

Constitution and Bylaws of Cove Baptist Church

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Preamble

This Constitution and Bylaws are made to:

1. Preserve and secure the principles of our faith.
2. Preserve the liberties of each individual member.
3. Ensure freedom of action of independence from any religious body or organization.
4. Provide for orderly conduct of internal affairs, in dealing with others, and of governing members.

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Constitution

I. Name

This body shall be known as Cove Baptist Church Inc. (hereinafter “the church”) located in Owens Cross Roads, Alabama.

II. Purpose

Cove Baptist Church is a body of baptized believers whose collective passion is to exalt and worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in spirit and in truth to prepare God's people for the training of the saints. We worship so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith, in attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, to seek the lost and bring them to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. (John 4:24, Ephesians 4:12, Luke 19:10).

III. Statement of Faith

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and is the basis for our Statement of Faith. The church affirms the “Baptist Faith and Message 2000” as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention. The ordinances of the church are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. We believe scriptural baptism is by immersion in water of a believer in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This act symbolizes the believer’s faith and obedience, as well as his/her identification with the crucified, buried, and risen Lord. Baptism is a prerequisite to the privileges of membership and to the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is the partaking of the bread and of the cup in symbolic remembrance of the Lord, whose body was given and whose blood was shed for the remission of sins.

IV. Government

The government of the church is vested in its members. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of its life and organization. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes the needs for mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Southern Baptist churches. Insofar as it is practical and consistent with the Purpose, the church will cooperate with and mutually work with churches, The Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

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V. Church Covenant

Having been led by the grace of God through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit to repent of our sin and in faith turn to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and having given public testimony of this faith through baptism, we now joyfully and solemnly enter into this covenant with the members of Cove Baptist Church.

We commit, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to affirm and follow the Statement of Faith and Covenant in the Church Constitution, to walk together in love, to remember one another in prayer, to help one another in times of need, to exercise gentleness and humility in our dealings with one another as we speak the truth in love, to be faithful in our responsibilities and commitments, to be just and honest in our dealings, and to honor ourselves and other for Christ's sake through sexual purity, personal integrity, and abstaining from things or practices which bring harm to our faith or the faith of another.

We commit to faithful participation in times of worship, prayer, study, and fellowship with other believers, to the building up of the church by using our spiritual gifts in ministry, to contributing cheerfully and regularly for the ministry and expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to the world.

We commit to practice personal and family worship, to train our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and all peoples of the world.

We have read the Articles, Constitution, and Bylaws including those policies dealing with Duties and Rights of Members, Church Discipline and Restoration, and Church Covenant and agree to be bound by the Articles, Constitution and Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, and accompanying policies and procedures.

VI. Amendments

Members may propose changes to the Constitution. They shall be submitted to the Leadership Team for consideration and comment. The Leadership Team shall present the proposed changes and their comments to the church at a regular business meeting. The Constitution may be amended by seventy-five percent (75%) vote of the voting members present at two consecutive regular business meetings provided the proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing and announced from the pulpit thirty (30) days prior to each meeting.

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Bylaws

I. Church Membership

A. General

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

The membership of the church shall consist of those persons who profess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, having been baptized by immersion and having indicated their commitment following the teachings of the Bible as their model and standard of living, giving satisfactory proof of conversion to the Christian faith, as set forth in the New Testament.

B. Membership Candidacy

Any person may offer themselves as a candidate for membership in this church. Membership may be granted by a majority vote of voting members present at any regular church service and in one of the following manners:

1. By baptism:
 - a) For persons making a public profession of faith.
 - b) For persons who have experienced salvation but have not experienced believer's baptism by immersion.
2. By letter:
 - a) Promise of letter of recommendation from another Baptist church.
3. By statement of faith:
 - a) For persons who have experienced salvation followed by believer's baptism by immersion by another Baptist church (or church of like doctrine), but are either not now Baptist, or no record is now available.
 - b) For restoration upon a statement of repentance and rededication of persons who have been removed from the fellowship of a Baptist church for reasons of discipline.

If there is any dissent as to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the Deacons for investigation and the recommendation for action to the church within thirty (30) days. A majority vote of voting members present shall be required to elect such candidates to membership.

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C. Termination of Membership

Membership in the church shall be terminated by reason of:

1. Transfer of letter to another Baptist church.
2. Joining another church. A letter of transfer is not required.
3. Death.
4. Church discipline with this document and church policies.
5. Written request for termination of membership.
6. Purging of membership records.

