meeting and by a three-fourths vote those names shall be deleted from the membership roll. It shall not be within this committee's responsibility to recommend removal of any member for any other reason. This activity shall occur at least every 10 calendar years beginning in 1995. This committee shall consist of the Outreach Leader and the Church Clerk.

8. Music Committee

The Music Committee shall promote the Music Program in the Church under the direction of the Minister of Music and in consultation with the Pastor. In the absence of a Minister of Music, the Committee shall arrange for musicians and a temporary music director as required for all services. When so directed by the Church, the Music Committee shall be responsible for performing a reasonable search for and recommending to the Church a Minister of Music. This committee shall consist of two elected members and the Minister of Music, if available.

9. **Van Committee**

The Van Committee shall be responsible for the care and maintenance of all Church vehicles and promote their use as an arm of the church for outreach, evangelism, and practical ministry. The Van Committee shall develop, maintain, and recommend for approval a van use policy which meets the needs of the church and its members. The committee shall consist of three elected members.

IV. **PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONS**

1. **General**

All organizations of the church shall be under church control, all officers being active church members, elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church. It is understood that the pastor is an ex officio officer of all organizations named, and his leadership is to be recognized in them.

2. **Sunday School**

There shall be a Sunday School under the direction of a Sunday School director. Sunday School shall be conducted each Lord's Day.

The tasks of the Sunday School shall be to teach the Bible, lead in reaching prospects for the church, lead the church in worship, witness, and daily ministry, provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

3. **Church Training**

There shall be a Church Training Program under the direction of a general director. Church Training is to be conducted each Lord's Day, and shall serve as the training organization of the church.

The tasks of the Church Training Program shall be to teach church doctrine, Christian history, Christian ethics, and church polity and organization; give orientation to new church members; to train all church members to worship, witness, learn, and minister daily; to train leaders for the church and the denomination; to discover, recruit, and train potential leaders; to provide for specialized training; to provide organization and leadership for special projects of the church; and to provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

4. **Woman's Missionary Union**

There shall be a Woman's Missionary Union with such officers and such forms of organization as needed. The elected president will be approved by the church. The tasks of the Woman's Missionary Union shall be to teach missions, lead persons to participate in missions; provide organization and leadership for special mission projects of the church; and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

5. **Baptist Men**

There shall be a Baptist Men's Organization, made up of such auxiliary groups, including Royal Ambassadors, as needed. This program shall be directed by a president who shall be approved by the church. The tasks are to teach missions, lead all men, young men, and boys to participate in mission activities; provide organization and leadership for special projects of the church; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

6. **Church Music Program**

There shall be a Church Music program under the direction of a minister of music, if available. Such other officers and/or organizations shall be provided as needed. The tasks of the music program shall be to teach music and hymnody; provide music and musicians for the congregational services and the organizations of the church; lead persons to participate in hymn singing; train persons to lead, sing, and play music; provide organization and leadership for special projects of the church; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

V. **CHURCH COUNCIL**

The Church Council shall be responsible for the planning and promotion of the overall program of the church in carrying out its ministries. The Church Council shall coordinate the various activities of the organizations and shall be responsible for the church calendar. The Church Council shall recommend to the church personnel for any paid positions not otherwise provided for in these Bylaws. The Church Council shall consist of the chairman of deacons, the Sunday School director, the Church Training director, the Women's Missionary Union president, the Baptist Men president, and the Minister of Music.

VI. **CHURCH ORDINANCES**

1. **Baptism**

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

- (1) Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
- (2) The pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism. The deacons shall assist in the preparation for, and the observance of, baptism.
- (3) Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
- (4) A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastor and/or staff or deacons. If negative interest is verified on the part of the candidate, he shall be deleted from those awaiting baptism.

2. **The Lord's Supper**

The church shall observe the Lord's Supper at least once each quarter. Preceding the observance of the Supper, one is to be a baptized believer to take the Lord's Supper. Plainly and emphatically the Bible teaches us (Matthew 28:19-20) this sacred order: one, we are to be saved; two, we are then to be baptized upon that profession of faith; three, we are thereafter to observe the things Jesus has given us to keep. The pastor and deacons shall schedule and administer the Lord's Supper, the deacons being responsible for the physical preparations.

