

Great Swamp

Baptist

Church



Constitution

&

By-Laws

Table of Contents

Preamble	1
Vision Statement	1
Article One	
Principal Office	1
Article Two	
Membership	
General	2
Candidacy	2
Duties	2
Voting Rights	3
Termination	3
Discipline	3
Article Three	
Meetings/Business Conference	
Place	4
Voting	4
Rules of Order	4
Ordinances	4
Article Four	
Church Council	
Members	5
Responsibilities	5
Meetings	5
Article Five	
Professional Ministerial Leadership Staff	
Staff Overview	5
Function	
Pastor	6
Minister of Music	6
Minister of Youth	6
Administrative Assistant	6
Selection	
Hiring	6
Resignation/Dismissal	6
Search Process	
Pastor, Music Minister, Youth Minister	7
Other Staff Members	7
Staff Screening	7

Article Six

General Church Officers, Deacons & Other Leadership

Overview	7
List of Officers	7
Moderator	8
Church Clerk	8
Treasurer	8
Trustees	8
Deacons	8
Other Leadership	8
Officer/Deacon/Leadership Qualification	9
Termination	9

Article Seven

Mediation Disputes

Disputes	9
Church Conflict	9
Agreement Procedures	10

Article Eight

Ordaining, Licensing & Commissioning

Ordaining & Licensing of Ministers	10
Ordaining Deacons	10
Commissioning Missionaries	10

Article Nine

Fiscal Responsibilities

Accounts & Records	11
Policy Manuals	11
Inspection of Records	11
Auditing Procedures—Financial	12
Auditing Procedures—Security	12

Article Ten

Dissolution	12
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Article Eleven

Amendments to the By-Laws

General Procedures	13
Amendment Styles	13
Notification & Reviews	13
Presentation & Vote	13
Documentation Distribution	13

Article Twelve

Adoptions	14
Adoptions	15

Bylaws of Great Swamp Baptist Church
A South Carolina Baptist Nonprofit Religious Corporation
Adopted: August 8, 2007

Preamble

We, the followers of Jesus Christ who make up the part of God's family and Christ's body known as Great Swamp Baptist Church, hereby agree that this document is in keeping with the desires of the forefathers of this Church. We will be self-governing and will cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention, the State Convention, and the Savannah River Baptist Association, as long as it does not compromise our scriptural principles.

Vision Statement

We will witness to this community, the nation, and the world that Jesus Christ is the Savior of all who trust Him. We will disciple those who acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord and will create a local community of believers for worship, celebration, restoration, fellowship, education, and missions.

Article One

Principal Office

Great Swamp Baptist Church

Organized: October 12, 1845

Constituted: March 17, 1958

Articles Of Incorporation dated: March 17, 1958

Associational Affiliation: Savannah River Baptist Association

Article Two

Membership

Section 1- General

The members of this church will consist of persons who confess Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and have followed in baptism by immersion. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

Section 2- Candidacy

Any person desiring membership in this church will be presented to the Church as a candidate for membership at any regular meeting. After counseling with the Pastor or with someone the Pastor designates, the candidate will be presented to the Church for membership in any of the following ways:

Baptism by immersion if the candidate has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

Baptism by immersion if the candidate is already a Christian but a member of another denomination and has never been baptized by immersion

On promise of a letter from another church of like faith

By statement of having been converted and baptized by immersion and wishing to join our church

By statement if the candidate's church records have been lost and the candidate states he/she was baptized by immersion and was a member of another Baptist church

By restoration if fellowship has been withdrawn from a member, and the member desires to come back

Restoration may take place upon the following:

- A. Evidence of repentance and reformation
- B. Request for reinstatement to the Pastor and Deacon body
- C. Recommendation for reinstatement by the Pastor and Deacon body
- D. A vote of the church at a regular business meeting
- E. Church body informed at a regular worship service

Section 3 – Duties

It will be the duty of the members of this church to strive to govern their lives and conduct according to the word of God, to be faithful in all duties essential to the Christian life, to attend regularly the services of this church, to give according to the church plan, which is tithing, for its support and its cause, and to share in the organized work of the church.

Section 4 - Voting Rights

Members, ages 16 or above, who can agree with the duties listed above, are in full and regular standing and may act and vote in the transactions of this church by show of hands unless otherwise noted.

Section 5 - Termination

Upon death a member's name will be removed from the church roll and placed on the list of Our Members in Memorial by the church secretary.

A member's name will remain on the church roll unless removed by the congregation at a regular business conference for one of the following reasons:

A. Any member whose letter is called for from another Baptist church of like faith and order will immediately be removed from the church roll, and a letter to that effect will be sent to the church calling for the letter.

