



THE CONSTITUTION OF  
Second Cape May Baptist Church

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# THE CONSTITUTION OF Second Cape May Baptist Church

## INTRODUCTION

We, the members of Second Cape May Baptist Church, do ordain and establish the following Constitution to which we voluntarily submit.

## ARTICLE I - OUR CHURCH

### A. Our Name

The name of this assembly of believers in Jesus Christ shall be:

Second Cape May Baptist Church

### B. Our Purpose

As believers in Jesus Christ, the purpose of Second Cape May Baptist Church shall be (1) to worship the Triune God eternally existing in three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-equal; (2) to proclaim the Gospel to the lost; (3) to strengthen the spiritual life of fellow believers and to encourage and support each other to reach out locally and globally in missions for the evangelization of Jesus Christ.

## ARTICLE II – OUR BELIEFS

### A. Our Statement of Faith

#### 1. Scripture

The Bible, containing the 66 books of the Old and New Testament, is God's perfect Word. It is completely trustworthy, without error in its original manuscripts, perfectly sufficient, and our only infallible rule of faith and practice. We believe the Holy Scriptures to be the absolute inspired Word of God. (John 10:35, 17:17; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21)

#### 2. The Triune God

We believe in one God, eternally existing as three in one; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19; John 1:11, 4:24, 5:23-26, 10:30)

##### a. God the Father

We believe in God the Father; perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, measureless in power. We rejoice that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men; that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 11:33; I Corinthians 8:6; I Timothy 6:15; Titus 3:4-6; I Peter 1:3,15-16; I John 5:15)

##### b. God the Son

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth, His sinless life, and His substitutionary and atoning death for humanity through His shed blood; His bodily resurrection; and His ascension to the right hand of the Father; and His personal, premillennial return to earth in power and glory, according to His promise. We believe His present work is that of High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor; in which capacity He appears before the face of God on our behalf. (Isaiah 53:5-6; Matthew 20:28; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:25-28; Acts 1:11; Galatians 3:13; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Titus 2:11-13; Hebrews 9:24; I John. 2:1)

### **c. God the Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, Who, having come forth from God, convicts the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment; Who also regenerates, sanctifies, comforts, indwells, enlightens, empowers, baptizes, guides and teaches all who become children of God through Christ. (Genesis 1:2; Matthew 28:19; John 16:8-11; Acts 5:32; Romans 8:14; I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19)

### **3. Satan**

We believe in the existence and personality of Satan. Satan is a created angel who incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, involving numerous angels in his fall. He introduced sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve. He is the prince of this world who was defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and will be eternally condemned to the lake of fire. (Genesis 3:1-15; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; John 12:31; Romans 16:20; Ephesians 2:2; II Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:9, 20:10)

### **4. The Creation of the World and Humanity**

We believe that God, solely by an act of His sovereign power and grace, and for the manifestation of His glory, brought the universe and everything in it into existence, out of nothing. We believe that Genesis 1-2 is a factual and literal account of God's creation of the world and humanity; that God directly formed Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from Adam's side; they were the historical parents of the entire human race; and they belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. (Genesis 1:1, 1:26-28, 1:31, 2:7, 2:22, 3:20; Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 19:1; John 1:1-3; I Corinthians 15:22; Hebrews 11:3)

### **5. Humanity's Fall into Sin**

We believe that man was created in innocence but fell in Adam and is now totally unable to redeem himself. Mankind by nature and by choice are sinners; that men became sinners through the fall of Adam; that Adam sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God; that those descended from Adam are born with a sinful nature and in the case of those who reach moral responsibility become sinners in thought, word and deed. (Genesis 1:26-28, 3:1-24; John 8:42-44; Romans 3:19, 23, 5:12; Ephesians 2:3)

### **6. Humanity's Need for Salvation**

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful mankind, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. We believe in salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, that those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior will rejoice forever in God's presence and those who refuse to accept Christ as Lord and Savior will be forever separated from God. (Matthew 25:46; John 3:16; Acts 13:38-39, 16:31; I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:8-9; Jude 13; Revelation 20:11-15, 22:11)

## **7. The Resurrection of the Dead**

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; the saved unto the resurrection of life and the lost unto the resurrection of damnation. (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 25:15; I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23; I John 3:2; Revelation 21-1-6)