D. Duties and Rights of Members

1. Members are expected to:
 - a) Be godly examples in all aspects of private and public life.
 - b) Regularly attend the services of the church.
 - c) Give regularly for its support and its causes in time, money, talents, and spiritual gifts.
 - d) Participate in its organized work.
2. Members shall have the right and privilege to full participation in the life and work of the church.
3. Members who have attained the age of eighteen (18) years shall have the right to a voice and vote in all aspects of church transactions authorized or mandated by these Bylaws.
4. Members who have not attained the age of 18 shall have a voice and the right to express their opinion on any matter.

E. Voting Rights of Membership

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all business matters brought before the church for a vote require a majority vote of voting members present for approval. Any vote requiring 3/4 vote will be done by secret ballot. Voting by proxy is prohibited.
2. Dissolving or disposition of all, or substantially all, of the church assets—3/4 vote of voting members present.
3. Acquisition or sale of realty property, and/or building projects and related indebtedness—3/4 vote of voting members present.
4. Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of the church—3/4 vote of voting members present.
5. Calling or removal of the Pastor—3/4 vote of voting members present.
6. Removal of a Deacon or church member—3/4 vote of voting members present.

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7. Membership termination in instances of church discipline.
8. Amendments to the church budget in excess of \$250.00.
9. Members may request that any item presented for vote be done by secret ballot. Unless otherwise indicated, secret ballots shall be counted by the church clerk and at least two deacons.

F. Church Discipline and Restoration

It shall be the practice of this church to pursue every reasonable measure for peace and reconciliation. Should one member sin against another member or the Body of Members (the church), engage in unrepentant moral failure or teaching of an essential Biblical heresy, the aggrieved members shall follow in a tender spirit the rules given by our Lord and Savior in Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Galatians 6:1 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14. In the event the matter cannot be resolved between the members, it shall be referred to the Pastor, Deacons and Leadership Team for counsel and guidance.

Only after good faith efforts by the Pastor, Deacons, and Leadership Team to bring about repentance and reconciliation have proven futile, shall the accused member be subjected to discipline by the church with notice of the charges and process. All church discipline will require a majority vote of the Pastor, Deacons, and Leadership Team before presenting it to the church. In the event that termination of church membership is the recommended discipline, the church shall be notified of the charges and actions taken to date at least thirty (30) days before the vote will be held.

Members dismissed by the church shall be restored to full membership privileges by the majority vote of the church upon recommendation of the Pastor, Deacons, and Leadership Team according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8 when their conduct is judged by the Pastor, Deacons and the Leadership Team to be in accordance with the Statement of Faith, Covenant, and Biblical repentance. The Pastor will communicate such restoration to the church in a timely manner.

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II. Church Offices

All who serve in offices of the church shall first be members of the church.

A. Pastor

1. Qualifications:
 - a) A man consistent with the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.
 - b) Ordained or willing to be ordained as a Southern Baptist minister.
2. Responsibilities:
 - a) These generally fall into the following areas: preaching, teaching, evangelism, pastoral counseling, administration, planning, and guiding the church to grow and fulfill its purposes.
 - b) He shall lead the church and its organization in performing the tasks in worship, proclamation, education, and evangelism.
 - c) The Pastor shall be an ex officio member of all church standing teams, except the Pastor Search Team.
 - d) He shall secure pulpit supply for times of his absence.
3. Call:
 - a) A Pastor shall be chosen and called whenever a vacancy occurs.
 - b) A Pastor Search Team shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and this team's recommendation will serve as a nomination.
 - c) The Pastor Search Team will recommend only one candidate at a time.
 - d) The Pastor Search Team will give members at least two weeks' notice of the presentation of the candidate.
 - e) Election will be by secret ballot and an affirmative vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of the voting members present is necessary.
4. Term of Service:
 - a) The Pastor shall serve until either his resignation or the church terminates the relationship, and in either case, at least two weeks (14 days) written notice shall be given unless otherwise mutually agreed or in the event of essential moral failure or essential biblical heresy.
 - b) If sufficient cause is found to terminate the Pastor, members shall be given written notice at least two weeks prior to a regular or called business meeting for that purpose. The meeting may be called only upon the recommendation of seventy-five percent (75%) of the Deacons or by a written petition signed by not less than thirty-three percent (33%) of the voting members.

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- c) The vote to declare the position of Pastor vacant shall be by secret ballot. An affirmative vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of the voting members present is necessary.
- d) Except in instances of gross misconduct by the Pastor so excluded from office, the church will compensate the pastor with one (1) month's salary, payable within 30 days.