B. Any member uniting with a church of another faith and order will be removed automatically from the church roll when proof of the above has been presented to the church at a regular business conference.

C. Any member, upon written or oral request made to the Deacons, may have his or her name removed from the church roll. Should the church honor the request, the clerk will so notify the person by mail, and the name will be removed.

Section 6 – Discipline

Any member showing unchristian conduct, immorality, or disturbing the work and peace of the church will be ministered to according to the teachings of Matthew 18:15-18, in order to seek redemption and to restore broken fellowship.

The following steps will be taken :

- The Pastor or the Deacon Chairman will inquire, counsel, and/or intervene to seek resolution.
- If there is no resolution, the Pastor and the Deacon body will counsel again to seek resolution.
- If restoration is accomplished, and it is deemed in the best interest of the individual and the church, the Deacon body will bring a recommendation for exclusion of the member from active service for a period of time to allow restoration and healing.
- If no resolution is reached, the matter will be taken before the church by the Deacons for dismissal of membership.

Article Three

Meetings/Business Conference

Section 1 - Place

The regular business conference of the church for transaction of business will be held on the second Wednesday of each month. The members who are present will constitute a quorum. These conferences will be held at the place of worship and presided over by a moderator elected annually. Recommendations from any source to be brought at the regular business conference will be printed in the church bulletin at least one week prior to the conference.

Special business conferences may be called by the Pastor and/or Chairman of Deacons for any purpose providing the reason and purpose is printed in the church bulletin and announced at least one week in advance.

New business of a controversial nature that is brought from the floor will not be allowed but will be referred to the proper department, committee, or deacons for study and consequent recommendation at the next business conference. It is understood that non-controversial matters may be brought from the floor at any regular business conference and could be referred to the proper department, committee, or deacons.

Section 2: Voting

- The members who are present at the business conference will constitute a quorum.
- Passage on any vote will be by a simple majority (50% + 1) of those members present.

Section 3 - Rules Of Order

Robert's Rules of Order is the guide for Parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church.

Section 4 - Ordinances

- **Baptism:** This ordinance, which is the immersion in water of one who has professed faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, will be observed as often as necessary, and at such times as may be convenient.
- **The Lord's Supper:** This will be observed by this church one Sunday each quarter at a minimum, and whenever the Pastor asks for it to be observed.

Article Four

Church Council

Section 1- Members

The Church Council will consist of the Pastor (ex-officio), Chairman of Deacons, Church Clerk, Sunday School Director, WMU Director, Men's Ministries Director, Music Minister, Youth Minister, Building and Grounds Chair, and Step of Faith Christian Academy Administrator. The chairman will be elected annually.

Section 2-Responsibilities

It will be the responsibility of the Church Council to prepare a church calendar and to meet from time to time to avoid conflict in the church calendar. The church calendar is to be kept in the church office and is to be updated by the Building and Grounds Committee as events are scheduled.

Section 3- Meetings

- The Church Council will meet quarterly to update the church calendar.
- If necessary additional meetings may be called.

Article Five

Professional Ministerial Leadership Staff

Section 1- Staff Overview

- The church staff includes the following:
- Pastor
- Minister of Music
- Minister of Youth
- Administrative Assistant
- Full job descriptions are found in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

Section 2- Staff Function- Pastor

The Pastor is considered a fulltime employee of the church and is the administrative leader of the church staff. He is leader of pastoral ministries, aid in achievement of the church mission and vision statement, preaches the gospel to believers and unbelievers, and assists in the care for church members and the community. He must be an ordained, Southern Baptist Minister. The pastor will be chosen and called by the church during a Called Special Business Conference for that purpose.

Section 2- Staff Function- Minister of Music

The Minister of Music will be responsible for planning and conducting a comprehensive music program and for providing worshipful music for the services of the church.

Section 2- Staff Function- Minister of Youth

The Minister of Youth is responsible for planning a comprehensive youth program and working with all children and youth committees.

Section 2- Staff Function- Administrative Assistant

The Administrative Assistant will work with the Pastor in administrative functions and with the Treasurer in financial functions, as well as handle general office duties.

Section 3- Staff Selection- Hiring

A staff member will be called by the congregation at a regular business meeting or at a conference called for that purpose when notice has been given at a regular service of the church at least one week in advance.

Section 3- Staff Selection- Resignation/Dismissal

If a staff member resigns, thirty days' notice will be given, unless otherwise agreed upon by the Pastor and/or the Personnel Committee. Should it become necessary for the Pastor or Personnel Committee to recommend the dismissal of a staff member, notice will be given, preferably by mail, and will be postmarked at least ten days prior to a conference called for that purpose. See Policies and Procedures for a full description.

