

Palmetto Baptist Church Bylaws

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of our Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, 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 unity; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; and 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 throughout all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred, acquaintances, and all others; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful to our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from unbiblical practices; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the ministry of the local church.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy of speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, and to secure reconciliation without delay.

We moreover engage, that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church of like faith and practice where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word. In the event there is no such church, we shall seek, with the Lord's help, to establish one.

Preamble

Desiring to glorify God in a biblical ministry, recognizing the preeminence of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Word of God, and pursuing the unity and order Scripture demands, we do hereby ordain and establish this constitution for the operation of our church by the grace of God.

Article I—Name

This organization shall be known as Palmetto Baptist Church.

Article II—Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be to worship God, edify believers by preaching and teaching Christian doctrine and ethics, evangelize the unsaved by proclaiming the Gospel, and otherwise advance the cause of Christ in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. This may be accomplished through regular meetings, special services, education, care, missionary outreach, and any other ministries and activities that the church shall deem appropriate or necessary. This church shall be operated as a nonprofit

organization exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law).

Article III—Declaration of Faith

Section 1: Scripture

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Since the Scriptures are God-breathed in the original autographs, inspiration extends to the very words of the Bible so that the entire Bible, and only the Bible, is the Word of God. As such, the Bible is infallible, inerrant, and our only rule of faith and practice. (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; Mat. 5:18; John 10:35; Rev. 22:18–19)

Section 2: God

We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing as one in His essence yet three in His persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, and co-equal in power and glory. (Deut. 6:4; Ps. 90:2; Mat. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14; I Cor. 8:6)

- A. God the Father—He is eternal, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is the sovereign God of the universe, the Creator and Preserver of all things. He is perfect in holiness, righteousness, justice, and love. Having extended His grace and mercy to people by sending His Son to die in their place, He desires to have fellowship with them. (Ps. 65:2; 139:1–24; I Chr. 29:11; John 1:12; 3:16; Eph. 1:3–9; Rom. 11:36)
- B. Jesus Christ—He is the Son of God. He is one Person, with both a divine nature (He is truly God) and a human nature (He is truly man). He existed from everlasting with the Father, was born of a virgin when He took on human flesh, lived a sinless life, and gave Himself willingly on the cross for the sins of people. He arose from the tomb on the third day, ascended to the Father, and will return to earth one day as Judge and King. (John 1:1–3, 18; 5:22–23; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:3, 6, 8; 9:24; Phil. 2:6–11; Col. 1:15–20; II Cor. 5:21; Mat. 25:31; Rev. 19:11–20:6; I John 2:2)
- C. Holy Spirit—He is a divine Person and not an impersonal force. He is fully God, proceeding from the Father and the Son. The work of the Holy Spirit included creation and the inspiration of the Scriptures. He calls people to salvation through Christ and dwells in the hearts of believers. (Mat. 28:19; John 16:7–14; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 1:13; 5:18; Rom. 8:9–16, 26)

Section 3: Creation

We believe the Genesis account of the creation of the world as a literal, historical record of the direct acts of God, without the involvement of any evolutionary process. (Gen. 1–2; John 1:3–10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 11:3)

Section 4: Mankind

We believe that man was created in innocence and in the image of God. However, in Adam's disobedience, sin entered the world and passed to all mankind destroying man's relationship with God and

resulting in death. Thus, all are sinners by nature and by choice, and therefore are under just condemnation without defense or excuse, and deserve eternal punishment in hell. (Gen. 1–3; Is. 64:6; Jer. 17:9; John 6:44; Rom. 3:10–12, 23; 5:12; 8:7–8; Eph. 2:1–3; I John 4:19)

Section 5: Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly by grace through faith alone in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and that all who receive Him as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and become children of God. (Eph. 2:8–9; John 1:29; I John 2:2; Is. 53:4–12)

