

CHURCH CONSTITUTION

Ogletown Baptist Church

Newark, Delaware

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Ogletown Baptist Church—united for the worship of God, the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the spiritual growth and protection of each individual member—both adopt this constitution as our principal articles of governance, for the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in submission to the Holy Bible as summarized in our Statement of Faith.

ARTICLE 1: NAME

This community of believers, gathering in Newark, Delaware and uniting under this constitution, shall be known as Ogletown Baptist Church. Hereafter referred to as “the church,” “congregation,” or “OBC,” Ogletown Baptist Church is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation under the laws of the State of Delaware, County of New Castle, and is voluntary affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

The ultimate purpose of Ogletown Baptist Church shall be to glorify God, being guided in all its affairs by the Word of God as revealed through the Old and New Testaments (Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Ogletown Baptist Church’s mission is to be a growing family of believers who follow Jesus together and help others follow Jesus. The Spirit-enabled pursuit of this mission will be evident in devotion to a common faith, a common life, a common worship, and a common gospel witness (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Acts 2:42).

ARTICLE 3: ARTICLES OF FAITH

The Baptist Faith & Message (2000) reflects the doctrinal outlook of Ogletown Baptist Church. The Statement of Faith (included by reference) does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself (Old & New Testaments), as the divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of humankind, is the ultimate and final source of all that we believe.

ARTICLE 4: ORDINANCES

We recognize and practice two ordinances: believer’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper. *The Baptist Faith & Message* (2000) reflects Ogletown Baptist Church’s doctrinal understanding of these two biblical ordinances. Recognizing baptism as a public display of faith in Jesus Christ, we hold baptism as a prerequisite for membership. Recognizing the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of His death for the church, we encourage all believers who have carefully examined their lives to participate.

ARTICLE 5: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Description of Covenant Membership

Membership at Ogletown Baptist Church means that one is covenanting before God and with the other members both to be spiritually responsible for each other and also to be one for whom the shepherds/pastors are spiritually responsible to God and to the congregation (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:19). To qualify for membership, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized following his or her profession of faith, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. More specifically, the responsibilities of members are summarized within the Ogletown Baptist Church’s *Membership Covenant* (included by reference).

Each member must also agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in OBC’s *Articles of Faith*, to keep the responsibilities expressed in OBC’s *Church Covenant*, and to live in accord with this *Constitution*. Individuals will be received into membership by congregational approval.

Section 2: Membership and Children

Children are a vital part of the OBC family. We recognize the critical and primary role that Christian parents play in the development of the faith of their children. We also acknowledge that the full responsibilities and privileges of church membership are only gradually understood and accepted by children as they mature. When students reach high school age, they may declare their intention to fully embrace the privileges and responsibilities of membership, as described above in the Article 5, Section 1.

Section 3: Removal from Membership

Members of Ogletown Baptist Church shall be removed from membership for reasons of (a) death; (b) the member's written request for removal; or (c) a transfer request of membership to another church.

Additionally, after OBC has made repeated attempts to contact a member failing to share in the fellowship and responsibilities of Ogletown Baptist Church for the period of a year, without an adequate reason (such as, but not limited to, failing health, military deployment, etc.), such a member may forfeit their membership. Membership may also be terminated through the process of church discipline on the basis of unrepentant sin (Matthew 5:23-24, 18:12-20, & 1 Corinthians 5:1-13). While OBC cannot force a withdrawing member to remain in this congregation, Ogletown Baptist Church retains the right and responsibility, within the domain of the church's authority, to encourage any necessary restoration and bring any existing disciplinary process to a loving, timely, and orderly conclusion. Members are removed from membership at Ogletown Baptist Church by the majority vote of members at Members Meetings.

ARTICLE 6: OFFICERS

Section 1: Authority

We believe that the local church is governed by Christ (Matthew 16:18) through the Holy Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:17; 14:37-38; 2 Thessalonians 3:14). All believers are on level ground before the Head of the church, each having direct access to him and responsibility to intercede for the good of all as a community of priests (Ephesians 4:15; Matthew 23:8-11; 1 Timothy 2:5; Revelation 1:6; Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 3:13).

Section 2: Congregation

Consequent to the previous Section (1) under the authority of Christ and bound by the Word of God, we believe that the local congregation has the authority to govern its affairs. Ogletown Baptist Church exercises this authority (governance) through the election of officers, with other major decisions reserved for corporate action by the members. These decisions are specified in Article 7 (Meetings). Otherwise, the officers are authorized to govern the church as described in this Constitution.

