

# CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS OF WOODVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

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## PREAMBLE

We, the members of Woodville Baptist Church, Inc. of Woodville, Mississippi, declare and establish this Constitution and By-laws to preserve the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner to the glory of God and consistent with the teachings of the New Testament. This Constitution and By-laws shall preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches. Upon its adoption, this Constitution and By-laws shall revoke, cancel, and/or set aside any and all resolutions, statements of policy and any other action of Woodville Baptist Church, Inc. or its predecessor, Woodville Baptist Church, and prior to the adoption of this Constitution and By-laws which may be in conflict with it. Where no conflict with this Constitution and By-laws exists, prior resolutions and statements of policy shall remain in effect.

### I. NAME

This body shall be known as Woodville Baptist Church, Inc., 264 Natchez Street, Woodville, Mississippi 39669.

### II. 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 the value of cooperation with other churches as deemed appropriate by this body of believers. All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church unless otherwise specified by church action. Upon adoption of this Constitution and By-laws this church shall be deemed to have affiliated itself with the Mississippi Baptist Association, the [Mississippi Baptist Convention](#) and the [Southern Baptist Convention](#).

### III. PURPOSE

To be a dynamic spiritual body being led by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world.

To be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to his leadership.

To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.

To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man.

To be a church which ministers unselfishly to persons in the community and the world in Jesus's name.

To be a church whose purpose is to be Christ-like in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the Lordship of Christ.

#### IV. 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 of 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, with governance as defined in the church's adopted by-laws.

#### V. CHURCH COVENANT

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

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and 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 engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid knowingly engaging in sinful behavior; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the 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.

## VI. BY-LAWS

### ARTICLE 1. PROCEDURE

[Woodville Baptist Church, Inc.](#) is a congregationally led church, governed by the congregation as opposed to a Board of Directors. As such, all members eighteen years and over have the right to participate in making decisions on behalf of the church. Church business will be presented to and voted on by the members prior to being adopted or implemented.

The regular business meeting will be the third Sunday of each quarter following the morning worship service.

Special business meetings may be called by the pastor or the chairman of deacons at any regular meeting of the church or whenever a special need arises. Significant items of business such as property, finance, or staffing will require advance notice to the membership of at least two weeks.

A decision-making quorum is considered to be those members present during a quarterly or special called meeting provided the decision being voted upon was presented as an agenda item with the prescribed two-week notice.

All business meetings will be conducted by the moderator pursuant to Article 3, Section 6, Paragraph A and the church shall follow [Robert's Rules of Order, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition](#) in matters of parliamentary practice.

As a practical matter, church officers and committees have authority to make day-to-day decisions governed by the roles and responsibilities assigned them or it. However, any decision by an officer or committee from which conflict arises is subject to approval by the Deacon body. Also, if objections to actions taken by an officer or a committee are formally raised in writing and signed by three or more church members to the Deacon body, the Deacon body may resolve the issue or have the option of bringing it before the congregation for a vote at a quarterly or special called meeting with two weeks prior notice.

Voting on all church matters will be done in person only. Proxies are not to be recognized for voting purposes.

## ARTICLE 2. MEMBERSHIP

- Section 1. Qualifications: This church shall receive members by:
- (1) Public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and upon baptism by immersion.
  - (2) Letter of transfer from a sister Southern Baptist Church.
  - (3) Satisfactory statement of salvation and former membership by any Christian church which practices baptism by immersion.

All prospective members will be congratulated at the time that they come forward publicly to unite with this church by one of the three ways stated above, but they will not be received officially into the membership of this church until they have been:

- (1) Received by a favorable vote of this church in a regular quarterly or a special called business meeting.
- (2) Received a new member packet which includes a copy of: Constitution, By-laws, Church Covenant (included in Constitution), "Baptist Faith and Message", and Deacon List.

- Section 2. Duties: Members are expected to be faithful in all the duties essential to living a positive life for Jesus Christ, to attend regularly all the worship services of this church when able, to contribute regularly for its support and its causes, and to share in its organized work.