- A. Regeneration—When an individual responds in faith to the Gospel, repents of his sin and turns to Christ for salvation, the Holy Spirit causes a spiritual change in which he is freed from the guilt of his inherently sinful nature, receives the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and thus is born again into God’s family. Regeneration involves an illumination of the mind, a change in the will, and a renewed nature. (John 3:3–7, 16; 1:12; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:8–9; Rom. 3:22–28; I Pet. 1:23; Tit. 3:5; Acts 2:38; 17:30)
- B. Justification—This is the act of God whereby He declares the sinner to be righteous in His sight. On the basis of the work of Christ, God does not impute sin to the individual, imputing instead the righteousness of Christ. (Rom. 3:22–28; 4:1–8; 5:1–2; Gal. 2:16)
- C. Sanctification—Whereas regeneration is a one-time event in the life of the believer, sanctification is a continuing process by which God gradually transforms him into the image of Christ. This process will be completed when believers join Christ in heaven, perfected in holiness. (John 17:17; II Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:26; I John 3:2; Acts 20:32)
- D. Preservation—Since salvation is based solely upon the grace of God and not on the merit of the individual, everyone who truly accepts Christ as Savior is eternally secure in his salvation and is kept by God’s power. Scripture, however, gives a solemn warning to those who profess salvation but whose lives give no evidence of change because of the willful, continual practice of sin. (John 6:37, 39; 10:27–30; Rom. 8:38–39; I Pet. 1:5; II Pet. 1:10; I John 3:7–10; James 2:14–26)

Section 6: The Church

We believe that the church, composed of all who have trusted Christ as Savior since Pentecost, is the body of Christ. Christ Himself is the Head of the Church. This spiritual organism is the universal aspect of the church. (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:23)

- A. Organization—The local church is an organized assembly of baptized believers voluntarily associated together in the faith in order to exalt the Lord in worship, evangelize the lost through witness, and edify the saints through teaching, fellowship, and service. The local church has the absolute right of self-government and should be free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations, religious or governmental. Jesus Christ is the Head and Chief Shepherd. (Eph. 4:11–16; Col. 1:15–20; I Pet. 5:4)
- B. Ordinances—Christ instructed the church to observe two ordinances, both of which are symbolical rather than sacramental or efficacious.

1. Baptism—All who profess faith in Jesus Christ should be baptized by immersion in water as a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. (Mat. 28:19; Rom. 6:3–4)
2. The Lord’s Supper—The Lord’s Supper is a memorial service in which the bread and juice represent the body and blood of Christ. (Mat. 26:26–29; I Cor. 10:16; 11:23–34)

Section 7: Separation

We believe that Scripture commands God’s people to be holy and separate from all polluting influences, including sin, disobedient brethren, and false teachers.

- A. Personal—Individual believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit and so must be pure from sin. They are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers nor found to be friends of the world. (II Cor. 6:14–7:1; I John 2:15–17; James 4:4)
- B. Ecclesiastical—The church as a whole must separate from those who teach false doctrine and attempt to subvert the saints. (Rom. 16:17; II Thes. 3:6–15; II John 9–11; II Cor. 6:14–18)

Section 8: Last Things

We believe in the personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ; His literal, physical reign on earth for a thousand years; the eternal punishment of unbelievers in hell; and the eternal blessings for believers in heaven. (Mat. 25:1–13; I Thes. 4:14–18; I Cor. 15:24–28; Rev. 19:11–20:15; 21–22)

Section 9: Marriage and Sexuality

We believe in the God-ordained institution of marriage between one man and one woman, and that all moral sexual relations are exercised solely within the God ordained institution of marriage. (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:24–25; Mat. 19:4–6)

Article IV—Membership

Section 1: Admission

- A. Qualifications—Any person may be admitted to the membership of this church who:
 1. Gives testimony of conversion and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and has subsequently been baptized by immersion.
 2. Ascribes to the Declaration of Faith and agrees to uphold the Constitution of this church.
 3. Is willing to strive to live a life separated from the sins of the world and consistent with the teachings of the Bible.

4. Is willing to support the work of this church by participating regularly in worship, service, and giving.
- B. Classification—Any person attending Palmetto Baptist Church for a limited amount of time due to educational pursuit or temporary residency, may choose to join Palmetto Baptist Church as a Watchcare Member. Watchcare Membership provides each individual a platform to enjoy all the benefits of a regular member of the church, with the exception of voting privileges, while retaining membership at his home church. The pastors at Palmetto Baptist Church will provide oversight for Watchcare Members on behalf of their home church. The process of becoming a Watchcare Member is the same as the process for a regular member.
 - C. Procedure—Any person desiring membership at Palmetto Baptist Church may make his request known to a pastor. He shall then meet with the pastor or members designated by the pastoral team to determine if he meets the qualifications for membership. If accepted, he shall be presented to the congregation during a regular church service for congregational approval and welcome.

