

# CONSTITUTION

## Preamble

We declare and establish this *Constitution* to preserve and secure the principles of our faith 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 relation to other churches. As an aid in the government of the body, the church shall establish and maintain a catalogue of current *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*.

## Name

The name of this body shall be Earle Street Baptist Church of Greenville, South Carolina.

## Mission

The mission of the church is to worship God (**worship**), to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed (**missions**), to be a home to all who would enter (**fellowship**), to minister to the needs of one another (**ministry**), and to assist in spiritual growth (**spiritual growth**).

## Statement of Faith

The *Holy Bible* is the inspired word of God and is the sole basis for any statement of faith. The church subscribes to the doctrinal statement given in *The Baptist Faith and Message*, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963.

## Relationships

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church 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 this church. This church is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist churches.

## Government of the Church

The government of the church shall be in the hands of the members. Those in attendance at any properly constituted church conference shall comprise a quorum for the transaction of business. *Robert's Rules of Order* shall guide the moderator in the conduct of church conferences.

## Church Operating Policies and Procedures

The *Church Operating Policies and Procedures* shall consist of a compilation of current church policies. An up-to-date master copy shall be maintained in the church office by the church staff.

The *Church Operating Policies and Procedures* shall include:

- *Constitution and Bylaws*,
- Job descriptions for all positions (paid and unpaid),
- Descriptions of the responsibilities for each church entity,
- General operating policies recommended by a church entity or by the Deacons and approved by the Deacons or by the church.

The *Church Operating Policies and Procedures* shall be approved by the Deacons, with the exception of the *Constitution and Bylaws*, which must be approved by the church in compliance with the *Constitution and Bylaws*.

### **Officers and Staff Members**

The officers of this church shall be the Senior Pastor, Moderator (Deacon Chair), Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurers, Financial Coordinator, and Trustees.

The duties of officers shall be those prescribed in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*.

The church shall have other officers and staff members as wisdom and the Holy Spirit may direct to carry out the purposes of the church. The duties of additional officers shall be determined by the Deacons and incorporated in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures* and the duties of staff members shall be determined by the Personnel Committee, approved by the Deacons, and incorporated in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*. The addition of officers and staff members and their duties shall be approved by the Deacons. The addition of a ministerial staff position and his or her duties shall be approved by the Deacons and recommended to the Church for approval. The addition of the approved ministerial staff position shall be accomplished in accordance with established guidelines in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*, and the candidate to fill that position shall be approved by the church.

### **Committees**

In addition to a Nominating Committee and a Personnel Committee, the church shall have a Constitution and Bylaws Committee, a Committee on Deacon Nominations, and such other Committees as shall be recommended and approved by the Deacons.

The duties of all committees shall be outlined in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures* and shall be approved by the Deacons and will be available upon request.

### **Adoption and Amendment**

This *Constitution and Bylaws* shall replace and supersede prior *Constitution and Bylaws* of the church. The *Constitution and Bylaws* shall take immediate effect when approved by two-thirds of the members present at a church conference.

Proposed changes to the *Constitution and Bylaws* must be submitted in writing to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee for review and recommendation prior to submission to the church. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall have sixty days within which to pass on any request for a change to the *Constitution and Bylaws*. If after sixty days the Constitution and Bylaws Committee has made no recommendation to the church, then any member of the church may bring a request for a change directly to the church provided proper notice be given. Notice of the proposed amendment shall be given at a church conference and published in the church newsletter at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting at which the vote is taken. Amendments shall take effect when approved by two-thirds of the members present at a church conference.

Any provision in the *Constitution and Bylaws* can be temporarily suspended by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a properly called church conference provided that written notice of the proposed suspension shall be given to the church at least two weeks prior to the vote.

## **BYLAWS**

### **Membership**

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

Members shall be admitted as follows:

- Upon profession or reaffirmation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and baptism by immersion,
- By transfer of membership from another church of like faith and practice, or
- By statement of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and previous baptism by immersion when no letter is obtainable.

Any exceptions to the above criteria will be considered and resolved by the Deacons.

Membership shall be terminated as follows:

- By death,
- By transfer of membership to another Baptist church,
- By erasure upon receipt of written notice that a member has joined a non-Baptist church, or
- At the written request of an individual member.

Members shall be classified as active or inactive. Members may be transferred to the inactive roll if the member's whereabouts is unknown or cannot be established. An active member will be defined as one who has participated in the life of the church within the past year. Members classified as active may request in writing that their names be placed on the inactive roll.

Every active member is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present.

Members shall be expected to worship regularly, to contribute financially according to their ability and to share in the organized work of the church. Members shall endeavor to share the meaning of Christ with others through their daily living and personal witnessing. Officers, Staff Members, Deacons, Teachers, and Entity Chairpersons are expected to be excellent examples of these characteristics.

### **Deacons**

The scriptural basis for Deacon Ministry is Acts 6:1-4; Romans 12:1-8; Romans 16:1-2; and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

### Deacon Eligibility and Qualifications

Those eligible for election must be at least twenty-one years of age, having been a church member for no less than two years, be an active resident church member, and able to perform the duties of a Deacon. Deacons who are rotating off will not be eligible for re-election for one year. Deacons serving unexpired terms will be eligible for re-election. Staff members and their immediate family (parents, children, spouses, and siblings) will be ineligible for election. Spouses may not serve as active deacons at the same time.