5. Vacancy:

- a) During a period of vacancy in the Pastor position, leadership will pass to the Chairman of the Deacons.
- b) The Chairman of the Deacons will work with our State Convention to ensure qualified men are scheduled to preach during the transition time.
- c) The Chairman of the Deacons will follow guidelines in these Bylaws and Church Ministry Guidelines to form the Pastor Search Team.

B. Deacons

1. Responsibilities: Deacons are first and foremost servants. The word "Deacon" translated in the original language in the Bible means "servant". Deacons are to serve the body of Christ as needed in support of the ministry of the pastor and church in the following:

- a) Lead the church in the achievement of its mission.
- b) Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
- c) Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

2. Number of Deacons: The church shall elect as many qualified men to serve as Deacons as deemed necessary by the Pastor and active Deacon board to fulfill the ministry of the church.

3. Term of Service: It is the belief of this church that once a man is called to be a Deacon, he is a Deacon for life unless he no longer meets the minimum qualifications.

- a) Deacons may also choose to move themselves to an inactive status at anytime by providing a written notice to be reviewed by the Pastor and chairman of Deacons. A deacon may not remain inactive at the suffrage of the church and could be asked to serve in the event or circumstance the church becomes in need.
- b) If a Deacon is moved to inactive status for any reason, the procedures for Deacon Election will be followed.

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4. Minimum Qualifications: A Deacon must:

- a) Confess to be a born again Christian with a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and living a life controlled by the Holy Spirit.
- b) Read and accept the Scriptural basis for Deacons as prescribed in Acts 6:3-8 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. In reference to 1 Timothy 3:12, a deacon shall be the husband of but one wife. Neither he or his current wife have been divorced since their salvation experience except for cause of adultery as stated in the scripture (ref; Matt5:32, 19, 8, 10; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18)
- c) Support by prayer and participation in the entire church ministry, particularly Sunday school, Sunday worship services, mid-week services, deacon family ministry plan and other services of God's work insofar as able in good faith and conscience.
- d) Commit to tithe through the Church program of Stewardship
- e) Assume without reservation the reservation on responsibilities, obligations, and opportunities expected of a deacon-in-service. Deacons are servant's who lead; and leaders who serve. The deacons shall join the pastor in providing spiritual oversight of the Church. Together with the pastor they shall seek to know the will of God for the Church and lead the congregation to do the will of God. The deacons shall meet with the pastor and ministerial staff on a regular basis for Bible study, prayer, fellowship and to deal with matters pertaining to responsibilities of the deacon body.
- f) Shall be a member of Cove Baptist Church for at least one year prior to the time of nomination for election as a deacon-in-service.
- g) Shall be a male of at least 25 years of age prior to the time of nomination for election as a deacon-in- service.
- h) Must be a baptized-believer for at least three years prior to the time of nomination for election as a deacon-in-service.

5. Election:

- a) The qualifications, duties and expectations will be made available to the membership when the need for a new active deacon or deacons is established. After prayer and review of the Deacon criteria, each member may nominate one man for each vacancy to be filled. (Example: If there are three positions to be filled, each member will be allowed to make up to three nominations) Recommendation must be made in writing.

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- b) Once the need is established and the qualifications, duties, and expectations of a Deacon have been made available to the members, the following three Sundays will be set aside for collecting the nominee's names. A list of men that meet the requirements for Deacon service according to date joined, date of baptism and age will be provided to each member of the congregation and returned with their nomination. Nominations will be collected in a sealed box to be opened by at least two Deacons and the Pastor.
- c) At least two Deacons and the Pastor will examine each nominee to ensure he fulfills the Biblical qualifications and church expectations by:
 - (i) Providing the duties and expectations along with a list of sample questions for the interview to the nominee to be returned and signed within fourteen (14) days.
 - (ii) Interviewing the nominee and his wife, concerning their beliefs, commitment, and duties.
 - (iii) After prayerful consideration by the Deacons and Pastor, the Deacons will present a list of all qualified nominees to the church two weeks before the election.
 - (iv) Members may voice concerns about any nominee to the Chairman of the Deacons up to forty-eight (48) hours before the election.
- d) The Deacon election will be by secret ballot.
- e) The ballots will be counted by at least two Deacons designated by the Chairman of Deacons and observed by the Clerk.

There shall be no obligation to constitute as an assignment as a deacon one who has been a deacon in another church; however, in such instances as one might be chosen by this church for assignment as a deacon, his previous ordination by another church of like faith and order shall suffice for this church.

6. Ordination:

- a) Selection, election, and ordination of Deacons are a privilege of the church.
- b) A Deacon Ordination service shall be scheduled by the Pastor for elected Deacons that are not ordained by Cove Baptist Church or another church of like faith and practice.

