

THE CHURCH ON THE HILL

A BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

CONSTITUTION and BYLAWS

Total Rework Presented May 2024
(Version 082124 – 1) To Be Adopted, August 2024

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CONSTITUTION

Preamble:

We declare and establish this Constitution to preserve and secure the principles in the light of the Holy Scriptures under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This Constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches.

This church, founded for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, seeks earnestly and affectionately to enlist the cooperation of all its members, committees, leadership, officers, and staff, who are admonished to work faithfully together for the accomplishment of this purpose.

ARTICLE I – NAME

Section 1: Church Name

This body shall be known as The Church on the Hill, A Baptist Fellowship, Inc. hereafter referenced as the ‘Church.’

Section 2: Incorporation

The Church is authorized under the warrant of the Holy Scriptures and incorporated under the laws of the State of Georgia and registered with the Georgia Secretary of State. It shall have no capital stock and is not organized for material or monetary profit. The Church is organized pursuant to the Georgia Nonprofit Corporation Code. It is organized for religious and other charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and that in the event of a dissolution, the residual assets of the corporation will be distributed to another qualified 501(c)(3) organization.

Section 3: Place of Business

The physical location of this Church shall be at 101 Gum Springs Church Road, Jefferson, Jackson County, Georgia, 30549 and other related campuses.

Section 4: Seal

The official Seal of the Church has inscribed thereon: The Church on the Hill, A Baptist Fellowship, Inc.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

United by the grace of God in Christian experience and doctrinal belief, we declare our adherence to the doctrines and teachings of the Holy Bible and recognize no obligation of religion or of conscience unless contained therein. We state our purpose as follows:

1. To be a dynamic, spiritual fellowship empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, ~~our~~ community, state and throughout the world.
2. To be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership, precepts, and instructions.

3. To promote and disseminate the teaching of Christ and the Word of God, found in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible.
4. To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.
5. To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and mankind.
6. To be a Church that ministers unselfishly to persons in the community and world in Christ's name.
7. 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.

ARTICLE III – MISSION

The Church **On the Hill** is *Worshiping, Connecting, and Growing* so that **From the Hill** we are *Living Like Jesus, Loving Like Jesus, and Sharing Jesus* with those we encounter at home, in our community, and around the world.

ARTICLE IV – CHURCH OVERSIGHT

Section 1: Polity

The government of this Church is vested in its membership. All authority or privileges are derived from the congregational body, and any task or duty assigned shall be in accord with the expressed will of the Church and in no event be construed as irrevocably vesting any power or authority in any individual, team, or organization.

This Church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches as a part of the body of Christ and acknowledges the Holy Spirit as its guide. In so far as possible, this Church will cooperate with and actively support the Mulberry Baptist Association, the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Section 2: Statement of Faith

We believe in the Holy Bible as the sacred, inerrant, infallible, and complete word of God; the creation of mankind by the direct act of God; the incarnation and virgin birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God; His vicarious atonement for the sins of mankind by the shedding of His blood on the cross; the resurrection of His body from the tomb; His imminent, visible return in power and glory; His unique power to save mankind from sin; the new birth through regeneration by the Holy Spirit; and the gift of eternal life by the grace of God through faith in Christ.

Further, we adopt and incorporate herein the doctrinal statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message* (<https://bfm.sbc.net/>) as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000, and amended on June 14, 2023, as our statement of faith.

Section 3: Doctrine

This Church is a congregation of baptized believers in Christ, united by covenant for the worship of Almighty God, and associated in the faith and the fellowship of the Gospel to practice its precepts, to recognize and receive Christ as their supreme Law Giver and Ruler, and to take the

Holy Bible and the Holy Bible alone, as the standard by which all matters of belief and conduct are to be tried.

Section 4: Church Covenant

The Church has the following beliefs:

1. We believe that God demonstrates and reveals through Christ that love is the basis for all relationships.
2. We believe that Christ's love calls us into a relationship with God and with one another, forming His church.
3. We believe that God gives the Church a vision of a fellowship to all who confess Christ as Savior and Lord, and of a fellowship that is committed to loving God and all people.
4. We believe that God prepares us in our unique experience to hear the call of Christ and to make God's vision for us a reality.

The Church holds these beliefs; therefore, we enter into this covenant:

1. We commit ourselves to living under the authority of Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit.
2. We commit ourselves to the open worship of God with dedication and devotion.
3. We commit ourselves to serious and systematic study of the Holy Bible, the inspired Word of God, through the leadership of the Holy Spirit, seeking to understand and apply its truth to our daily lives.
4. We commit ourselves to regular and sacrificial giving of money, time, and abilities, with joy and a thankful heart.
5. We commit ourselves to preserve, promote, and practice religious liberty by accepting and respecting the rights and responsibilities of the individual Christian to live and to minister as led by the Holy Spirit; by affirming the autonomy of the local church; by upholding the separation of church and state; and by respecting the freedom of all people in matters of conscience.
6. We commit ourselves to minister to one another and to the community through prayer, meeting physical needs, nurturing emotional well-being, and fostering spiritual growth.
7. We commit ourselves to evangelism and missions, making known through word and deed the love of God and the gift of salvation through Christ.
8. We commit ourselves to the example of Christ, practicing grace and forgiveness, and making peace among ourselves and all people.
9. We commit ourselves to voluntary cooperation with other churches in the body of Christ, demonstrating the power of God's love through our unity.
10. We commit ourselves to prayer, trusting the Holy Spirit to reveal God's will.
11. We commit ourselves to the faithful care and kingdom use of our resources including land and facilities.