VII. **CHURCH MEETINGS**

1. **Worship Services**

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning and evening for preaching, instruction, evangelism, and for the worship of Almighty God, and on Wednesday evening for prayer and other church activities. These meetings shall be open to the membership of the church and to all others who may choose to attend. They shall be conducted under the direction of the pastor.

3. **Business Meetings**

Regular business meetings shall be held monthly on the second Wednesday night of each month.

The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. One-week notice must be given for any specially called business meeting. A special business meeting shall only be called by consent of the pastor and the deacon body, or by vote of the church in regular business session.

The business meeting agenda shall consist of:

- (1) Only the stated purpose or business for any called business meeting.
- (2) Only recommendations brought to the church by the standing or special committees and/or by the deacons.
- (3) Nomination from the floor and election of delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention, Tennessee Baptist Convention, and the Loudon County Baptist Association Convention.

Presentation of new business may be brought to the attention of the church at any regular business meeting, whereon, without discussion, it shall be referred to the appropriate committee or the deacon body by the moderator. After referral, the designated committee or the deacon body shall make recommendation to the church concerning the matter at the next business meeting.

4. **Quorum**

Those present and voting at any duly called or regular business meeting will constitute a quorum.

5. **Parliamentary Rules**

The business shall be conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in Roberts's Rules of Order, unless by a two-thirds vote the church votes to suspend these procedures for any one item of business.

IIX. ELECTIONS

Deacons are to be elected in accordance the requirements of the "Deacons, Elections" section of these By-Laws.

The Sunday School director and the Church Training director shall be nominated and elected during the regular June business meeting or as soon as practical thereafter. These directors-elect shall immediately join the presently serving directors on the Nominating Committee in preparation for teacher nominations. All other director duties shall commence on October 1.

All other church officers shall be nominated and elected at the regular September business meeting or as soon as practical thereafter. Their duties shall begin on October 1. Unless otherwise noted, all terms expire on September 30. Special elections may be held at any regular business meeting to fill unexpected vacancies. Election of delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention, Tennessee Baptist Convention, and the Loudon County Baptist Association Convention may be at any regular business meeting.

IX. CHURCH FINANCES

1. **Budget**

The Finance Committee, in consultation with other committees as necessary, shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive annual budget. The church fiscal year shall run concurrent with the calendar year beginning on January 1. The budget for the following year shall be presented during the month of December. The budget shall indicate by items the amount needed and sought for all local and other expenses. Any subsequent revisions to the budget necessary to cover unforeseen expenses shall be recommended by the Finance Committee and be approved by the church.

Approval of the budget shall authorize expenditures for all recurring expenses including salaries, Sunday School literature, utilities, minor repairs, and expendable supplies. Non-recurring expenses in excess of \$200 shall be presented to the church at a regular business meeting for approval. Emergency approval for expenditures necessary to protect or maintain the assets of the church may be granted by any two of the Pastor, the Treasurer, Chairman of the Finance Committee or Chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee.

2. **Accounting Procedures**

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer, or financial secretary, and be properly recorded on the books of the church. The only exception may be those informal funds maintained by the Baptist Men and WMU organizations, and individual classes used primarily for social functions.

A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the treasurer and financial secretary. No bank account may be opened in the name of the Church without prior Church approval.

X. **PASTOR**

1. **Calling of Pastor**

Whenever the church is without a pastor, the church shall endeavor with all deliberate speed to secure a pastor.

- (1) A pulpit committee consisting of an odd number of members shall be nominated by the deacons and voted upon by the church.
- (2) After prayerful consideration and search, the pulpit committee shall present only one candidate at a time to the church.
- (3) The pulpit committee shall give the church at least one week notice of their intent to have a prospective pastor preach for the church.
- (4) The church may vote upon a candidate at the regular business meeting or in a special called meeting of which at least one week's public notice has been given.
- (5) The church shall issue a call upon a three-fourths vote of the church by secret ballot.
- (6) If the candidate accepts the call, the pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request. He shall give at least two week notice at the time of resignation before terminating his responsibilities as pastor.

2. **Conditions of Employment**

- (1) The church shall supply the pastor and his family with an adequate salary and a parsonage or comparable housing allowance. If the parsonage is used, the pastor shall be responsible to promptly report any needed repairs to the building and grounds committee.
- (2) The pastor will be responsible for the spiritual care and leadership of the church, including all church meetings.
- (3) The pastor shall be given fourteen days of paid vacation. After completion of four years, the pastor will be entitled to an extra week of vacation to be taken any time in the calendar year of his fifth anniversary and each year thereafter.