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7. Officers:

- a) Within 30 days of the beginning of the church year, the deacons shall elect a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and others, as they deem necessary.
- b) The election of Deacon Officers will be by secret ballot.
- c) The ballots will be counted by the Pastor and Church Clerk.
- d) Deacons who have not completed at least one year of active service are not eligible for officer positions.

C. Clerk

1. Responsibilities: The clerk shall be responsible for supervising the keeping of a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. Duties include:

- a) Keep a register of names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal, death, or erasure, together with a record of baptisms.
- b) Issue letters of dismissal voted by the church.
- c) Preserve on file all communications and written official reports.
- d) Give required notice of all meeting where notice is necessary, as indicated by these Bylaws
- e) Prepare the annual profile of the church to the association.
- f) At least one copy of all church documentation shall be maintained outside the church.
- g) The church may delegate some or all of the clerical responsibilities to a secretary who will assist the elected clerk.

2. Term of Service:

- a) The church shall annually elect a clerk as its clerical officer to coincide with the beginning of the church year.

D. Moderator

1. Responsibilities:

- a) The moderator shall preside at all regular and called business meetings of the church.
- b) In the absence of the moderator, the Chairman of the Deacons shall preside.
- c) In the absence of the moderator and the Chairman of the Deacons, the church clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator will be elected.

2. Term of Service:

- a) The church shall annually elect a moderator to coincide with the beginning of the church year.

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E. Treasurer

1. Responsibilities:

- a) Receive, preserve, and pay out approved expenses, all money or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.
- b) Render an itemized report of receipts and disbursements for the previous month at each regular business meeting.
- c) Upon rendering the annual account at the end of each fiscal year and its acceptance/approval by the church, the records shall be delivered by the treasurer to the church clerk, who shall keep and preserve the account as part of the permanent records of the church.
- d) When the annual report is provided at the end of each fiscal year, any member has the right to request that the account be audited by an auditing team or public accountant. In situations where a public accountant is used, the person should be a licensed CPA who is not a member of Cove Baptist Church.

2. Term of Service:

- a) The church shall annually elect a treasurer as its financial officer to coincide with the beginning of the church year.

F. Trustees

At least three (3) trustees shall be elected by the church to serve as legal officers for the church.

1. Responsibilities:

- a) They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property of the church without specific vote of the church authorizing each action.
- b) When the signatures of trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, lease, or rental of property, or other legal documents related to church-approved matters.

2. Term of Service:

- a) Trustees shall serve a three (3) year staggered term, rotating off the Board in sequential order, with one new trustee being elected every year to coincide with the beginning of the church year.
- b) If a vacancy occurs during the year, a vote will be conducted during a regular or called business meeting to fill the remaining term of the vacated position.
- c) No trustee may be re-elected to successive terms.

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III. Ministry teams

To facilitate the work of the church, there shall be ministry teams. General guidance for the scope of their work will be outlined in these Bylaws while specific work will be provided in the Church Ministry Guidelines. All ministry teams and ministries shall be accountable to the church, under the direction of the Pastor. In addition, the church may at any time request a special report on any aspect of any team or ministry.

A. Definition:

1. Standing: Elected teams with no limits to consecutive terms served.
2. Ad-Hoc: Temporary teams created for a specific purpose

B. Establishment:

When new ministry teams are to be established, the following steps should be followed:

1. Need identified and approved by the church.
2. Once the need for the team has been identified, the nominating team will work to identify a chairman of the team.
3. Once a chairman has been identified, the chairman will work with the nominating team to identify additional people to comprise the team (at least 3 members, including the chairman, are required).
4. Once potential team members are identified, the nominating team will formally present the potential team members to the church (during a regular or called business meeting) for vote and approval.

C. Number of Members:

Each ministry team will be composed of no less than three members. The size of the ministry team will be determined by the needs of the church as advised by the ministry team Chairperson. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of each standing ministry team serving as a resource person and liaison.

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D. Standing Ministry Teams:

Standing ministry teams shall include teams authorized by the church. Members of standing ministry teams shall serve on a three-year rotation basis with one third to be elected each year with no limit to consecutive terms.

E. Ad-Hoc Teams:

1. The church has the authority to form ad-hoc teams at any regular or called business meeting.
2. Members of ad-hoc teams shall serve on the team until the assigned task is complete.
3. Ad-hoc Teams will be selected in accordance with the Church Ministries Guidelines.