## **8. The Status of Believers**

We believe that every human being is directly responsible to God alone; and only those who truly receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are born of God. We believe that they are made partakers of the Divine Nature by the incoming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit and are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Believers are kept by the power of God and will be presented faultless before the presence of His glory. (John 1:11-13, 3:3, 5:24, 10:28-29, 14:17,23; Romans 8:16, 38-39; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30; Philippians 1:16; Colossians 3:4; II Thessalonians 3:3; II Timothy 1:12; I Peter 1:3-5; II Peter 1:4; Jude 24; Revelation 3:20)

## **9. The Holiness of Believers**

We believe in righteous living and missionary effort. Good works do not produce salvation in any sense, but it is proper evidence and fruit of the new birth. (John 15; Acts 1:8; Titus 2:14)

## **10. Separation from Sin**

We further believe in separation from the world; and that the righteous are called into a life of separation from all worldly and sinful practices. (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:3-11; I John 2:15-17)

## **11. Dignity of Human Life**

We believe God created mankind in his image, which distinguishes humanity from any other creature. Therefore, from the moment of conception to natural death, every human person should be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Genesis 1:27; Jeremiah 1:5; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31)

## **12. Mankind as Male and Female**

We believe God created mankind as male and female, two distinct sexes of humanity which complement and complete each other with each reflecting God's character and glory. The sex of each individual human is ordained by God and cannot be changed or altered by human will. The willful suppression, denial or alteration of one's sex is sinful and offensive to the Lord. (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4-5)

## **13. Marriage and Family**

We believe marriage was ordained by God and is not a construct of individual or societal will. God has decreed marriage to be the joining of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. Within the marriage relationship God has ordained that husband and wife assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising loving leadership and authority in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to and respectfully obeying her husband in a way that models the love of the church for the Lord. (Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:3-6; I Corinthians 11:3-10; Ephesians 5:22-33)

We believe God designed sexual intimacy to be expressed between a man and a woman who are married to each other, both for the purposes of producing offspring as well as for the mutual joy and sexual fulfillment of the married couple. We also believe God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

Any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, or pornography and any other form of sexual immorality is sinful and offensive to God. (Genesis 1:28, 4:1; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:6-18, 20, 22-23; Deuteronomy 27:21; Proverbs 5:18-19; Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:18; I Thessalonians 4:3-4; Hebrews 13:4)

#### **14. The Church**

We believe in the one true Church; a living and spiritual body of which Christ is the head and of which all born again believers are members.

We believe that a visible church is a company of believers in Jesus Christ; baptized on a credible confession of faith, and associated for worship, work, fellowship, prayer, teaching, a united testimony, and the observance of the ordinances of our Lord; God the Father has laid on these churches the task of proclaiming to the lost world to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 17:20-21; John 20:19-22; Acts 2:42-47)

#### **15. The Great Commission**

We believe that the Church, composed of all who have been born again through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, is commissioned to teach and preach the Gospel to all nations and to be evangelistic in its work and in its spirit. (Matthew 28:19, 20; John 3:1-8)

#### **16. Autonomy of the Local Church**

We believe in the autonomy and independence of the local church; and that we must be kept free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority. Therefore, church and state must be kept separate as having different functions; each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

#### **17. Elders**

We believe that Jesus Christ alone is head of the church, and He governs His church through His elders who are designated by Him as shepherds, overseers and stewards and to whom Christ commands submission. These are endowed by His Spirit with gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and qualifications for this ministry and, after congregational selection and Biblical examination by the elders, to set them apart to this ministry by united prayer.

Whereas in new or small congregations only one man may have the gifts necessary to his being recognized as an elder, the evidence of the New Testament points to a plurality of elders in a given local church. These all are the "pastors and teachers" given to the church "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...". The Scriptural pattern is that pastoral responsibilities and authority be distributed among a "council of shepherds." (Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11-12; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 5:1-4)

We believe that this plurality does not mean that all elders are equal in their work or position in the church. While every elder must be "able to teach", some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more engaged in pastoring (that is, private teaching and admonishing) and governing. Some will occupy the office as a vocation and thus be able to devote their lives to shepherding, while others, because of other employment, will shoulder only some of the shepherding responsibilities in the congregation. (I Timothy 3:2, 5:17)

## **18. Deacons**

We believe that deacons are called by God to a ministry of "assisting" or "helping" the elders and the congregation. The deacons serve the eldership by assuming responsibility for those tasks assigned by the elders - tasks that would interfere with the elders' ministry of the Word. They serve the congregation by overseeing the temporal needs of the church and the ministries of mercy and benevolence. It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and graces for this ministry (Acts 6:1-6; I Timothy 3:8-13).