Section 5: Review of Constitution

This constitution will be reviewed by a special team periodically from the approval date of this document as deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor and Deacon body or by the Church with a vote at a Church conference. The Senior Pastor and Deacon body shall recommend the composition of the team at a called Church conference. The team will present its findings to the congregation at a future called Church conference.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: General

The Church is a sovereign, autonomous and democratic Southern Baptist affiliated organization under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of the Church.

Section 2: Candidacy for Membership

This membership reserves the right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership. Any person may offer himself/herself as a candidate for membership. All such candidates shall be presented at any regular service in the following ways and a vote of the Church shall be taken at the close of any worship service or Church conference:

1. By profession of faith and baptism by immersion.
2. By statement of Christian faith and baptism by immersion (which was after the Christian conversion) in a Bible-believing church as a symbolic act of obedience to Christ.
3. By receipt of a letter or some other written correspondence from another Southern Baptist Church. We will communicate with the other church if a member is transferring for the purpose of maintaining accurate membership rolls in each church and ascertain the member was in good standing as a member of said church.
4. By restoration (see Article I Section 5 below).

Section 3: Responsibilities and Privileges of Members

Members' Responsibilities:

1. Be faithful in all the responsibilities essential to strengthen the Christian life - Grow spiritually (2 Peter 3:18); Love (John 13:34-35); Live (2 Peter 1:3) Study (2 Timothy 2:15); Share (Matthew 28:18-20); Pray (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, James 5:16).
2. Faithfully participate in the services of the church. (Hebrews 10:25)
3. Share in the organized work of the Church. (1 Corinthians 12:12-20)
4. Give financial support to the Church according to the teachings of the Bible. (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)
5. Abide by the *Baptist Faith and Message* and by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Church. (Hebrews 13:17)

Members' Privileges:

1. Having fulfilled membership responsibilities, those age 18 and over may vote in all transactions of the Church.
2. May hold leadership positions and serve in the various capacities on committees, teams, and in Church programs.

Section 4: Termination of Membership

Individuals may be removed from the Church membership roll as follows:

1. By death
2. By letter to another Southern Baptist Church
3. By dismissal to another denomination
4. By Church discipline
5. By erasure - names taken off the Church roll as listed below:
 - A. When requested by the member.
 - B. If the Church should ever elect to remove inactive names from the Membership roll, it shall occur only when contact with a member has been lost for two years or more, and after diligent attempts at renewed contact have proven futile. Removal shall occur after discussion of the names proposed by a majority vote of the Deacon body.

Section 5: Discipline and Restoration

Recognizing that the health and integrity of the Church is important in the spread of the Gospel, the Church must be faithful to biblical doctrine, the biblical moral purity of the members and the unity of fellowship in the Church. To that end, should a member's conduct appear to be contrary to these purposes or breach these principles it shall be the practice of this Church to emphasize that reasonable measures shall be taken to assist any troubled member. The Senior Pastor, Pastoral staff, and the Deacon body are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of the members toward one another shall be guided by biblical restoration rather than punishment.

Should a member's actions appear to be contrary to the fidelity of biblical doctrine, biblical purity, or the unity of the fellowship of the Church, the Senior Pastor, Pastoral staff, and Deacon body shall make a reasonable effort to resolve the matter in accord with Matthew 18:15-20.

If the Senior Pastor, Pastoral staff, and Deacon body are unable to resolve the issue, and the member's behavior is still contrary to the Bible and the *Baptist Faith and Message*, then his/her Church membership may be terminated by a vote of the Deacon body followed by immediate communication with member in question.

Any individual whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of the Deacon body upon evidence of repentance and reformation.

Section 6: Church Roll

An up-to-date Church roll of all active members and inactive members shall be maintained in the Church designated database and its approved software platform(s). Names may be placed on an inactive list if a member is out of communication for one year or more.

ARTICLE II - CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The Church Leadership shall consist of the Senior Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Deacon body, Finance Director, Committee Chairs and Trustees. Any authority or privilege granted, or task or duty assigned shall be at the will of the Church and shall in no sense be construed as irrevocably vesting such power or privilege in any individual. All Church leaders must be members of the Church in good standing. Each leader and staff are guided and directed by the Senior Pastor.

Responsibilities and descriptions for Church Leadership positions are described below.

Section 1: Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor is to provide spiritual and pastoral leadership to the membership of the Church so that it might fulfill its mission and purpose as the body of Christ.

The Senior Pastor will preach, teach, administer the ordinances, and provide leadership in the ministries of Worship, Administration, Stewardship and Outreach.

The Senior Pastor shall provide oversight to Church pastoral staff, non-pastoral staff and hold an ex-officio position within each Church committee and ministry team.

As stated in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and amended in 2023: “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture” (1 Timothy 3:1-15; Titus 1: 6-8).

A Senior Pastor shall be called by the Church whenever a vacancy occurs. His call shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose on the day of his trial sermon, of which at least one week’s public notice has been given.

The Senior Pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the Church’s request. He shall give at least a two-week notice at the time of resignation before terminating his responsibilities as pastor. If the position of Senior Pastor is vacant, a Pastor Search Team will be formed.