He may be away for revival for two Sundays during which the church will pay the pulpit supply. Any further absences from the church are discouraged and must be approved by the church, and if approved, the pastor will pay his supply.

XI. DEACONS

Deacons are servants of the church. The Greek word "dekonia" is translated 36 times in the New Testament as "servant". "Servants" were selected to free the apostles to pray, prepare and preach. Deacons are not to decide for the church, they are to carry out the decisions of the church. To them will come many matters calling for deliberation and recommendation, and on their own initiative they will be watchful over the welfare of the church. They should never arrogate to themselves any authority for running the church.

1. **Number**

There shall be at least seven (7) active deacons, for the first three hundred (300) members whose names are on the church roll, and one additional deacon for each additional forty (40) members.

2. **Duties**

Their greatest service to the church will usually be found in their assistance to the pastor. To them he will bring problems, the difficulties, the embarrassing situations, the material and spiritual concerns of the church. In closest confidence, with combined wisdom, in much prayer for guidance, pastor and deacons will seek to conserve the interest of the church and the kingdom and to protect the work and influence of the congregation and denomination "from Jerusalem....unto the uttermost part."

They shall seek to know the moral, physical and Spiritual needs and burdens of the members of the church and shall serve the whole church through the Deacon Ministry in relieving, encouraging, and developing all who are in such need.

The whole body of Deacons shall be organized as a unit for the consideration of all larger problems and general policies of the church having such officers, including a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary, as well as such committees as they may deem best.

The Deacons shall meet each month and at such special times, upon call of the chairman, for considerations of urgent matters. Any three members of the Deacons shall have the right to petition and call a meeting of the Deacons.

The Deacons shall, in the case of the absence or inability of the pastor, and subject to the advice and conference with him, provide for pulpit supplies. In any period when the church is without a pastor, unless the church shall otherwise provide, the Deacons shall arrange for temporary ministry and take counsel with reference to securing an interim pastor; however, it is especially provided that the matter of selecting a pastor shall rest with the church and not with the Deacons.

There shall be an active deacon on each of the Church Committees.

3. **Qualifications**

In electing deacons, the church shall elect men who are honorable, who are true servants of God, and who conform with the meaning of the Word and practice of the New Testament. They shall be servants of the church and zealous to guide the unity of the Spirit within the church in the bonds of peace. Accordingly, the following guidelines shall be the basis for selection of deacons. A deacon shall:

- (A) Be a spirit-filled believer, Acts 6:3
- (B) Be a man of good reputation in the community, Acts 6:3
- (C) Be a man with the spiritual gift of wisdom and understanding, Acts 6:3
- (D) Be sound in the faith and a man of pure conscience, I Timothy 3:9
- (E) Be serious about the Lord's work and not a gossip or one who speaks with a double tongue, I Timothy 3:8
- (F) Abstain from all alcoholic beverages, I Timothy 3:8
- (G) Be a good steward of his money, not greedy or covetous, and honoring God with at least a tithe of his income, I Timothy 3:8
- (H) Have had a time of proving, I Timothy 3:10
- (I) Be the husband of one living wife and the spiritual leader of his wife and children, I Timothy 3:12
- (J) Be a man who assumes his duties and responsibilities as directed by the church, as a servant set out in the word "deacon" which comes from the Greek work meaning "servant".
- (K) Be the pastor's helper and friend, Acts 6:1-6
- (L) Be a witness for Christ as the example of Philip, and is to support the visitation program of this church, Acts 8:26-40
- (M) Be faithful and regular in attendance at all worship services, prayer and business meetings of the church, Hebrews 10:25.

In accordance with this Church's interpretation of the scriptures and longstanding tradition, the following shall be the policy of this Church:

- (1) Only married male members of the church of age twenty-five (25) and over shall be considered for deacon.
- (2) Men shall have been saved at least three years, and a member of Oral Baptist Church at least one year before being considered for deacon.
- (3) There shall be no obligation to constitute as an active deacon a brother who comes to the church from another church where he has served as deacon. However, if one should be chosen by this church through the nomination and election procedure described below, his previous ordination by another Baptist church of like faith shall suffice for this church.