## **19. The Blessed Hope**

We believe that, according to the Word of God, the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself into Heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming and also all who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and that this event is the blessed hope set before us in the Scripture for which we should be constantly looking. (John 14:1-3; I Corinthians 15:51,51; I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

## **20. The Eternal State**

We believe that at death the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence. But the souls of the unbelieving remain after death conscious of condemnation and in misery until the Final Judgment of the great white throne at the close of the millennium; when the soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. (Luke 16:19-26; II Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 20:11-15)

## **B. Ordinances of the Church**

### **1. Baptism**

We believe that Christ instituted the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to be observed by believers until He comes. We believe that Christian baptism by immersion in water is a solemn and beautiful emblem of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection; and consequently shows forth the believers death, burial, and resurrection to the newness of life in Christ Jesus. It does not in any way take away sin. (Matthew 26:26-30, 28:19-20)

### **2. The Lord's Supper**

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a provision of the bread and the cup, representing the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We as believers partake of them in commemoration of His death, showing forth our faith and participation in the merits of His sacrifice and our dependence on Him for spiritual life through His resurrection from the dead. The Lord's Supper is to be preceded by faithful self-examination. (I Corinthians 11:23-29)

## **C. Other Beliefs**

This Declaration of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs and they are not intended to set a limit regarding the doctrines which define us as a congregation. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind. The Bible is the sole and final source of all that we believe.

## **D. Interpretive Authority**

For purposes of Second Cape May Baptist Church's understanding of our core faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the elders are the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

# **ARTICLE III – OUR MEMBERSHIP**

## **A. Definition and Requirements**

All who have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior immediately become members of the body of Christ and are therefore eligible to become part of the local expression of Christ's body, the local church. (I Corinthians 12:12-14)

The requirements for joining the fellowship of believers are as follows:

1. All those interested in becoming a member will attend a membership class.
2. Anyone who has received the Lord Jesus Christ as his/her own personal Savior, providing evidence of true conversion by his/her daily walk, and who affirms the statement of faith and covenantal responsibilities set forth in this constitution, and
3. Who has been baptized after his or her conversion,
4. And who submits to the Constitution of this local assembly, agrees to joyfully submit oneself to the spiritual care of fellow believers and to the spiritual authority of the elders. (Hebrews 13:17).

## **B. Membership Process**

1. Anyone who desires to become a member of the church shall meet with at least two elders, who are responsible to examine the individual's life and testimony for evidence of a true regeneration experience and for agreement with the doctrine and practice of the church.
2. Upon a unanimous vote of the elders, candidates may then be presented to the congregation at any worship or business meeting of the Church.
3. The new members shall be welcomed to our fellowship by the membership.

## **C. Church Covenant**

As faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to not only proclaim the message of the Gospel, but also to be personally transformed by it. While the *Statement of Faith* provides the beliefs which we all share as part of this community, the *Covenant & Commitment Statement* below outlines our pledge for living as redeemed members of Christ's community as we serve the Lord.



## **Covenant & Commitment Statement**

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we do now in the presence of God and this church most solemnly and joyfully enter into this Covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We seek God's grace and enablement in all things.

1. To walk together in Christian love; (Romans 12:9-10; Galatians 5:13-15; I Peter 1:22; I John 4:9-11)
2. To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another; (Proverbs 27:17; Ephesians 4; Colossians 3:16)
3. To assemble regularly to encourage one another and to pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrows, and joys; (Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:16; I Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:24-25)
4. To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness; (Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-14)
5. To guard the purity, peace, prosperity of the Church, through the guidance of the Scriptures, and to support its testimony as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus; (Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 14:19; Titus 2:7-8; Hebrews 12:14)
6. To assist, through the gifts of the Spirit, in the work of the Church. (Romans 12:6-7; I Corinthians 12)
7. To contribute, as the Lord directs, to the financial support of the Church, the relief of the needy, and the evangelism of all people; (Proverbs 3:9; I Corinthians 16:2)
8. To love and to pray for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; (Matthew 18:18-22; Ephesians 6:18; II Corinthians 1:11; I Timothy 2:1-2; James 5:16)
9. To engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer, and to establish family devotions where possible; (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 3:18)
10. To uphold the chastity of the unmarried and the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman; (Genesis 2:20-24; Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:8-9; I Corinthians 6:9-10, 6:18; Hebrews 13:4)
11. To uphold the sanctity of life, from conception to death, as the unique image-bearers of God; (Exodus 1:15-17, 20-21; Psalms 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2)
12. To bring up such children as may be entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4)
13. To live with honesty and humility in the world, demonstrating God's kindness to all, to be faithful in engagements, exemplary in conduct, and denying ungodliness and sinful desires; (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:10; I Peter 2:11)
14. To endeavor by example, work, prayer, and the proclamation of Biblical teaching by witnessing to others to make disciples of Jesus Christ; (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; II Timothy 4:1-4)
15. To purpose that when we remove ourselves from this fellowship, we will as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's Word; (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. (II Corinthians 13:14)