- Section 3. Rights: All members of this church may act, speak, and vote (if aged 18 years or older) pertaining to the transaction of business of this church.

- Section 4. Termination: Membership in this church will cease in the following ways:
- (1) At death.
  - (2) Upon the granting, by this church, at the request of a sister Southern Baptist Church or another Christian Church that practices baptism by immersion, a letter of transfer.
  - (3) When a member formally and publicly unites with another denomination.
  - (4) When a member unites with another Baptist Church and there is no request for letter.
  - (5) A person's membership may be terminated upon presentation of his written request.
  - (6) When a member has become an offense to the church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct.

Termination, in regard to item (6) above, will come about by the church in a regular quarterly business meeting after first consideration by the deacon body, then after due notice and hearing to the delinquent member, and then only after faithful, patient, kind, loving efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment. Such termination by the church body will require a 75% vote.

Section 5. Restoration: Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by a 75% vote of the church, upon evidence of his repentance and amendment.

### ARTICLE 3. CHURCH OFFICERS

Woodville Baptist Church, Inc. follows Mississippi's "Employment at Will Doctrine" whereby paid employees of the church are not under a contractual employment agreement of any sort. Under this doctrine, an employment agreement, whether written or verbal, may be terminated at the will of either party at any time with or without cause.

Section 1. Pastor:

- (1) Election: A pastor will be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election will take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice will be given in the church bulletin and/or the church newsletter. A pastor search committee will be elected by the process of secret ballot and a committee chairman will be selected by the search committee at their first meeting thereafter. Their recommendation for a pastor will constitute a nomination, which, as a courtesy, shall be first presented to the body of Deacons prior to being presented to the church. The church will consider only one man at a time and the candidate must receive 75% of the vote. The pastor, thus elected and called, will serve until the relationship is terminated. According to the church's belief, only men will be allowed to serve in the role of church Pastor.
- (2) Scriptural Qualifications: The scriptural qualifications of the pastor will be those as found in [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#).
- (3) Termination of a pastor's call:
  - (1) A pastor's call shall continue until the relationship is terminated at the request of the pastor or the church. In either case, at least 30 days' notice shall be given, unless otherwise mutually agreed, with both the pastor and the church seeking to follow the will of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
  - (2) Calls for termination proposed by members of the church must be presented to the Deacons and personnel committee in writing and signed by the proposers. Action to consider termination of the pastor's call by the church based on objective cause shall be reviewed jointly by the Deacons and the personnel committee with efforts to resolve issues through counseling and mediation.

- (3) The Deacons and personnel committee may call a Special Business Meeting and jointly present their recommendations to the church. The church will vote on the termination by written ballot. An affirmative vote for termination by 75% of the votes cast will be required to terminate the relationship.

Section 2. Minister of Music

Election: The Minister of Music will be recommended by the pastor and the music committee, approved by the body of Deacons, and accepted by a 75% vote of the church. The Minister of Music's duties shall be defined by the personnel committee.

Section 3. Minister of Youth

Election: The Minister of Youth will be recommended by the pastor and the youth committee, approved by the body of Deacons, and accepted by a 75% vote of the church. The Minister of Youth's duties shall be defined by the personnel committee.

Section 4. Secretary

Election: The secretary will be recommended by the personnel committee and approved by the church with a simple majority vote. The secretary's duties shall be defined by the personnel committee.

Section 5. Deacons

*A. Qualities and Qualifications:*

The basic scriptural qualities of deacons are found in [1 Timothy 3:8-12](#) and [Acts 6:1-8](#), to which all deacons shall subscribe. The local church qualifications are:

1. A deacon shall be a Christian devoted to Christ and ministering to his people.
2. A deacon shall be doctrinally sound. [The Baptist Faith and Message](#) (adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000) shall serve as doctrinal guide.
3. A deacon's financial stewardship shall begin with the tithe (10%) to his church.
4. A deacon shall have read the [Church Covenant](#) and pledge to carry out its spirit and principles of God's word.
5. A deacon shall have had active membership in this church for a period of at least three years and be at least 30 years old as of August 31 in the year of nomination.
6. A deacon shall be a person who, if health and work permit and not being providentially hindered, attends the regularly scheduled church worship services.