Section 3: Offices

Consistent with the equality of all believers, as described in Section 1 (above), God has also ordained the existence of two offices in the church: shepherds (pastors, elders, overseers—Acts 20:17-35; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-16), and deacons (literally, “servants”—Acts 6:1-6; Philippians 1:1-2; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). These offices shall both be comprised of biblically qualified individuals who are spiritually mature and exemplary (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

Section 4: Purpose

Each of these offices of the church carries its own set of aims, yet both labor to free and equip the entire membership to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).

Shepherds. Led by the Senior Pastor, the Shepherding Team (comprised of both vocational and non-vocational shepherds) will oversee the overall direction and teaching of Ogletown Baptist Church, since they are the ones who will one day give an account for it (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7; 13:17; Acts 20:28). In this capacity, shepherds serve the OBC family as spiritual **guides** (offering counsel and direction), **teachers** (speaking and equipping in God's truth), **caregivers** (helping others toward maturity), and **protectors** (guarding and warning against harmful influences and instruction). The Shepherding Team will give attention to needs and concerns brought to them by any member. Vocational shepherds include, but are not limited to, the offices of Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors.

Deacons. The office of **Deacon** will serve the congregation and the shepherds by modeling, managing, and mobilizing others to meet the, often task-specific, needs that exist in the church (e.g., including, but not limited to, mercy ministry, benevolence care, upkeep of building and grounds, etc.) (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 5: Appointment of Officers

All candidates for non-vocational shepherds and deacons will require a congregational vote of affirmation for an initial three-year term by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of members present at a regular or special-called Members Meeting. Both offices may serve two consecutive three-year terms, pending the re-affirmation of the congregation every three years. After two terms, members of both offices will be encouraged to not actively serve in that role for a period of time, typically a year. Regarding the process for appointing officers, at any time, members may recommend candidates, though typically officers will be appointed once a year. The Shepherding Team will review member recommendations along with any individuals already under consideration.

Section 6: Removal of Officers

All shepherds and deacons may be removed from office for valid cause: resignation, inability to serve, temporary sabbatical, or biblically warranted discipline (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Timothy 5:17-19). Any two members with reason to believe that an officer should biblically be dismissed, should express such concern to the Shepherding Team. After evaluation of the situation, the Shepherding Team may make a recommendation to the church to remove the officer in question. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instruction of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21. Any of the shepherds and deacons may be dismissed by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of members present at a regular or special-called Members Meeting.

Section 7: Pastoral Staff (Vocational Duties)

Qualifications & Duties. Like all shepherds (pastors/elders), pastoral staff shall be men whose character and gifts conform to biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4). While sharing the same shepherding responsibilities identified above for all shepherds (i.e., leading, nurturing, teaching, and guarding the flock), specific duties will be set forth in a job description for all vocational shepherds (available through the church office). In contrast to non-vocational shepherds, staff shepherds shall be regularly compensated and, except in the case of pastoral assistants or interns, are called for an indefinite term of office.

Hiring. For pastoral staff (not including pastoral assistants or interns), a pastoral search committee, comprised of at least five members of the congregation, recommended by the Shepherding Team, and approved by three-fourths (75%) majority vote of members present at a regular or special-called Members Meeting, shall, after diligent search, recommend a pastoral candidate to the congregation. This candidate, including a Senior Pastor, shall be considered by the congregation for no less than two weeks before being voted upon. During this time, the candidate shall be personally introduced to the congregation. The election of a pastor, unless otherwise provided, shall be for a term not specified, and shall require at least a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of members present and voting at a regular or special-called members meeting.

ARTICLE 7: MEETINGS

Section 1: Worship Meetings

Public services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week.

Section 2: Members Meetings

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ

Regular Members Meetings shall typically occur quarterly, and are to be announced in weekly services for at least two weeks prior. The Shepherding Team shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that any required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members. Attendance at all such meetings is the privilege and responsibility of each member of Ogletown Baptist Church.

A moderator designated by the Shepherding Team shall preside at each Members Meetings of the church. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall consist of those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

Special-called Members Meetings may be called as required by the Shepherding Team, or at the written request, submitted to the Shepherding Team, of five percent of the membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at public services of the church for at least two weeks preceding the meeting.