## **D. Associate Members**

Members who affirm the statement of faith and covenantal responsibilities set forth in this constitution, but who are situated so that regular attendance is impracticable for a period of six (6) months, shall be designated as associate members by the elders. Examples include members unable to attend due to an extended convalescence; or members serving in the military, attending a college or university, or serving in the mission field. Associate members shall be regarded as members in good standing, except they shall not have voting privileges nor be counted for the purposes of any quorum during their prolonged absence. Associate membership may be requested by a member in the expectation of a period of absence or designated by the unanimous vote of the elders after the member has been absent for six months. The elders shall attempt to contact the church member to confer about the member's situation before making a transfer to associate membership.

Once an associate member is able to return to regular participation and attendance, he or she may request a return to the regular membership. Regular membership and voting privileges shall be restored by a unanimous vote of the elders. Transfer of members to and from associate membership shall be announced at business meetings of the church.

## **E. Withdrawal and Removal of Members**

Any member may voluntarily resign from membership by submitting a request, in writing, to the elders.

Membership may be automatically terminated by a unanimous vote of the elders if the member unites in consistent fellowship with another church, and/or voluntarily absents themselves from the regular teaching/worship times of for a period of six months (unless providentially hindered), or if they move from the area and give no indication of an intent to return to the area to maintain fellowship.

An attempt will be made to contact members prior to the removal of membership from the roll.

## **F. Restoration of Members**

Our desire is to promote the spiritual growth of the members of our congregation. There can be times in our spiritual journey that we make wrong decisions and do not follow God's direction as set forth in the Bible. It is our intent to address sin issues among members of the body through the shepherding process. At these times, it becomes the responsibility of the Church to encourage, correct or even rebuke with the purpose of restoring the member's relationship with God.

The purpose of restoration is to effect a return to a Biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs, to maintain purity in the local church, and to deter sin (I Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 6:1; I Timothy 5:20).

Any member of this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, persistently conducts himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church shall be pursued for the purposes of restoration as follows, according to Matthew 18:15-18:

1. Any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct shall warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
2. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
3. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall attempt to bring about restoration. If restoration cannot be accomplished, they shall tell it to the church encouraging the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member.
4. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the elders and the church, he or she shall be dismissed from the church pursuant to the Scriptures and treated as an unbeliever.
5. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any court. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member. It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion; whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.

## **ARTICLE IV – OUR GOVERNMENT**

### **A. Officers**

The spiritual officers of the Church shall consist of the Elders and the Deacons.

### **B. Qualifications of Officers**

1. Officers of the church must be a member of the church in full fellowship and in good standing for a period of at least one year before holding an office.
2. Elders and deacons must be above reproach in their life and conduct and demonstrate the qualifications for their respective offices as given in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.
3. Any man who desires to serve as elder or deacon must give testimony to his faith and conduct and submit to examination by the elders to be considered for the office in which they would serve. Elder approval of officers shall be by a unanimous vote.

### **C. Pastors, Elders, and Deacons**

#### 1. Senior Pastor

##### a. Duties

- (1) A man called to devote himself to the work of the ministry and oversight of the church “full-time.”
- (2) Adequately trained, skilled in public preaching, and thoroughly prepared to engage in this work of ministry. (I Timothy 5:17).