Pastor Search Team:

The members of the Pastor Search Team shall be nominated by the Deacon body. The members selected shall be broadly representative of the Church membership, at least one of whom is an active deacon. The team shall consist of seven persons and one alternate.

The Pastor Search Team shall be voted on by the Church and its election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least a one-week notice has been given.

Duties:

The Pastor Search Team shall seek out a Senior Pastor. After prayerful consideration and seeking the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the team shall bring only one candidate before the Church. The team recommendation will constitute a nomination. The team will hold a fellowship time when the congregation can meet and ask questions of the prospective Senior Pastor. His call shall take place on the Sunday of the trial sermon of which at least one-week notice has been given. The method of extending a call shall be by ballot with an affirmative vote of three-fourths of members voting for a call to be extended. Upon the affirmative vote of the new Senior Pastor, the Pastor Search Team duties are completed, and the team is dissolved. If the candidate is not affirmed or if he declines the call, this same Pastor Search Team resumes their duties if they choose.

Section 2: Deacon Body

In accordance with the meaning of the word and practice of the New Testament, Deacons are to be servants of the Church, serving with the Senior Pastor and staff.

While there is no Senior Pastor, the responsibility of making the decisions related to the Church's operations and functioning rests with the Deacon body. It is the responsibility of the Deacon body to identify an interim pastor, which may or may not include an associate minister already on staff.

Election of deacons:

The current active deacons, along with the Senior Pastor, having requested suggestions from the congregation for men to serve as deacons, will compile a list of qualified candidates who will be willing to serve as deacons, if elected. Qualifications can be found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6. The congregation will be presented with the list two weeks prior to the called Church conference at which the voting will occur. The congregation will elect, by secret ballot, the recommended number of men to serve for a period of three years per the Deacon body rotation schedule. Deacons will rotate off after serving a three-year term and may be re-elected after taking at least one year off.

If a deacon is unable to fulfill his term of three years, the vacancy shall be filled as soon as possible and presented to the Church at the next regular Church conference or at a special called Church conference for that purpose, and will begin serving immediately, or upon ordination if needed.

The Senior Pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the Deacon body. The terms of the deacons will run with the Calendar Year which begins on January 1.

Section 3: Moderator

Unless otherwise voted on by the Church, the Senior Pastor shall serve as Moderator. In the absence of the Moderator, the Chairman of Deacons may serve. The Senior Pastor or the Chairman of Deacons may decide to have another person function as the moderator for a Church conference. In the absence of the Senior Pastor and the Chairman of Deacons and with no designated moderator, a nomination from the floor shall be made for a temporary moderator to moderate the Church conference. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, will apply at all Church conferences.

Section 4: Finance Director

The Church's Finance Director is employed by the Church.

The Church Finance Director shall be responsible for approved accounting processes and platforms. It shall be the duty of the Finance Director to receive, preserve, and pay out, all money, or things of value paid or given to the Church, always keeping an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements as required by law. The Finance Director shall work in Christian harmony with the Finance Committee. He or she shall meet regularly with the Finance Committee and shall be responsible for the review and membership report distribution of the monthly financial statements. The Finance Director shall also perform a verification of the reconciliation of bank statements to the approved accounting systems.

The Finance Director shall work in conjunction with the Pastoral staff to maintain an accurate roll of the active and inactive church members, with dates and methods of admissions and dismissals, name and address changes, and all other pertinent information of all Church records and property. The Finance Director shall not share or distribute member information to unauthorized bodies, individuals, or organizations without the approval of the Senior Pastor, Deacons, or Church body.

Section 5: Trustees

The Trustees, acting as a board, shall constitute the Board of Directors of the Church under Georgia law. It shall be the duties of the Trustees to hold in trust the Church assets and secure proper legal protection. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer this real estate except by an affirmative vote of the membership at a Church conference called for this purpose. They are to execute all deeds and conveyances on Church buildings, properties, and furnishings as authorized by the Church. The Trustees shall secure and maintain all legal papers of the church.

Because of the trust and confidential responsibilities, the stability needed for this team, and the signature requirements on legal documents, the Trustees will serve a nine-year term with one member rotating off every three years. After serving the nine-year term, a Trustee may be re-elected to another consecutive nine-year term with the approval of the current Trustees, the Senior Pastor, the current Deacon body, and a vote of affirmation from the Church.

The Senior Pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the Trustees.

When a new Trustee is needed, the current active Trustees will suggest a qualified candidate who would be willing to serve as Trustee if elected and present that nominee to the Senior Pastor and Deacon Body for affirmation. The Deacon Body will present the nomination to the Church Body for a vote to approve. If a Trustee is unable to fulfill his or her complete term of nine years, the vacancy shall be filled as stated above, as for all new trustees, with the oncoming Trustee fulfilling the remaining term of the vacating Trustee.

Section 6: Church Clerk

The Church Clerk will be appointed by the Senior Pastor. The Church Clerk will attend or be represented at all Church conferences and special called Church conferences to take minutes of the actions of the Church. In the absence of the Church Clerk, it shall be the Senior Pastor's or Moderator's duty to designate someone to take minutes at all Church conferences and special called Church conferences.

ARTICLE III - CHURCH STAFF

Any Pastoral or non-pastoral staff shall be recommended by the Personnel Committee in consultation with the Senior Pastor and other staff and voted on by the church.

ARTICLE IV - CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND LAY LEADERS

To assist the Church in the execution of many responsibilities and to actively involve the membership using their gifts and talents, five types of committees and teams are to be formed.