At any regular or special-called Members Meeting, all questions and matters of business shall be decided by the majority of the members present, except as listed elsewhere in this constitution. A three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the church members present shall be required to effect the following actions:

- (A) the election of church officers and pastoral staff (*votes regarding pastoral staff will be voted on at Sunday morning services*)
- (B) the discipline of church officers and church members
- (C) changes to the constitution, covenant, and articles of faith (*see Article 11: Amendments for details*)
- (D) the approval of the annual operating budget, and any out-of-budget expenses in excess of five percent (5%) of the annual operating budget
- (E) any transactions (e.g., selling, buying, refinancing, etc.) regarding real estate or additional indebtedness

ARTICLE 8: FINANCES

Membership in Ogletown Baptist Church includes financial obligations to support the church and its causes with regular and proportionate giving. The primary source of income for the church will be the financial gifts of its members. No funds shall be raised or received by the church in a manner that conflicts with the Scriptural ideals of the church.

Ogletown Baptist Church shall create and adopt an annual budget. The annual budget shall be prepared and recommended by the Shepherding Team, in conjunction with the stewardship committee, to the congregation at a public service for a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the members present.

The church will also conduct an internal audit no less than every two years and will contract with a CPA (certified public accountant), no less than every five years, in order to conduct an external, annual review of the financial records of the church, in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America.

ARTICLE 9: ADMINISTRATION

Section 1: Support Staff

The pastoral staff, in conjunction with the personnel committee, shall have the discretion to hire or appoint employees as support staff (e.g., ministry assistants, ministry interns, ministry directors and coordinators, administrative assistants, custodians, etc.) they deem necessary and financially feasible. The support staff shall act in accordance with the current Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual. The term of service for support staff will be indefinite, but may be terminated either by the employee or by the pastoral staff, in conjunction with the personnel committee, with a thirty-day notice, or at any time that is mutually agreeable among the employee, pastoral staff, and personnel committee.

Section 2: Committees

Various committees may be established, or disbanded, by the Shepherding Team in order to promote efficient and effective handling of church matters. All committees shall serve the purpose for which they were commissioned. The Stewardship Committee and the Personnel Committee shall be perpetual. Any others shall be constituted until their organizing need has been met or commission has otherwise expired. The committees may be comprised of members from the congregation, the staff, and the Shepherding Team. Committee members shall be recommended, by the Nominating Committee in conjunction with the Shepherding Team, for a vote of church members. Committee members shall be appointed or removed by a majority vote of members present at a duly called Members Meeting, and shall serve a 3-year term.

Section 3: Agents

(1) *Treasurer.* The treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall render to the shepherds and the congregation an account of the financial condition of the church at Members Meetings and whenever required. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in records belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Delaware, the Treasurer shall serve as the financial officer of the corporation. The treasurer shall be nominated by the Shepherding Team and elected by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the congregation to serve a term of one year.

(2) *Clerk.* It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special Members Meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports of such records as requested by the shepherds, the deacons, or OBC members. The clerk shall be nominated by the Shepherding Team and elected, by a majority vote of the members at a duly called Members Meeting, to serve a term of one year. In the absence or incapacity of the clerk, the Shepherding Team shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the clerk. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Delaware, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation. The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

(3) *Trustees.* Two appointed members from the Shepherding Team (non-vocational) and two from the deacon team, shall be elected annually by the congregation to serve as trustees of the church. They shall be the only officers, who possess legal authorization, in accordance with these by-laws, the church constitution, and any applicable laws, to execute legal documents relating to real estate, church property, and church finances. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Delaware, the trustees shall serve as corporate representatives in legal matters. Their authority in these matters shall be only that vested in them by the church.

Section 4: Indemnification

The church may indemnify and hold harmless to the full extent permitted by applicable law each person who was or is made a party to or is threatened to be made a party to or is involved (including, without limitation, as a witness) in any actual or threatened action, suit or other proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative, and whether formal or informal, by reason of the fact that he or she is or was an officer or employee of the church.

Section 5: Ordination, Licensing, and Commissioning

While non-ordained believers may take part in the performance of some ordinances and ceremonies of the church (e.g., baptism, funerals, etc.), Ogletown Baptist Church reserves the right for the Shepherding Team to commission seminary students, as well as to commission, ordain, license, or commission individuals as ministers of the gospel who may also perform the ordinances and ceremonies of the church including, but not limited to, marriage, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and funerals.

ARTICLE 10: DISSOLUTION

In event of dissolution of Ogletown Baptist Church, all assets will be converted to cash and, after debts have been satisfied, all remaining cash will be transferred to the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE 11: AMENDMENTS

Any Article of this constitution may be amended by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote by members at Sunday morning services. For all constitutional amendments public notice shall be presented to the congregation not less than one month prior to the vote.