- (3) Functions as the appointed Senior Pastor who, with all other elders, leads the church through the careful application of the Word of God in all matters and is a voting member on the elder board
- (4) Committed to the public and private preaching of the Word of God in order that the saints might be completely equipped and fully mature (Acts 20:20; Ephesians 4:11- 12).
- (5) Functions as the lead shepherd and administrator of the church, working closely with the elders and deacons, church officers and committee chairpersons. He will be responsible for oversight of and day-to-day administration as delegated through the church staff.
- (6) Shall be directly accountable to the elders.

b. Nomination

When a pastoral vacancy exists or is anticipated, a Pastoral Search Committee will be called and selected from the Membership by a unanimous vote of the elders. The Committee will locate a qualified candidate for recommendation to the elder board.

c. Affirmation

No less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority of a 50% quorum of the membership shall be required before a candidate may assume office.

d. Term of Ministry

The Senior Pastor shall be affirmed to an indeterminate term.

2. Assistant Pastor(s)

As ministry needs require, assistant pastors may be called to serve in a full or part-time capacity.

a. Duties

- (1) A man called to devote himself to the work of the ministry of the church.
- (2) Adequately trained and prepared to engage in this work of ministry.
- (3) Functions as a ministry leader who, within his ministry role, helps to lead the church through the careful application of the Word of God and in accordance with the Senior Pastor's vision and mission for the church.
- (4) In the absence of the Senior Pastor and as directed by the elders, an Assistant Pastor under the oversight of the elders may function as the lead shepherd and administrator of the church.. Within this role he will be responsible for oversight of and day-to-day administration.

(5) Shall be directly accountable to the Senior Pastor.

b. Nomination

When a pastoral vacancy exists or is anticipated, a Pastoral Search Committee will be called and selected from the membership by a unanimous vote of the elders. The committee will locate a qualified candidate for recommendation to the elder board.

c. Affirmation

No less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority of a 50% quorum of the membership shall be required before a candidate may assume office.

d. Term of Ministry

The Assistant Pastor shall be affirmed to an indeterminate term.

3. Elders

a. Qualifications

- (1) The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly I Timothy 2:12; 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
- (2) Any man who has been a member for at least one year; who desires to serve as an elder, and who after submitting to examination, and demonstrating that he possesses the qualifications set forth in Scripture, would be considered to be qualified to serve as an elder. (I Timothy 3:1)

b. Duties

Elders are given the responsibility of oversight, directing the affairs of the church and managing them as a father would his family (Acts 20:28; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; I Timothy 3:4-5, 10, 17; I Peter 5:1-4). Their duties include:

- (1) Guarding the flock of God against error and heresy (Acts 20:28-31; II Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 1:9-11).
- (2) Careful admonition, confronting sin, teaching individuals and families as men who will have to give an account (Hebrews 13:17).
- (3) Counseling and private teaching and admonition (Ezekiel 34; Acts 20:20; Colossians 1:28; I Thessalonians 5:12).
- (4) Praying for the congregation and the work of God (Acts 6:3-4).
- (5) Equipping others for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16; II Timothy 2:2)
- (6) Preaching and teaching the Word of God (I Timothy 5:17; II Timothy 4:1-4).

- (7) Making sure that the Word of God is continually used as the foundational basis for all decisions and directions of the body (Deuteronomy 29:29; John 8:32; Acts 20:28-30; II Timothy 3:16-17).
- (8) Establishing the policies and practices for the church in matters pertaining to the entire body and shall approve the policies and practices of all committees, ministries or organizations within the church body.
- (9) Leading in the discipline and reconciliation of erring members.
- (10) Determining the needed committees for the normal function of the ministry of the church. These may include a membership committee, missionary committee, maintenance committee, finance committee, auditing committee, and others as needed.
- (11) Overseeing the selection of any needed personnel for particular ministries, such as Treasurer, Clerk, committee members etc.
- (12) Overseeing the Pastoral Staff and deacons.
- (13) Operating as overseer members of all committees.
- (14) Administering the church services in the prolonged or temporary absence of the Senior Pastor and arranging for pulpit supply and leadership for weekly prayer meetings. This shall be the responsibility of the chairman of the elders, working with the Assistant Pastor(s).
- (15) The elders are servant leaders of the congregation and must give an account to the membership for their stewardship of ministry.
- (16) Hiring, managing, and termination of the secretary.