1. Nominating Committee - this committee shall be nominated by the Senior Pastor and Deacon body and will nominate those who fill the positions of other committees.
2. Standing Committees - these committees are operational in nature. They function throughout the year and carry out their responsibilities from year to year. Standing Committees have a defined mission and objectives which require on-going activity.
3. Ministry Teams - these teams are ministry in nature. They plan and organize for the various ministries of the Church.
4. Special Teams - these teams are convened for a unique, temporary assignment and shall be dissolved when the assignment is completed.
5. Church Council - The Church Council is the forum for and the team to provide the coordination, communication, and promotion of Churchwide ministries, special events, and activities of the Church. It shall be composed of the Senior Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Chairman of Deacons, the Trustees, heads of all Church program ministries, and chairpersons of active committees or teams.

The Church functions in this manner: the Active Membership affirms, the Committees lead, the Pastoral Staff shepherds, the Deacons serve.

The Active Membership Affirms

In accordance with our guiding belief in the autonomy of the local church, all major decisions directly affecting the body, or a group within it, are brought before the membership and subjected to a vote. These decisions include, but are not limited to, the call of the Senior Pastor, the selection of new deacons, committee members, or Pastoral staff, as well as the adoption of an annual Church budget and other seasonal business. In this way, it is the full active membership of the Church that is empowered to shape its major activities and future direction.

The Committees Lead

Each year, the active membership votes to approve the members of certain committees: Nominating Committee, standing committees (Finance, Personnel, Buildings and Grounds, and Missions), and leadership teams. The membership will affirm the creation of special teams, such as a Pastoral Search Team, Events Team, or a Design and Development Team. These committees and teams, composed of nominated and affirmed members, are tasked with the responsibility to oversee their committee's functions. It is these committees, ministry teams, and special teams that lead the membership in its administrative and ministerial efforts.

The Pastoral Staff Shepherds

In addition to committee leadership, the membership affirms a Pastoral staff that works to guide the Church's congregational ministries, ensure proper and effective communication, and uphold the administrative decisions of the various committees. Along with the Senior Pastor, the Pastoral Staff and Trustees maintain overseer responsibilities in their respective areas.

The Deacons Serve

Recognizing the biblical mandate for an appointed team of servants to consistently care for the needs of the fellowship, the Church is served by a body of Deacons who partner with the Senior Pastor to visit and council members, offer prayer and comfort in times of crisis, and resolutely promote unity within the body.

ARTICLE V - MEETINGS

Section 1: Church Conference

The regular Church conference of the Church shall be held quarterly.

Special Church conferences may be called by the Senior Pastor, Chairman of Deacons, or by the majority of the Church Council. The object of the meeting must be stated when called, and only the stated business may be considered. Notice of such a special Church conference shall be read at all public worship services at least one week prior to the called meeting.

Section 2: Quorum

The quorum consists of those active Church members who attend the regular quarterly Church Conference or the duly called Special Church conference.

Section 3: Parliamentary Rule

At all Church conferences, the authority on all questions shall be *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition. A parliamentarian may be appointed by the Moderator, if so desired, at any Church conference.

ARTICLE VI - ORDINANCES

Section 1: Baptism

A person who receives 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 shall be received for baptism.

1. Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
2. Baptisms shall be administered by the Senior Pastor or whomever the Senior Pastor and/or Deacon body shall authorize.
3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service.

Section 2: The Lord's Supper

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, commemorate the death of Christ and anticipate His second coming.

1. The Lord's Supper shall be scheduled by the Senior Pastor.
2. The Senior Pastor and Deacon body shall be responsible for the administration of the Lord's Supper.

ARTICLE VII – MAINTENANCE OF THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

The Official Copy of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Church shall be maintained within an approved technical platform and a copy made available upon request through the Senior Pastor, Communications Pastor, Chairman of Deacons, or Finance Director. Whenever amendments to

the Constitution and Bylaws are adopted by the Church, they shall be added to the digital copy and the date of the last revision affixed to the bottom of the title page and the last page.

The Constitution and Bylaws will be reviewed by a special team periodically from the approval date of this document as deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor and Deacon body or by the Church with a vote at a Church conference. The Senior Pastor and Deacon body shall recommend the composition of the team at a called Church conference. The team will present its findings to the congregation at a future called Church conference by presenting all recommendations and/or amendments. Upon approval from the Church, the new reading of the Constitution and Bylaws becomes official as of that Church conference date.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

An amendment to the Constitution and Bylaws may be submitted at any regular Church conference, provided the proposed amendment is submitted in writing and adheres to the required two week notice period. Upon receipt of proposed amendments, they shall be automatically referred to a Constitution and Bylaws Review Team composed of a minimum of three church members nominated from the floor by the church. The team would also include the Senior Pastor and Chairman of Deacons to make a total of at least five people. This team shall bring a report back at the next Church conference or a special called Church conference.

If the proposed amendment is deemed worthy, appropriate, and in keeping with the Church's vision and mission, it shall be published, and copies made available two weeks prior to the next Church conference or special called Church conference at which a two-thirds vote of members present shall be needed for the amendment to be enacted. Amendments cannot be retroactive and become valid on the date they are enacted.

When enacted amendments that change article numbers or section numbers, all subsequent numbers shall automatically be changed without the need for further church action.

Changes of program positions or titles in this Constitution and Bylaws that may be adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, or other entities with whom the Church partners to provide ministry, may be updated without a church vote.