Section 2: Removal

A member of Palmetto Baptist Church may be removed from the membership list for any of the following reasons:

- A. Death
- B. Request—An individual may be removed from the church membership based on a request from the member personally, or a request for a letter from another church of like faith and practice as long as the member is not currently under the process of church discipline at Palmetto Baptist Church. If an individual joins another church, and he is not currently under the process of church discipline at Palmetto Baptist Church, he will be removed from the membership of Palmetto Baptist Church even if a request is not received.
- C. Absence—The membership of any individual shall be transferred to Watchcare Member status if the member in question has not attended regular worship services of the church in the preceding three months. The membership of any individual shall be automatically terminated without notice if the member in question has not attended regular worship services of the church in the preceding six months. The pastors may choose to waive this provision if, in their discretion, there is good cause for the absence.
- D. Persistent sinful conduct—Removal from membership may be made based on persistent sinful conduct that is clearly contrary to the teachings of the Bible (such as immorality or apostasy). This is also an action taken by the church at the advice of the pastors. The church shall strive to follow the guidelines for church discipline as given in Scripture (Mat. 18:15–17; I Cor. 5:11) in dealing with such a member. Any member excluded from the church in this manner may be restored upon evidence of confession and repentance acceptable to the pastors.

Article V—Meetings

Section 1: Meetings for Worship

The church shall hold regular meetings for worship, service, prayer, and fellowship. The pastors may also arrange special meetings and conferences.

Section 2: Meetings for Church Business

- A. **Regular Business Meetings**—The church shall conduct quarterly business meetings during a regular service in April, July, and October. Announcements of such meetings shall be made on at least one Sunday before the meeting.
- B. **Annual Business Meetings**—The annual business meeting shall be held in November and announced at least two weeks in advance. At that time the church shall elect officers, adopt a budget for the following year, and take up other pertinent matters of church business. The church fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and conclude on December 31.
- C. **Special Business Meetings**—Special business meetings may be called by the pastors to consider matters which require action prior to the next regular business meeting. Announcement shall be made at least one Sunday in advance.
- D. **Moderator**—The senior pastor or his designee shall act as moderator at all business meetings of the church. In his absence or during a meeting for the senior pastor's dismissal, another pastor may moderate.
- E. **Voting**—Members must be at least 18 years of age and in good standing to be eligible to vote. Not less than 40 percent of the active voting membership shall be considered a quorum. Voting shall be either open or secret at the discretion of the moderator. A three-fourths majority of all voting members present shall be required for passage of any item of business.

Article VI—Church Government

Scripture indicates that the responsibility for shepherding and leading the church under Jesus Christ belongs to the pastors. As necessary, the Scriptures also provides for the appointment of deacons to serve the church, particularly in areas of ministry that would cause the pastors to neglect their Biblical responsibilities. (cf. Acts 6:1–7) The church membership is responsible to vote on the approval of leaders (both pastors and deacons), the inclusion and discipline of church members, and the acceptance of the annual church budget.

Section 1: Pastoral Qualifications

Pastors shall meet the qualifications and standards of the Word of God prescribed for their office. They shall endeavor, by God's grace, to live and serve in full conformity to the standards found in John 21:16; Heb. 13:17; I Tim. 3:1–7; I Pet. 5:1–3; and Tit. 1:5–9. The terms *elder*, *pastor*, and *overseer* refer to the same office. (Acts 20:17, 28; I Pet. 5:1–5) The pastoral team shall be comprised of both paid and volunteer staff members.

Section 2: Pastoral Responsibilities

- A. He is responsible to manage or administrate the local church before Almighty God. (Tit. 1:7)
- B. He is responsible to be a guardian of the truth and to care for the welfare of the members of the local church in every area (I Tim. 3:1–2; Tit. 1:7, Heb. 13:17)
- C. He is to exercise leadership and authority in the local church as a member of a team of pastors. (I Tim. 3:4–5)
- D. He is required to hold fast to the Scriptures and to be able to apply them to life situations. (Tit. 1:9)
- E. He is required to reprove, rebuke, and exhort according to the principles of Scripture as necessary. (Tit. 1:9, 13; II Tim. 3:16)
- F. He is required to “feed the flock,” by ministering the Word of God whether publicly or privately. (I Tim. 3:2; I Pet. 5:2–3; Acts 20:28)
- G. He is to be an example to the membership of the church. (I Pet. 5:3)
- H. He is required to “shepherd” the members of the local church. (Acts 20:28)

Section 3: Selection of a Volunteer Pastor

The selection process shall be as follows:

- A. The current pastors shall determine the number of pastors needed to serve the church and make the congregation aware of the need.
- B. The congregation shall submit names of nominees to the pastors for their consideration.
- C. The nominees shall perform extensive self-evaluation based upon the scriptural teaching concerning pastors.
- D. The pastors shall interview those nominees who remain in the process following the self-evaluation.
- E. The pastors shall recommend to the congregation the nominees they feel best fulfill the biblical requirements for pastors.
- F. The congregation shall then evaluate the recommended nominees. Any concerns shall be taken up first with the nominee in question and then with the current pastors.
- G. Following the congregational evaluation, the congregation will vote to appoint the nominees to serve on the pastoral team.

- H. Following the vote, a time of dedication and congregational affirmation shall be held for the new pastors.
- I. The volunteer pastor can resign his office at any point with a ninety-day notice.

Section 4: Dismissal of a Volunteer Pastor

The dismissal of a volunteer pastor from office shall be the responsibility of the remaining pastors. Action to dismiss a volunteer pastor shall require the unanimous consent of the remaining pastors.

Article VII—Officers

Section 1: Senior Pastor

- A. **Qualifications**—The senior pastor shall meet the scriptural qualification of a pastor as mentioned above. He must ascribe to the Declaration of Faith, the Constitution, and any bylaws of this church.
- B. **Authority**—The senior pastor shall be the chief spiritual leader and chief administrative officer of the church. As such he shall be an ex officio member of every church committee and organization. He shall lead the pastors in their responsibility for all the church services, including the approval of speakers, music, and all other matters pertaining to the operation of the church. He shall be charged with the oversight of the preaching of the Word of God and administration of the ordinances.
- C. **Call and Tenure**—A pulpit committee, comprised of the pastoral team members, shall seek and recommend a qualified man to be senior pastor of the church. Following careful examination and an opportunity to hear the man preach, the church shall vote on the candidate at a special business meeting. Only one candidate may be considered at a time, with a vote taken before considering another candidate. If a current pastor becomes a candidate to fill the position of senior pastor he shall not serve on the pulpit committee while under consideration. Once elected, the senior pastor will continue to serve until he either resigns his office (with a ninety-day notice) or is dismissed by the pastors (with ninety days' severance pay). Dismissal of the senior pastor shall be the responsibility of the pastors. Action to dismiss the senior pastor shall require the unanimous consent of all of the remaining pastors.

Section 2: Staff

In order to meet the needs of the church, pastors are at liberty to fill salaried positions such as pastoral staff, secretaries, custodians, and any others they may deem necessary with personnel who are equipped for a particular task and meet the spiritual qualifications. Salaried personnel may be hired only after the congregation has allocated funds for that position in the budget. The dismissal of a ministerial or pastoral staff member shall be the responsibility of the pastors acting upon the recommendation of the senior pastor. A vote by the congregation is required before a pastoral staff member is appointed into office. The pastoral staff member will continue to serve until he either resigns his office (with a ninety-day notice) or is dismissed by the pastors (with ninety days' severance pay).

Section 3: Selection of a Staff Pastor

The selection process shall be as follows:

- A. The current pastors shall determine the number of pastors needed to serve the church and make the congregation aware of the need.
- B. The senior pastor shall submit names of nominees to the pastors for their consideration.
- C. The nominees shall perform extensive self-evaluation based upon the scriptural teaching concerning pastors.
- D. The pastors shall interview those nominees who remain in the process following the self-evaluation.
- E. The pastors shall recommend to the congregation the nominees they feel best fulfill the biblical requirements for pastors.
- F. The congregation shall then evaluate the recommended nominees. Any concerns shall be taken up first with the nominee in question and then with the current pastors.
- G. Following the congregational evaluation, the congregation will vote to appoint the nominees to serve on the pastoral team.
- H. Following the vote, a time of dedication and congregational affirmation shall be held for the new pastors.
- I. The pastoral staff member will continue to serve until he either resigns his office (with a ninety-day notice).

Section 4: Dismissal of a Staff Pastor

The dismissal of a staff pastor from office shall be the responsibility of the remaining pastors. Action to dismiss a staff pastor shall require the unanimous consent of the remaining pastors. If dismissed by the pastors, the pastoral staff member will receive a ninety-day severance pay.