#### c. Appointment and Affirmation

The elders shall identify men in the congregation who demonstrate the qualifications for eldership as described in I Timothy 2:12; 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The elders shall approve each nominee by a unanimous vote before he is placed on the ballot for eldership. Once approved, 2 weeks-notice of the candidate's nomination shall be provided to the membership. No less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority of a 50% quorum of the membership shall be required for the affirmation of an elder.

#### d. Decisions

The elders shall strive toward unanimity when making decisions where unanimity is not otherwise required under this constitution. If unanimity cannot be reached they must be in consensus in their recommendations to the church body by a majority with no more than one dissenting vote. In weighty decisions, such as doctrinal or ethical concerns, the elders may choose to take a period of time for further prayer and consideration in order to pursue unanimity. (Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 2:2).

#### e. Term of Ministry

The term of ministry shall not exceed three (3) years, so arranged as to expire in annual rotation. As long as the scriptural qualifications are met, an elder may be reaffirmed to a second term not exceeding 3 years. Upon the expiration of a second consecutive term, an elder will come off the elder board for a minimum of one year.

If an elder finds it necessary to come off the elder board within his three-year term of service, he will be granted a sabbatical. Examples of reasons for sabbatical are: a needed rest from oversight responsibilities, a time to re-evaluate personal walk, a family illness, etc. Notification will be given the church at the start and finish of any elder requested sabbatical.

#### f. Number

The elder board shall endeavor to maintain a minimum of three (3) elders to properly service the needs of the church.

#### g. Removal and Reinstatement

##### (1) Removal for Disqualification

While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Yet they are called to live an exemplary life that is above reproach (I Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9). Therefore, each elder as an individual is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to this higher level of accountability. If an elder is accused of being in sin and that he is not living in accordance with the Biblical standards of an elder, the matter shall be investigated by the elders. If after careful examination the elders determine that there is sin that is confirmed by two or three witnesses, he will be dismissed, and the congregation will be informed of his dismissal. (I Timothy 5:19-20).

##### (2) Reinstatement

The process of reinstatement for an elder who has been removed will be determined by the elders at a later time in relation to the circumstances and his qualification and desire to serve again. Reinstatement must be affirmed by a unanimous vote of the elders and then by a vote of no less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority of a 50% quorum of the membership.

#### 4. Deacons

##### a. Qualifications

The qualifications for deacons are clearly stated in I Timothy 3:8-10,12-13.

- (1) Any man who has been a member for at least one year and who, after submitting to examination and demonstrating that he possesses the qualifications set forth in Scripture, would be considered to be qualified to serve as a deacon.

## b. Duties

Deacons are called by God to a ministry of "assisting" or "helping" the elders and the congregation. The deacons serve the eldership by assuming responsibility for those tasks assigned by the elders - tasks that would interfere with the elders' ministry of the Word. They serve the congregation by overseeing the temporal needs of the church and the ministries of mercy and benevolence.

- (1) The deacons may assist the elders in the serving of the elements of the Lord's Supper and assist in baptismal services (Acts 8:36-39; Acts 6:1-6).
- (2) The deacons shall maintain a "Deacons' Fund." The deacons shall be sovereign in giving from this fund, communicating the needs and financial disbursements with the elders, but they need not give account to the church or make public their use of these monies except to give a general disclosure of income and disbursements at the regular meetings of the church.
- (3) The deacons are the trustees of the church and are responsible for the care of church property including, repair, investment, and preservation of the same.
- (4) The deacons shall aid in the general spiritual care of the church, especially giving themselves to the ministry of mercy, and perform other duties as assigned by the elders.
- (5) The deacons must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with the elder board.
- (6) The deacon board will be in charge of hiring, managing, and termination of staff associated with finances and property management.

## c. Appointment and Affirmation

Each member of the church family must examine carefully the Scriptural qualifications for deacon. A standard recommendation form listing the biblical qualifications of a deacon must be turned in to the elders at least 6 weeks prior to the annual business meeting. It will include the name of the potential candidate for deacon, an evaluation estimate of each item of character qualifications for the man being nominated, and a dated signature of the one making the recommendation. The elders must approve each nominee before he is placed upon the ballot. No less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority of a 50% quorum of the membership shall be required for the affirmation of any deacon.

## d. Term of Ministry

The term of ministry shall not exceed three (3) years, so arranged as to expire in annual rotation. As long as the scriptural qualifications are met, a deacon may be reaffirmed to a second consecutive three-year term. Upon the expiration of a second consecutive term, a deacon will come off the deacon board for a minimum of one year.