ARTICLE IX – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy and procedures article is used to explain the processes by which the Church's Constitution and Bylaws are administered.

Section 1.0: Governance Matters

1.01 Governing Law: The Corporation (referred to as the "Church") is governed by the nonelective provisions of the Georgia Nonprofit Corporation Code as amended (the "Georgia Code") and shall be construed insofar as possible to be consistent therewith, subject to the religious liberty protections available to it under applicable law.

1.02 Definitions: The definitions are incorporated by reference that appear in the Georgia Code 14-3-140 as amended.

1.03 Registered Office and Agent: The registered office and agent are governed by the Georgia Code 14-3-501 through -504 as amended.

1.04 Emergency: Emergency powers are provided by Georgia Code 14-3-303 as amended.

1.05 Reservation of Religious Freedom: These Bylaws are a requirement of the corporate laws of the State of Georgia to encourage compliance with the Georgia Code. They are not intended and shall not be interpreted to surrender to civil authorities any authority over the operation of the Church, which is a religious corporation, in the exercise of its freedom to worship and the right to govern its internal affairs. All matters pertaining to the worship of God, the advancement of its mission, the election and qualification of deacons and leadership, and the free exercise of its religious expression are expressly reserved to the Church's body of Deacons. The Church expressly invokes all rights and protections related to the free exercise of religion, freedom of conscience, freedom of association, freedom of speech and press, due process and equal protection of the laws, and religious exemptions reflected in applicable law, including but not limited to the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. Article I of the Georgia Constitution, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, and all other religious exemptions and protections available under state laws and county and local codes and ordinances. Nothing contained in these Bylaws is intended to, nor should it be interpreted as waiving any rights, protections, exemptions, and defenses that the Church may have, claim, and/or be entitled to claim either now or in the future.

Section 1.1: Sexual Harassment or Abuse

Sexual harassment and emotional or physical abuse perpetrated by or against any member of the Pastoral staff, employee, leader, member of the Church, or any other person involved with the Church, to include visitors, shall not be tolerated. The Church will comply with all federal and state regulations pertaining to sexual harassment or abuse. Any instances of sexual harassment or abuse accusations shared with any Pastoral Staff, Deacon, Trustee, ministry leader or member will be immediately reported to the Senior Pastor. If the Senior Pastor is the one accused, the accusation will be reported to the Chairman of Deacons.

The Senior Pastor or Chairman of Deacons will work with the one making the accusation to encourage that person and accompany that person if requested in filing a report with the proper law enforcement authorities such as the Jackson County Sheriff's department. If the allegation is being made by an adult, he or she can choose to report the incident to the authorities or not. That decision must be his or her choice with no pressure from the Church or any leadership but only support and help. The proper authorities can then investigate the accusations and handle the matter in the legal system. All credible allegations of minors must be reported to law enforcement or Child Protect Services authorities. The Church's responsibility then becomes to minister to and walk alongside of the victim and provide any and all assistance needed by the accuser and the associated family that is feasible for the Church to provide.

During and following the investigation by the authorities, the Senior Pastor working with the Deacons will lead the church through the necessary decisions in relation to the accused regarding leave of absence or termination for a paid staff member, or church discipline or attendance prohibitions for a volunteer or church member. These decisions will be driven by what the accusation involves and what the investigation by the legal authorities discovers. If the Senior Pastor is the accused, the Deacons will lead the Church through the necessary decisions without the involvement of the Senior Pastor. Each situation is unique so the Church must work through the process needed for that situation.

Section 1.2: Prevention of Child and Youth Abuse

The Church takes great measures to care for the children and youth (“participants”) in our ministry programs. We work hard to make our ministry programs for our participants both excellent and safe. To help provide this safe environment, we have contracted with Ministry Safe. Ministry Safe is a firm which provides training and a safety system to enhance our child protection practices and further equip our ministries to be aware of sexual predators. The Church will stay in compliance with Ministry Safe’s guidelines. There are four steps to this safety system which Pastoral Staff members, volunteers working with children and youth participants, and the Security Team are required to complete.

Step One: Criminal Background Check

Staff members, volunteers, and Security Team members aged 18 and over are required to have a criminal background check every two years.

Step Two: Screening Process

The screening process includes:

- complete application, including a signed release giving permission for a background check.
- provide references to be checked.
- complete an interview.

A volunteer should have regularly attended the Church on the Hill (or another verifiable church attendance) for a minimum of three months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, youth, or student populations.

Step Three: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

This online training will equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a participant, win the participant’s trust (and the trust of the participant’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the participant into sexual activity and keep the participant from disclosing the abuse.

The video’s topics include:

- The definition of sexual abuse
- Common errors and misconceptions related to sexual abuse and sexual abusers
- Abuser characteristics
- Grooming process (grooming children and gatekeepers)
- Common grooming behaviors
- Peer-on-peer abuse

- Impact on children both long and short term
- Reporting responsibilities to authorities and supervisors

Step Four: Review Policies and Procedures

Staff members and volunteers should review the policies contained in the Policies and Procedures Document and sign the agreement page, indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements. The complete Policies and Procedures Document is available for review by contacting the Kids and Student Pastor.

Special Note: This procedure goes into effect August 2024 for all new volunteers.