7. A deacon shall make a commitment to attend all regularly scheduled monthly deacons' meetings and any special deacons' meetings, unless providentially hindered.

*B. Election:*

- (1) The present body of deacons, along with the pastor, serves as a screening committee.
- (2) A designated time is set aside for the receiving of names of prospective deacons. Any member of the church is eligible to submit names written on the church's deacon nomination form to the screening committee. The list need not be signed.
- (3) Names submitted after the designated time for receiving them will not be considered.
- (4) Deacon Rotation System
  - (1) Each deacon would serve a five-year term as an "active" deacon.
  - (2) Those terms would start September 1 and continue through August 31.
  - (3) When a deacon's term expires, that deacon will be on a "rotation" or "inactive" status for a minimum of twelve months.
  - (4) After those twelve months, the deacon would then be eligible for re-election to "active" status.

*C. Duties of Deacons:*

- (1) For the office of deacon only those who most nearly meet all the scriptural requirements of [1 Timothy 3:1-12](#) and [Acts 6:3](#), shall be eligible.
- (2) The body of deacons will be chaired and the term of office for chairman will be one year.
- (3) Deacons will be expected to attend all regular worship services of the church when able.
- (4) 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 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 ministry and application; and lead the church in performing its mission.
- (5) The deacons will have a regular meeting the first Sunday of each month.
- (6) The deacons will be responsible for making recommendations relative to constitution and by-law amendments.

*D. Deacon Emeritus*

The position of Deacon Emeritus shall be reserved for and in order to honor someone that has fulfilled his duties as a deacon through faithful service. In order to be considered for Deacon Emeritus status, a deacon, or someone on his behalf, may submit a request to the Chairman of Deacons. The request will then be presented to the deacon body and if approved, presented to the church to be voted on during a duly convened business meeting. Any deacon approved for Deacon Emeritus shall retain all rights and privileges other than voting during a meeting of the deacons.

*E. Revocation of Ordination and/or Active Deacons Service:*

In the event a Deacon shall be overtaken in a moral fault or conduct unbecoming a Deacon, such as refusal to support the church and its programs systematically, a prolonged absence from the church or failure to repent for beliefs or conduct inappropriate for an ordained Deacon, a team of Deacons in association with the pastor shall approach the Deacon in a Christian way in an effort to win them from error and restore them to full fellowship with the church and the Deacons. Failing in this, the team shall recommend to the full group of active Deacons that they in turn recommend to the church that the place among the Deacons held by such a Deacon be declared vacant. Upon approval by the church in a 75% vote, the office shall be declared vacant.

Section 6. Other Church Officers and Teachers:

All church officers except those previously mentioned in this constitution will be nominated by the nominating committee and elected by the church. The tenure of office will be for one year.

- A. Moderator: The pastor shall serve as moderator and shall preside at all business meetings of the church except when said meeting agenda includes discussion about the pastor's performance or any other potentially contentious topic related to his role in the church. In such cases, the Deacon Chairman will call the church to order and shall serve as moderator. Likewise, in the absence of the pastor, the Deacon Chairman will serve as moderator. The moderator shall become familiar with the rules and procedure of parliamentary authority in the provisions of these by-laws, and in all matters of parliamentary law governing deliberation of the assembly, the rules of the procedure set forth in [Robert's Rules of Order, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition](#) shall govern. The moderator must maintain a neutral position while presiding. If the moderator wishes to debate a question under consideration, this person shall ask an assistant to preside.