If a deacon finds it necessary to come off the deacon board within his three-year term of service, he will be granted a sabbatical. Examples of reasons for sabbatical are: a needed rest from oversight responsibilities, a time to re-evaluate personal walk, a family illness, etc. Notification will be given to the church at the start and finish of any deacon-requested sabbatical.

e. Number

The church should endeavor to discover and then to formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and character qualities for the ministry of deacon. It is evident, therefore, that the number of deacons cannot be fixed by the church but will be determined by the elders according to the needs of the church body.

f. Removal

Deacons, like elders, must live lives that are above reproach (I Timothy 3:10). The elders shall investigate allegations of sin by a deacon. When it has been confirmed that a deacon is not living in accordance with the Biblical standards outlined in Scripture for deacons, his sin shall be addressed in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20. If after careful investigation the elders determine that a deacon's sin is confirmed by two or three witnesses, he will be dismissed, and the congregation will be informed of his dismissal.

g. Reinstatement

The process of reinstatement for a deacon who has been removed will be determined by the elders at a later time in relation to the circumstances and his qualification and desire to serve again. The elders must be unanimous in their vote for reinstatement.

## **D. Voting of the Membership**

1. Members shall vote on all major issues that impact the values, vision, and direction of Second Cape May Baptist Church, as defined by the list provided below. Members must be at least 18 years of age to vote on church matters. While the elders may present other matters, at its discretion, to the congregation for a vote, they must allow members in good standing the opportunity to vote on the following matters that will be accepted only by a three-fourths (3/4) majority:
  - a. The affirmation of candidates to the positions of Senior Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Elder, Deacon, and other elected positions.
  - b. Amendments to the Constitution.
  - c. Commissioning and/or financial support of missionaries.
  - d. The annual budget.
  - e. Non-budgeted expenditures exceeding 2% of the annual budget. (In the case of an emergency, the Deacons and Elders may act collectively with a majority vote, but it is their responsibility to report the expense and the reason for its necessity to the congregation in a timely manner)
  - f. Buying, selling, or encumbering real property.

2. Typically, business items will be voted upon at a scheduled quarterly or special business meeting. It is desired that the membership be in attendance to hear explanation, discussion, and questions surrounding issues voted on. If, however, a member will be unable to attend the business meeting, absentee voting is allowed within the following guidelines:
  - a. Only members in good standing, as defined in the Membership section (Article III) of this constitution, will be allowed to vote.
  - b. In advance of each vote, the church staff will create a list of members in good standing.
  - c. Absentee ballots are to be filled out on paper, signed by the member and delivered to the church office staff. Members may request ballots by email to be returned to and verified by the Church office staff before being counted for vote.
  - d. Members absentee voting will be annotated on a voting list for each meeting.
  - e. Voting list will be provided to the moderator in advance of each business meeting vote to ensure that no one inadvertently votes twice.
3. Quorum
  - a. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum for the regular transaction of business.
  - b. Fifty percent (50%) of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum for amendments to the church constitution, buying, selling, or encumbering real property, and for the affirmation of pastors, assistant pastors, elders and deacons.

## **E. Monetary Expenditures**

No board or committee shall make monetary expenditures in excess of their annual budget allocation without approval by the elders and deacons. Such expenditures shall be reported to the membership at the next business meeting.

## **F. Conflict of Interest**

To safeguard the integrity and the reputation of Second Cape May Baptist Church, all pastors, elders, deacons, committee members, and church members shall endeavor to conduct church business or ministry activities in a manner that best serves the purposes and ministries of Second Cape May Baptist Church and avoids situations where a conflict of interest may arise.

### **1. Conflict of Interest by Transaction**

A conflict of interest arises when someone is on both sides of an actual or potential transaction or situation. Care should be taken to avoid a conflict of interest in the conduct of financial transactions, or business transactions on behalf of Second Cape May Baptist Church.

## 2. Conflict of Interest by Family Relationship

In order to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest, no staff member can be a close relative (spouse, parent, child, or sibling; including step relatives and in-laws) of a serving pastor or elder. Similarly, no two close relatives may serve simultaneously as officers of the same board.

The elders shall make the final decision and use wisdom whenever a conflict of interest situation may arise.