While we recognize we are all flawed, imperfect people, in constant need of God's grace, each deacon should be a committed follower of Christ, growing toward a mature faith and striving to:

- Be actively involved and participating in the life of the church, using one's gifts through appropriate service in and through the church,
- Be committed to and working to help the church carry out its vision and mission,
- Have the interest of the whole church at heart, being a peacemaker within the congregation, seeking unity in Christ,
- Demonstrate a life of positive personal witness to all,
- Demonstrate a consistent witness in home life,
- Practice stewardship of time, talents, testimony, and treasure, and
- Be temperate in all areas of life.

### Deacon Election

There will be eighteen Deacons with six Deacons rotating off each year. Deacons will serve a three-year term beginning on September 1.

The Committee on Deacon Nominations (CDN) will facilitate the election process beginning in April. The CDN will solicit and collect nominations, vet nominees, and inform them of the responsibilities of a deacon. From the eligible and willing nominees, the CDN will prepare a balanced slate of candidates, equal to the number of openings, representing the diversity of the congregation (demographics of gender, age, position in the church, cluster representation, longevity of membership, previous deacon service).

On the third Sunday in July the church, by ballot, will elect the appropriate number of Deacons to replace those whose terms are expiring and to fill any vacant unexpired term(s). Each active member will be given a ballot with the names of recommended Deacons and a checkbox for voting on each nominee.

The outgoing Deacons will count the votes. Those receiving a simple majority of the ballots cast shall be elected.

If a vacancy occurs during the year, the church will be notified. The CDN will remain on "standby" throughout the year in the event the deacons deem it necessary to hold an election to fill the vacancy. In the event of a special election, the CDN will choose and present for vote by the church a nominee from those previously considered eligible for nomination.

The procedure for the CDN will be incorporated in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*.

### **Staff Replacement**

Within thirty days of the announcement that there is, or will be, a vacancy in the position of Senior Pastor, the Deacons will be responsible for initiating the process of recommending an Interim Pastor to the congregation. Salary and benefits for the Interim Pastor will be determined by the Personnel Committee.

Within thirty days of the announcement that there is, or will be, a vacancy in the position of Senior Pastor, the Nominating Committee will initiate the process of forming a Senior Pastor Search Committee, which will consist of an odd number of people ranging from five to nine who meet the following qualifications: at least twenty-one years of age, have been an active resident church member for no less than one year, and willing and able to perform the duties of the Senior Pastor Search Committee. Staff members and their immediate family (parents, children, spouses, and siblings) will be ineligible for election to the Senior Pastor Search Committee. The Nominating Committee will gather congregational input, and considering that input, will form a slate of nominations, filling in nominees as needed to represent the diversity of the congregation (demographics of gender, age, position in the church, cluster representation, longevity of membership, etc.). The entire slate will be presented to the congregation for approval by a ballot vote. A two-week notice before the ballot vote will be given to the congregation in the newsletter and other appropriate channels. The Senior Pastor Search Committee will accomplish its work in compliance with its job description in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*, developed and approved by the Deacons.

The Senior Pastor Search Committee's recommendation of a candidate shall be made to the church for approval by a ballot vote. A two-week notice before the ballot vote will be given to the congregation in the newsletter and other appropriate channels. At least a two-thirds majority of the votes cast will be required to extend a call to the prospective Senior Pastor.

Replacement of other ministerial staff shall be accomplished by the Personnel Committee in accordance with established guidelines in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures* and shall be approved by the church. Replacement of other staff shall be accomplished by the Personnel Committee in accordance with established guidelines in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures* and reported to the church. The addition of a ministerial staff position and a corresponding job description, or the deletion of a ministerial staff position, shall be recommended by the Personnel Committee, approved by the Deacons, and recommended to the Church for approval. The addition of the approved ministerial staff position shall be accomplished in accordance with established guidelines in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*, and the candidate to fill that position shall be approved by the church.

Terms of employment shall be in accordance with established church policy found in the *Church Operating Policies and Procedures*.

Only one candidate for any position will be voted on at any one time.

### **Worship**

This church shall conduct regular worship services on every Sunday and on Wednesday evenings unless otherwise agreed upon by the Senior Pastor and the Deacons. The church shall provide all

necessary support for worship, missions, fellowship, ministry, spiritual growth, and administration functions of the church.

The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once each quarter and on any other day as determined by the Senior Pastor and the Deacons.

### **Church Conference**

Regular church conferences shall be held six times a year, in alternating months, according to a schedule determined by the Deacon Chair, in consultation with the Senior Pastor. The Deacon Chair, as the Moderator of the Church, shall lead church conferences, with his/her designee leading the conference in his/her absence.

When votes are taken, voice votes are accepted, the raising of hands is accepted, and if a ballot is desired, a motion would be made and seconded. If seven members vote for a ballot, then voting will be by ballot.

Absentee ballots will be made available at least one week in advance for Deacon elections, approving the budget, approving the *Strategic Plan*, or calling a candidate to a staff position. The Deacons may approve the use of an absentee ballot so long as there has been a two week notice of the pending vote.

A special church conference may be held on the call of the Deacon Chair or Deacon Vice-Chair at any regular meeting or service of the church. Except in case of great urgency (which shall be noted in the minutes) at least one week's notice of such meeting shall be given in the church newsletter.

### **Church Calendar**

The church calendar year shall begin September 1 of each year. The church fiscal year shall begin January 1 of each year.