- B. **Membership Clerk:** The membership clerk will be responsible for:
- (1) Keeping a register of the names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal or death;
  - (2) Keeping a record of baptisms;
  - (3) Writing for letters of transfer from sister Southern Baptist Churches;
  - (4) Issuing letters of dismissal and transfer voted by the church;
- C. **Recording Clerk:** The recording clerk will be responsible for:
- (1) Keeping a record of all actions of the church;
  - (2) Preparing the annual church letter;
- D. **Treasurer:** the church treasurer represents the church in an official capacity within the church body and outside the church body. It is important for the treasurer to stay current on federal, state, and local laws that affect the church with regard to taxes, reporting and filing requirements, and other legal issues.
- It will be this person's duty to:
- (1) Serve as financial officer of the congregation.
  - (2) Responsible for payment of all bills, invoices, charges and payroll.
  - (3) Performs or oversees all of the financial record-keeping functions of the church.
  - (4) Prepares the financial reports for the church and provides appropriate financial information to the church and gift acknowledgments to donors.
  - (5) Files all required federal, state, and local tax forms.
  - (6) Monitors the cash position of the congregation and invests available funds as directed by the church stewardship committee.
  - (7) Is empowered to borrow funds when directed by the church stewardship committee.
  - (8) Assists in the preparation of the annual church budget.
  - (9) Monitors adherence to church budget throughout the fiscal year.
  - (10) Serves as a member of the church stewardship committee.

All books, records and accounts kept by the treasurer are the property of the church and will be open to inspection at all times by any member of the church.

- E. **Trustees:** Trustees shall serve as legal representatives in all transactions of the church. Responsibilities are:
- (1) Sign all documents relating to the purchase, sale, mortgaging, or rental of church property only after approval by vote of the church in regular business session.
  - (2) Act as legal agent as directed by the church.
  - (3) The signatures of two trustees shall be required for all legal documents.

(4) The trustees shall consist of three members elected by the church as a standing committee. Replacement of a member shall be by recommendation of the Nominating Committee and voted on by the church.

F. **Sunday School Director**: The Sunday school director coordinates the work of the Sunday school. This person plans meetings and programs that will ensure the effectiveness of the Bible teaching program of the church. The Sunday school director will work with the nominating committee in securing Sunday school workers.

G. **Discipleship Training Director**: The discipleship training director coordinates the training program of the church. This person plans meetings and uses programs that will ensure the effective training of the church membership.

#### **ARTICLE 4. COMMITTEES AND COORDINATING GROUPS**

Section 1. **General**:

Committees will elect a chairperson. Committee members will work through the chairman at all times and not independently of the chairman. The chairman of each committee is responsible for communication with and / or recommendations to the church. In the chairman's absence, he may designate another person on the committee to act in his behalf. Members will volunteer for 1-year terms through the Nominating Committee, with no restrictions on term limits or succession.

Section 2. **Duties**:

Each church committee shall have a list defining its roles and responsibilities. As there may be a frequent need for modification to those duties, and due to the large number of committees, the specific requirements of the church committees shall not be spelled out in these by-laws. Until such time as the committees convene and update or develop new roles and responsibilities they are to continue using pre-existing role and responsibility lists that may have already been in place prior to the church's adoption of this Constitution and By-laws.

#### **ARTICLE 5. USE OF PROPERTIES**

No church facilities or furniture, including tables and chairs, may be used or loaned out for any use other than church related functions. Permission to use the church property off the premises for church related functions must be granted by the properties committee. Special exceptions

must be presented to the body of Deacons who may consider making a recommendation to the church.

## ARTICLE 6. AMENDMENTS

Changes in the Constitution and By-laws may be made by presenting the proposed change to the body of deacons who may consider making a recommendation to the church regarding the proposed amendment.

The proposed amendment may be presented at any regular business meeting of the church. The amendment will have been published in the church newsletter or church bulletin at least two weeks prior to the regular business meeting in which the proposed amendment will be voted on.

Amendments to the Constitution and By-laws will be by two-thirds of all church members present and voting. The voting will be by written ballot.