Section 1.3: Conflict of Interest

It is the policy of the Church that every Ministry Leader or Employee shall abstain from involvement, whether by voting or otherwise participating in the decision-making process, in those situations where they have or may have a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is deemed to exist where:

- The person has a substantive interest, whether direct or indirect, in the matter at hand or the other party(ies) involved.
- The person is either a director, officer, or employee of the other party(ies) involved; or the person's spouse, children, parent, or siblings are in substantive relationships with the other party(ies) involved.

In those situations where a conflict of interest does exist or has the potential to exist, any Deacon, Ministry Leader, or Church Employee aware of such shall notify the Senior Pastor or the Chairman of Deacons. Ministry Leaders and Employees are encouraged to participate actively in community and professional activities. Because Ministry Leaders and Employees are not always aware of all interagency involvement(s), they should inform the Senior Pastor of any intentions to participate in any activity that could potentially give rise to a conflict of interest impacting the church.

Section 1.4: Emergency or Disaster Notification/Recovery

In the event of an actual or impending emergency, or when it is imperative to notify the members, friends, and leadership of the Church that an emergency has occurred, the following people shall provide leadership. The point person for emergencies will vary based on the situation as follows:

- Fire or Police Situation: Pastor/Designee/Deacon
- Illness or Death: Pastor/Designee/Deacon
- Weather: Pastor/Designee/Deacon
- Other: Pastor/Designee/Deacon

Once the point person learns of the emergency, that individual will notify the affected Ministry Leaders, who will then contact the members of their respective ministry or program teams as needed. The primary methods of communication will be email, text messaging, and/or telephone. A general email will be sent from the Communications Pastor. A web notification, when appropriate to the needs of the situation, will be posted.

Section 2.0: Finances

God has blessed the Church family tremendously. As such, the Finance Committee, Finance Director, Pastoral Staff, committees, and designated teams are charged with the careful utilization and dissemination of finances in the conduct of daily ministry.

Section 3.0: Church Officers Descriptions

Section 3.1: Trustees

Primary Functions:

1. Fulfill duties with diligence and integrity; contribute to the overall well-being of the Church and its ability to fulfill its mission.
2. Hold in trust all assets which include both physical and fiscal assets.
3. Secure proper legal protection of all properties and ensure compliance with legal and financial regulations.
4. Sign all documents related to the purchase, sale, mortgaging, or rental of church property, only after approval by the Church in a regular or called Church conference.
5. Execute all deeds and conveyances on church buildings, properties, and furnishings as authorized by the Church.
6. Maintain an inventory of and secure all church documentation related to deeds, loans, insurance, and financial instruments, and physical checks. Documents may be secured in a safe or in a safety deposit box at the institution of choice.
7. Keep abreast of the latest insurance and legal changes to report such changes to the church leadership and advise changes.
8. Counsel with Church leadership as required.
9. Sign any church related legal document which requires a minimum of two Trustee signatures.
10. Maintain an open and honest line of communication with the Church and the Church leadership regarding the Church's financial activities ensuring that accurate records are kept and that financial decisions are made with the best interest of the Church in mind.
11. Trustees serve as members of the Church Council.

Section 3.2: Finance Director

The Church's Finance Director, employed by the Church, will serve as the Church Treasurer.

Primary Functions:

1. Shall be custodian of all money.
2. Shall adhere to strict confidentiality of all members related receipts while providing the Church with financial transparency relating to financial reporting and budget management.
3. Record tithes and offerings given to the Church:
 - The tithes and offering collections are given to the Finance Director as soon as possible from the various tithing boxes and collection during the Worship Service.
 - The Finance Director and Trustees maintain possession of the keys for the bank bags.
 - Weekly receipts each Monday-Sunday are deposited via banking remote deposit application.
 - Tithes and offerings are recorded into the church software indicating the contributor, amount contributed and the fund to be credited.
 - All manual and on-line contributions balanced, a proof list printed and checked.
 - A dated report package containing a list of contributors, the amount of the contribution, on-line deposit verification numbers and any physical canceled checks are created and retained per the 7-year IRS required retention period. The weekly report packages are stored in a secure climate-controlled area.

4. General Ledger entries are posted to the specific general ledger accounts with copies of entry attached to the weekly tithes and offering report package.
5. Report weekly tithes and offerings to Senior Pastor, Trustees and Finance Committee Chairperson upon receipt verification. A copy of the report is included in the weekly report package.
6. Receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of requests approved by authorized personnel, all money, or things of value paid or given to the church while always keeping an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.
7. Issue as needed manual or bank generated checks.
8. Maintain manual check registers with required detailed information such as date, check number, payee, purpose, and authorization.
9. Work in Christian harmony with the Finance Committee and meet regularly with them.
10. Be responsible for the review of the monthly financial statements and prepare quarterly financial statements for the Church.
11. Perform a verification of the reconciliation of the monthly bank statements to the financial software platform (checkbook) and attach supporting reconciliation reports to the bank statement upon completion.
12. Prepare and process employee payroll according to the agreed pay schedules for both employee and contractors of the Church.
13. Prepare annual 1099s and W2s including submission to the appropriate federal and state tax entities.
14. Review, approve and authorize payroll services firm to submit on behalf of the Church payroll tax payment and report as required.

Signatures of Checks:

1. All purchases of supplies, equipment and services shall be made only on the approval of authorized staff member or ministry leader in concert with the then approved church budget.
2. All checks issued by the church from any account shall bear at least two authorized signatures.
3. The Trustees or the Finance Director are the only people authorized to sign checks.