Section 5: Deacons

- A. **Qualifications**—Deacons shall be males who meet the Scriptural qualifications for the office as set forth in I Timothy 3:8–13. They must have been members of the church for at least six months.
- B. **Responsibilities**—According to the pattern set forth in Acts 6:1–6, the deacons shall assist the pastors in every aspect of ministry in the church. They shall recognize the pastors as the leaders of the church and support them in matters spiritual and secular that pertain to the operation of the church. The deacons will serve as the legal agents of the church under the direction of the pastors. The senior pastor shall serve as moderator at all deacons' meetings. The deacons may elect a chairman who shall serve for a term of one year. The pastors shall direct the operation of the church in the absence of a senior pastor. If the

church does not have any men serving as a pastor, the deacons shall direct the operation of the church, including the search for a new senior pastor.

- C. Election and Tenure—Church members may submit recommendations for deacons based on the number of vacancies. From that list, the pastors will submit nominations to the congregation for vote. Upon election, a deacon shall serve for three years. The number of deacons shall be determined by the pastors according to the needs of the church.
- D. The deacon will continue to serve until he either resigns his office (with a ninety-day notice) or is dismissed from his role by a unanimous vote by the pastors.

Section 6: Other Officers

- A. Clerk—The clerk shall keep the minutes of each business meeting and present those minutes to the congregation at the following business meeting. The clerk shall be custodian of the membership roll and other official (nonfinancial) documents of the church. The pastors shall appoint the clerk for a three year term.
- B. Treasurer—The treasurer shall keep an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements and present a financial report at each regular business meeting. The pastors shall appoint the treasurer for a three year term. The treasurer, senior pastor, and any other designee appointed by the pastors shall be authorized to sign church checks.
- C. Financial Records Secretary—The financial records secretary shall keep a record of all monetary gifts and provide a copy to each individual contributor of his own annual contributions. The pastors shall appoint the financial records secretary for a three year term. The records and personal knowledge of the financial records secretary shall be confidential.

Article VII—Committees

The pastors shall appoint special committees as the need arises, which shall serve under their direction and authority.

Article VIII—Ministries

All ministries of the church are under the authority of the pastors and are subject to their approval, including the selection of staff and teachers.

Article IX—Standards for Workers

Since the officers and others who serve in the ministries of the church occupy positions of authority and responsibility, they are expected to observe high standards of Christian conduct as examples for the rest of the membership. For that reason, all officers and workers in the church shall be expected to abide by the standards of modesty, decency, and Christian testimony, as set by the pastors.

Article X—Ordination

Any male member of Palmetto Baptist Church who has been persuaded that God has called him to the Gospel ministry may be considered for ordination to preach the Gospel. He must demonstrate this call by the possession of gifts and graces belonging to the ministry, and by adequate preparation. The church shall call an ordination council, moderated by the senior pastor or his delegate, and composed of the pastors and any other men invited by the pastors. They shall examine the candidate with regard to his doctrinal soundness, moral and spiritual qualifications, and manifestation of spiritual gifts. This meeting shall be open to all church members, who will have an opportunity to ask questions after the council has finished. After satisfactory examination and recommendation by the council, the church will vote concerning the ordination of the candidate during a church service.

Article XI—Financial Support Policy

The financial needs of this church shall be primarily met by the voluntary giving of tithes, offerings, and contributions by its members and friends (Mal. 3:8–10; I Cor. 16:1–2; II Cor. 9:6–7). Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the pastors and deacons. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article II.

Article XII—Affiliation

Section 1: Autonomy

This church is totally self-governing and subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body.

Section 2: Authority

The pastors are responsible to shepherd and lead the church members to do the work of the ministry. The deacons are responsible to assist the pastors in ministering to the material needs of the church (facilities, finances, and families). The church members are responsible to vote on the approval of leaders (both pastors and deacons), the inclusion and discipline of church members, and the acceptance of the annual church budget.

Section 3: Association

This church will recognize and sustain the obligations of mutual conviction, counsel, and cooperation which are common among like-minded churches and seek to maintain fellowship with those organizations which consistently uphold the truth of God's Word and the spirit of this Constitution.

Article XIII—Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted only by a three-fourths majority vote of the congregation at any regular or special meeting, provided that such amendment be distributed in written form to the membership at least two weeks prior to said congregational meeting.

Article XIV—Dissolution of Corporation

In the event of the dissolution of Palmetto Baptist Church as a nonprofit organization, the assets of this church shall be given to other nonprofit organizations of like faith and order which would satisfy the remaining membership and qualify under the provision and regulations of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law).