F. Policies and Procedure:

The list of Ministry teams and the policies and procedures that govern them are found in the Church Ministry Guidelines (“Manual”). The manual, maintained by the church secretary, shall be kept in the church and made available to any member upon request. The ministry team Chairperson shall be provided a copy of the guidelines for their team upon their appointment as Chairperson.

Addition, revision, or deletion of church policy and ministry guidelines require:

1. Written draft of the proposed change prepared by the ministry team requesting change.
2. This proposal will be finalized and provided to the church Leadership Team for review and recommendation for change.
3. If the change is recommended by the Leadership Team, the Leadership Team shall present the proposed change to the church for approval.
4. If the change is not recommended by the Leadership Team, the Leadership Team shall provide a written response to the ministry team that made the request.

G. Ministry Team Charter and Oversight

Each new ministry team will develop a charter to be approved by the leadership team, which describes the ministry team’s purpose, duties, manning, and qualifications. The nominating team shall have general oversight responsibility to ensure the ministry team is fully staffed.

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H. Operation

1. Each ministry team shall have a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary.
2. Each ministry team shall annually review its policies and procedures to ensure team effectiveness. These policies and procedures will be included as part of the Church Ministry Guidelines. The ministry team chairperson and the leadership team shall review and approve changes.

I. Coordination

1. In the spirit of cooperation, each ministry team, through its chairperson, shall consult with all other ministry teams, which may be affected by any contemplated action, prior to action being taken.
2. Any ministry team recommendations requiring approval of the church shall be reviewed with the Leadership Team, as needed, prior to church action. In addition, if such action shall require non-budgeted funds, the stewardship team shall review and present the request to the church for approval.

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IV. Church Ordinances

A. 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. The Senior Pastor or other ordained pastor as authorized by the Senior Pastor shall administer Baptism.
3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service.
4. The Pastor shall counsel a person professing Christ and failing to be baptized after a reasonable length of time. If negative interest is ascertained, he/she shall be deleted from those awaiting Baptism and membership.

B. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby baptized believers, through partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, commemorate the death of Jesus Christ and anticipate his second coming.

1. The Lord's Supper should be observed at least once a quarter.
2. The Pastor shall be responsible for the administration of the Lord's Supper.
3. The Deacons shall be responsible for the physical preparation and serving of the Lord's Supper.
4. All baptized believers, who after a time of self examination, not under church discipline and who feel led, may partake of the Lord's Supper.

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V. Church Meetings

A. Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning and evening for the worship of God, for preaching, instruction, evangelism, and on Wednesday night designated for prayer and Bible study. These meetings will be open for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the Pastor or his designee.

B. Special Services

Revival services and other functions, which are essential in the promotion of the church's Purpose, shall be scheduled accordingly.

C. Regular Business Meetings

1. Regular business meetings shall be held the second Wednesday evening of each month and no advance notice of the meeting need be given.

The Pastor or his designee may reschedule a regular business meeting with seven-day advance notice or extenuating circumstances.

D. Called Business Meeting

1. A called business meeting to consider special matters of significant nature may be called by:
 - a) The Pastor or Leadership Team.
 - b) The church with written application by a minimum of thirty percent (30%) of the voting members.
2. Notification Requirement:
 - a) A minimum one-week written notice must be given for any purpose which does not require 3/4 approval.
 - b) A minimum two-week written notice must be given for any purpose which requires 3/4 approval.
3. Action may be taken only on items specified in the written purpose of the called business meeting.

E. Quorum

The quorum consists of those members who attend the business meeting, provided it is a regular meeting or one that has been properly called.

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F. Parliamentary Rules

Robert's Rules of Order (revised edition) is adopted as the standard for parliamentary rules of procedure for all regular and called business meetings of the church. Effort will be made to follow the Robert's Rules of Order standards in parliamentary procedure.

VI. Church Finances

A. Budget

The stewardship team, in consultation with the church Leadership Team, shall prepare and submit a budget to the church for introduction at least two business meetings prior to the beginning of the church year. The approved church budget becomes effective at the beginning of the church year.

B. Fiscal Year

The church fiscal year shall coincide with the church calendar year.

VII. Elections, Rotations, and Vacancies

Elections, rotations, and vacancies shall be in accordance with church policy and coincide with the beginning of the church year.

VIII. Amendments

Members may propose changes to the Bylaws. They shall be submitted to the Leadership Team for consideration and comment. The Leadership Team shall present the proposed changes and their comments to the church at a regular or special business meeting. The Bylaws may be amended by seventy-five percent (75%) vote of the voting members present at two consecutive regular and/or called business meetings provided the proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing and announced from the pulpit thirty (30) days prior to each meeting.