### **G. Unity of the Fellowship**

When Second Cape May Baptist Church members disagree or their interpretations differ, we pray that the love of Christ will guard our attitudes toward one another so that we exhibit a genuine concern for the building up of all God's people in an atmosphere of love.

### **H. Church Policy Manual**

The elders, deacons, and church employees shall maintain a church policy manual to document practices and procedures that are important to the ministries of Second Cape May Baptist Church, which are not included in the church constitution.

Policies and policy changes must be submitted to the elders for approval and should receive input from those directly involved in each specific area of ministry. Examples include church leadership positions, committees, facility usage, and the use of church property. New policies or policy changes may be recommended by individuals involved in a particular ministry, or at the request of the elders.

After a proposal is approved by the elders, the policy change will be posted for 30 days to inform the membership and gain additional input from the membership prior to amending the official policy manual in the church office.

### **I. Committees**

Whenever the need arises, the elders and deacons may establish new committees, or make changes to the current committees, for the purpose of the ministries of the church. Any committees of the church and their responsibilities shall be outlined in the church policy manual.

### **J. Staff Positions**

Any staff positions of the church and their responsibilities shall be outlined in the church policy manual.

## **ARTICLE V – AFFILIATED MINISTRIES**

Participation in fellowships and ministries affiliated with the church shall come under the jurisdiction of the elders. Examples include: Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Non-Denominational Church Fellowships, and temporary multi-church evangelistic efforts.

### **A. Missions**

A missionary interest both at home and abroad shall be promoted extensively in this church. We will endeavor to channel all of our missionary offerings into evangelical, Bible-believing, Christ-centered mission boards (or churches acting as a mission board). All missionary funds shall be directly designated to the missionary objective, whether giving through a mission board or directly to the missionary.

### **B. Ordination**

The Church is authorized to ordain into the gospel ministry, those men whom God has called and equipped. Requests for ordination to the gospel ministry shall not be considered until the applicant shall have been licensed by the church to preach for a period of one year. Requests for a license to preach shall not be considered until the applicant shall have been a member of the church for a period of one year. Authority by vote of the congregation shall be necessary to call ordination councils and issue proper credentials. The ordination council shall thoroughly examine all applicants for ordination as to their call to the Christian ministry, education, Christian experience, reputation, character, doctrinal belief, and demonstrated efficiency in Christian service.

## **ARTICLE VI – AMENDMENTS**

No alteration or amendment shall be made to this Constitution unless the proposed alteration or amendment is submitted in writing, publicly posted, and recommended to the congregation by the elders, at least one month prior to voting. Public announcement of the upcoming vote must be made for two consecutive Sundays prior to the business meeting. Any amendment must be voted on and accepted by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of a 50% quorum of the membership.

A current copy of the Constitution will be available for review in the Second Cape May Baptist Church office. A paper copy will be maintained by the church staff and a current electronic copy will be available on the publicly accessible Second Cape May Baptist Church website.

## **Article VII – Indemnification**

All those serving at Second Cape May Baptist Church as pastors, paid Staff, and Officers shall be indemnified against all expenses, limited by the financial ability of the church, actually or necessarily incurred by said workers in connection with the defense of any action, suit or proceeding to which they have been made a party by reason of being or having been such a worker except in relation to matters as to which said workers shall be adjudicated in such action, suit or proceeding to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of duty. The elders shall have final discretion in determining qualification for indemnification.

## **Article VIII – Binding Arbitration**

### **A. Submission to Arbitration**

Members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration in any legal matters within the church, which cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bring any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

### **B. Arbitration Procedures**

The procedures for arbitration shall be as adopted by the elders. If the elders have not adopted procedures, the church may use arbitration procedures provided by Peacemaker Ministries or a similar entity. This arbitration provision is ecclesiastical and faith-based in nature, and is intended to operate under the rules and guidelines of Second Cape May Baptist Church. This arbitration is not intended to operate under any state or federal guidelines for arbitration.

## **ARTICLE IX – DISSOLUTION**

In the event that Second Cape May Baptist Church, due to circumstances such as low attendance or finances, can no longer sustain viable ministry, the remaining membership, by majority vote, may choose to dissolve. Upon the dissolution, the remaining membership shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, evenly dispose by majority vote all assets of the church among the church-supported missionaries, past or present, or any other non-profit, like-minded Christian ministries. Recipients of said assets shall be in harmony with the evangelical beliefs contained in the Constitution. No assets shall accrue to the benefit of any member(s).