Section 4.0: Church Committees and Teams

To assist the Church in the execution of its many responsibilities and to actively involve the membership using its gifts and talents, five types of committees and teams are to be formed.

- A. Nominating Committee
- B. Standing Committees
- C. Ministry Teams
- D. Special Teams
- E. Church Council

The Senior Pastor is an ex-officio member of all teams and committees, and he or other ministerial staff will be available in advisory capacities upon request. Should a team desire the Senior Pastor and/or a staff member to attend its meeting, an invitation for them to attend should be extended. Do not expect the Senior Pastor or staff to automatically attend a meeting.

Members selected to serve on all committees and teams must:

- Be professed Christians, committed to ongoing discipleship and their spiritual growth in their relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Be active, contributing members of the church with regular attendance.
- Commit to attend committee and team meetings and to assist the committee and/or team in reaching the goals set forth by the leadership of the church and in accordance with God's will.
- Be free from conflict of interest and humbly cooperate with the Holy Spirit as well as other committee and team members to accomplish the duties and responsibilities of the church through their committee and/or teams.
- Be at least 18 years of age.

Regular terms for committees will run with the Church Year which begins on September 1.

Section 4.1: Nominating Committee

The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to secure from the members of the Church candidates for nomination to fill open positions within the Standing Committees.

Members of the Nominating Committee are selected by the Pastoral staff and the Deacon Body. The persons selected must be members in good standing for a minimum of two years.

There are to be six members on this committee.

Members of this committee will serve a three-year term and will be required to rotate off for a period of at least one year before serving on this same committee. The composition of this committee will be arranged so that the term of one-third of the members will expire at the end of each year. The chairman of this committee will be a member of the Church Council.

Primary Functions:

1. Work with the Pastoral staff in nominating the members of each committee (except the Nominating Committee).
2. Work with the Chairman of each committee in nominating the number of qualified members necessary for his or her committee to operate with a full committee.
3. Provide all nominees when contacted with detailed information regarding duties and functions of the committee on which they would serve.
4. Identify qualified replacements should any vacancies occur during the year and present the nominees to the Church in a Church conference.

Section 4.2: Standing Committees

This group of leadership committees are operational in nature. These committees analyze, evaluate, and propose recommendations to the church for approval.

Those serving on Standing Committees will be members in good standing for a minimum of one year, nominated by the Nominating Committee, and the Church will be notified at a Church conference each year of who is serving on these committees.

Members of these committees will serve a 3-year term and must rotate off for a period of one year before serving again on the same committee. The composition of these committees will be arranged so that the term of approximately one-third of the members will expire at the end of each year. The chairman of each of these committees will be a member of the Church Council.

Standing Committees are:

1. Personnel Committee
2. Finance Committee
3. Building and Grounds Committee
4. Missions Committee

Specific responsibilities and job descriptions for each of these committees are detailed below in Section 5.0-5.4.

Section 4.3: Ministry Teams

This group of leadership teams are ministry in nature. They plan and organize for the various ministries of our church with goals to reach and minister to both members and guests effectively. They help the Church achieve its mission by reaching the community, providing opportunities for spiritual growth for all, and allowing members to use their gifts and talents for God's glory.

The leader of each of these Ministry teams will be selected by the Senior Pastor and the Pastoral Staff. Additional members of these teams will be chosen by the team leader along with guidance from the Senior Pastor and the Pastoral Staff. Members of Ministry teams can serve indefinitely.

Ministry Teams are groups like, but not limited to, Women's Ministry Team, Men's Ministry Team, PrimeTimers (Senior Adult) Team, Greeters Team, Security Team, and Next Steps Team.

Section 4.4: Special Teams

From time to time, the need may arise for the formation of special teams whose responsibilities fall outside the parameters of existing teams. These teams are convened for a unique temporary assignment and shall be dissolved when the assignment is completed.

These teams are nominated by the Pastoral staff.

These teams shall consist of no fewer than three members and, when appropriate, the Senior Pastor and Chairman of Deacons shall also serve on the team. Such teams may be a Constitution and Bylaws Review or Revision Team, a search team for a new staff member, a church planting team to assess the possibility of planting a new church, a mission team to plan a church-wide mission endeavor, a building design/development team, or other teams as deemed necessary.

Section 5.0: Committee Guidelines

Section 4.2 (above) lists the four committees that serve as Standing Committees for the Church: Personnel Committee, Finance Committee, Building and Grounds Committee and Missions Committee. These next sections give specific responsibilities and the primary functions for each of these committees.

Section 5.1: Personnel Committee

The purpose of this committee is to seek God's will, pray for, and implement, all personnel matters of the Church staff.

The Personnel Committee shall consist of six members.

Chairperson: The person filling this position will be a member of the Church Council. The Chairperson must confer with this committee to make decisions pertaining to any personnel issues.

Vice Chairperson: This position has the responsibility to assume the Chairperson position, should the need arise.

Secretary: The person filling this position must be available to keep the minutes during all Personnel Committee meetings, taking minutes and forwarding them to each Committee member. These minutes must be kept in printed or digital form for any necessary reference during Committee meetings.