4. **Election**

The congregation by ballots shall choose their servants. The election of deacon(s) shall commence as soon as practical after a vacancy has been identified. All steps in the selection of deacons shall be accompanied by earnest prayer for guidance and clear exposition of the basic requirements and duties of the office. The process of arriving at a final ballot shall include nomination of candidates, and verification of the nominees' willingness to serve. The final ballot shall not contain more than two names for each vacancy except that it may contain three names if only a single vacancy exists. All ballots shall be accompanied by the qualifications for deacons.

a) **Nomination**

The pastor and presently serving deacons shall design a ballot for nomination of deacons. This first ballot shall be presented at a meeting called for that purpose of which at least two weeks public notice has been given. Every member of the congregation is asked to pray and to vote for (number needed) men. The ballots are to be turned in at the conclusion of the meeting and counted in private by the pastor and deacons. Nominees shall be ranked according to the number of votes received.

b) **Interview of Candidates**

Deacons shall be men who are willing to serve in such capacity and who are fully conscious of the Divine purpose and duties of the work of the deacon. Accordingly, nominees shall be contacted by the pastor and active deacons starting with the man with the most nominating votes. The purpose of this interview shall be to determine his willingness to accept the spiritual requirements of the deaconship and to abide by the Church Constitution and Bylaws. An affirmative answer places his name on the final ballot. Interviews shall continue with each man in turn down the nomination list. Interviews shall cease when the final ballot is thus filled. All interviews shall be completed within two weeks of the first ballot.

c) **Final Balloting**

The pastor and presently serving deacons shall prepare the final ballot for election of deacons. Only names of nominees who have expressed a willingness to serve shall be included. This ballot shall be presented at a meeting called for that purpose of which at least two weeks public notice has been given. Every member of the congregation is asked to pray and to vote for (number needed) men. The ballots are to be turned in and counted in private by the pastor and deacons.

The man receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected. The man receiving the next highest number of votes shall be declared elected. This procedure will continue until the number of deacons needed are elected.

d) **Training and Induction**

Newly elected deacons shall be expected to join the presently serving deacons in a study of the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963. Ordination, if necessary, and induction into the office of deacon shall then follow as soon as practical.

5. **Tenure of Service**

Once a deacon is ordained, it is for life unless his ordination is revoked by the church. His active status as a deacon depends upon his commitment and faithfulness to all the above in these guidelines for deacons.

The term of office of a deacon shall terminate upon:

- (A) His death,
- (B) Termination of his membership in the Church,
- (C) His resignation,
- (D) The action of the Deacons hereinafter provided for, or
- (E) His removal from such office by the Church.

On behalf of the Church and without additional Church action, the Deacons may accept the resignation of any deacon and may drop his active deacon status. The Deacons shall make such recommendations as they may deem proper to the Church.

In the event of gross misconduct or in the case of acts involving moral turpitude or un-christian-like conduct on the part of any deacon during his ministry, he may, upon written complaint made to the church, be removed from active ministry by vote of the church at any regular business meeting. The church may proceed to elect another deacon to fill such vacancy. In no case shall a deacon be removed from office without the church first granting him the privilege of an open hearing. The church is to always be guided by the principles set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, I Corinthians 5:9-13, I Thessalonians 5:12-14.

6. **Deacon Emeritus**

It shall be appropriate for the church to promote to honorary life membership any deacon who by age or infirmity shall, after honorable service, be no longer able to render active service.

Promotion to Deacon Emeritus shall not be considered as either resignation or termination from the Deacons but rather as well earned semi-retirement after years of service. This position is to be considered a place of honor and frees the deacon so promoted from active participation in the Deacon Ministry except as he feels led of the Lord and is able. An additional active deacon shall be elected to fill the position vacated by one promoted to Deacon Emeritus.

XII. **AMENDMENTS**

Changes in this constitution and bylaws may be any regular business meetings 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. Amendments to the constitution shall be by two-thirds vote of all members of the church present entitled to vote. Amendments to the bylaws shall be by a vote of a majority of the members present and voting.

AMENDMENT RECORD			
(Note: Latest revisions are indicated with a vertical line in margin adjacent to lines with changes.)			
Rev.	Approval Date	Revised Section(s)	Revision Intent
95	Mar/Apr 1995	All	General revision of the 1992 Constitution and Bylaws.
95A	Oct 2005	III. Committees, Paragraph 2	To clarify the paragraph and to remove the requirement for mandatory rotation of elected members on all committees.