Primary Functions:

1. Oversee the salaries and employee benefits for the Church staff.
2. Make recommendations to the Finance Committee for the Personnel budget.
3. Oversee the hiring of church staff and ministerial 1099/contractors, full or part-time through coordination with the Pastoral staff and church leadership.
4. Work with the Senior Pastor to ensure that he conducts an annual evaluation of each staff member and ministerial 1099/contractors and appropriately document.
5. Ensure job descriptions are available for full or part-time staff members and ministerial 1099/contractors, and their evaluations are based on the job descriptions.
6. Ensure personnel files are maintained in a confidential manner.
7. Work with the Senior Pastor to oversee all personnel matters.

Section 5.2: Finance Committee

The purpose of this committee is to pray for guidance in putting together a budget focused on the mission and ministry of the church, as well as monitoring monthly revenue and expenses to ensure financial integrity and adherence to the Church-approved budget.

The Finance Committee shall consist of six members plus the Finance Director.

In the absence of the Senior Pastor, the Chairman of Deacons will be an ex-officio member of this committee.

Chairperson: The person filling this position will be a member of the Church Council. The Chairperson must confer with this committee and the Finance Director to make decisions pertaining to any financial issues.

Vice Chairperson: This position has the responsibility to assume the Chairperson position, should the need arise.

Secretary: The person filling this position must be available to keep the minutes during all Finance Committee meetings, taking minutes and forwarding them to each Committee member. These minutes must be kept in printed or digital form for any necessary reference during Committee meetings.

Primary Functions:

1. Recommend a budget for the upcoming church year.
2. Review the financial details monthly to ensure the adherence to the budget.
3. Ensure the confidentiality of the contribution records of individuals and the privacy of other information deemed confidential or private under state or federal law.
4. Each Finance Committee member must ensure the confidentiality of all financial discussions and information.
5. Together, with the Deacons and pastoral staff, encourage participation and support of the Church to fulfill the budget once it has been adopted.
6. Ensure that no ministry shall exceed its budgeted allotment without prior authorization through the Finance Director and Finance Committee.
7. Provide transparency for the church financials through weekly bulletin updates, monthly financial reports, and quarterly Church Conference reviews.

Budget Process:

1. Secure budget recommendations from the Pastoral staff, committees, ministries, and teams, for inclusion in the budget.
2. Based on these recommendations, put together a proposed budget focused on the ministry and mission of the church.
3. The proposed budget shall be submitted to the Church two weeks prior to adoption. Questions may be asked individually to the Finance Committee or Finance Director during the two weeks prior to final approval.
4. The budget shall be submitted to the Church for final adoption at a Church Conference no later than the second Sunday morning in December with no further discussion at this meeting.

Section 5.3: Building and Grounds Committee

The purpose of this committee will have general oversight of all church property and equipment excluding the processes for any new construction. Members of this committee should have some understanding, or experience, in maintaining property and assets.

The Building and Grounds Committee shall consist of six members.

Chairperson: The person filling this position will be a member of the Church Council and an ex officio member of any new construction team. The Chairperson must confer with this committee to make decisions pertaining to any building or grounds issues.

Vice Chairperson: This position has a responsibility to assume the Chairperson position, should the need arise.

Secretary: The person filling this position must be available to keep the minutes during all Building and Grounds Committee meetings, taking minutes and forwarding them to each Committee member. These minutes must be kept in printed or digital form for any necessary reference during Committee meetings.

Primary Functions:

1. Oversee all activities associated with the operation, maintenance, and safety of all buildings, grounds, furnishings, and equipment owned by the church.
2. Coordinate with the Security team to address any building and grounds issues that pertain to the security of events and services.
3. Assist in preparing the annual budget as it relates to the building and grounds for recommendation to the Finance Committee.
4. Review requests regarding buildings, grounds, furnishings, and equipment owned by the church and determine what, if any, action should be taken. When funds are needed for expenditures beyond the approved budget, the Committee will request assistance from the Finance Committee.
5. Oversee any contracted maintenance and services that may be needed to carry out the purposes of the Church. Any contracts needed must be coordinated with the Trustees and the Finance Director.
6. Maintain an inventory of furniture, fixtures, and consumables.
7. Review and recommend renovation projects relating to decorating, painting, structural changes, or remodeling of any part of the church facilities that are not covered by the allocated budget. This plan should be submitted to the Finance Committee.
8. Shall be responsible for cleaning, upkeep and improvement of all existing church buildings and grounds.
9. Will set times for church-wide workdays and shall supervise the work inside and outside of the church facilities.

Section 5.4: Missions Committee

With members of this committee having a heart for missions and spreading the Lord's gospel, this committee will review, research, recommend and implement plans for special mission opportunities.

The Missions Committee will consist of nine members.

Chairperson: The person filling this position will be a member of the Church Council. The Chairperson must confer with this committee to make decisions pertaining to any missions issues.

Vice Chairperson: This position has the responsibility to assume the Chairperson position, should the need arise.

Secretary: The person filling this position must be available to keep the minutes during all Mission Committee meetings, taking minutes and forwarding them to each Committee member. These minutes must be kept in printed or digital form for any necessary reference during Committee meetings.

Primary Functions:

1. Establish and maintain communication with local, state and national mission organizations and other appropriate missions groups to inform the Church of possible missions opportunities that are meaningful for the Church. Investigate thoroughly before promoting projects to the Church body.
2. Assist in implementing, and supporting, the special offerings of the Southern Baptist Convention throughout the year.
3. Work with the Finance Committee in preparing the Missions Committee's annual Operating Budget Request.
4. Request and administer Missions Committee budget.

Total Rework Presented May 2024
(Version 082124 – 1) To Be Adopted, August 2024