Section 4-Staff Search Process- Pastor, Music Minister, Youth Minister

The Staff Search Committee will be elected as soon as possible after the staff member has resigned or is terminated. This committee will have the responsibility of seeing that the pulpit or position is supplied until the church calls a pastor or other staff member. This committee is charged to be active as soon as it is established. In seeking a staff member, only one person will be recommended and considered by the church at a time.

Section 4-Staff Search Process- Other Staff Members

The Personnel Committee, in conjunction with the Pastor, will have the responsibility of recommending the hiring of other staff members to the church.

Section 5- Staff Screening

Screening will be handled by the Pastor Search Committee or the Personnel Committee.

Article Six

General Church Officers, Deacons & Other Leadership

Section 1-Overview

A Baptist Church is in reality a Christ-centered democracy; it is seeking to know and do the will of God and not merely ascertain its own desire in the matter. But it does use democratic processes in which each member is equal and of infinite worth in voting and rightful church participation. This system provides checks and balances so that no one particular person or segment will “run” the church. All members should seek God’s will that He might be in full charge of every decision and action.

Section 2- List of Officers

General Church Officers:

Moderator

Church Clerk

Treasurer

Trustees

*See Policies and Procedures for full description.

Section 3- Functions of General Officers- Moderator

Moderator: Presiding Officer at all church business conferences with the task of maintaining fellowship, conducting orderly business, exercising business in a timely manner with an agenda and speaking for the church in times of crisis.

Section 3- Functions of General Officers- Church Clerk

The church clerk will keep a permanent record of all actions and deliberations of the church.

Section 3- Functions of General Officers- Treasurer

The Treasurer focuses on receiving, accounting, and dispersing the funds of the church.

Section 3- Functions of General Officers- Trustees

The Trustees will execute all legal instruments of the church as may be authorized by the church. All documents will be executed in the authority of the church.

Section 4- Deacons

The body of deacons will consist of ordained men chosen by the church to serve as deacons.

The deacons are servants of the church according to the meaning of the Word. They will be scripturally qualified as stated in 1 Timothy 3:8-16.

Section 5- Other Leadership

Finance Committee Chairperson

Building and Grounds Committee Chairperson

Personnel Committee Chairperson

Sunday School Director

Men's Ministry Director

Women's Ministry Director

Youth Activities Director

School Administrator

Day Care Director

*See Policies and Procedures for full description.

Section 6-Officer/Deacon/Leadership Qualifications

All church officers, deacons, and other church leadership must be a member of the church for at least one year.

All Officers, Deacons and other Leadership are individuals who are God called and Spirit empowered.

Section 7-Officer and Leader Rotation

All officers and leaders are nominated by the Nominating Committee and are elected annually.

Section 8-Termination

Any person wishing to resign from an elected position will put resignation in writing, sign and present to the Nominating Committee Chairman. Any other effort to remove persons from elected positions will come through the Deacons.

Article Seven

Mediation Disputes

Section 1- Disputes

Members of the Great Swamp Baptist Church believe the Scripture teaches in Matt. 18:15-20 and 1 Cor. 6:1-8 that every effort must be made to live at peace and to resolve disputes or conflicts with church members in private or within the church.

Section 2- Church Conflict

Members of Great Swamp Baptist Church agree that any claim or dispute arising from or related to being a member of Great Swamp Baptist Church, which is not resolved between parties through use of the principles of Matthew 18, should be settled by Biblically based mediation.

Members understand that the above method will be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising out of their church membership, and expressly waive their right to file a suit or claim against another member.

Church conflicts may be dissolved by written declaration to the Deacon Body giving specific dates, times, nature of conflicts, and actions of both parties. Matthew 18:15-18 will be activated by the Deacon Body to resolve the conflict.

Section 3- Agreement Procedures

Matthew 18:15-18 will be imposed for church action and removal of disputants from the church roll.

Article Eight

Ordaining, Licensing & Commissioning

Section 1- Ordaining and Licensing of Ministers

Any present member of Great Swamp Baptist Church, or former member now serving in ministry, who by his calling to preach and teach gives evidence and publicly acknowledges that he is called of God to the work of the ministry, may, by a vote of a simple majority of members present at any church meeting, be ordained or licensed by the church to the ministry.

Careful examination by the Pastor and Deacons will be exercised. A special service for the specific ordination of a Minister will be given to honor Gods call on this individual.

A Certificate of License or Ordination will be signed and presented at the ceremony.

Section 2- Ordaining Deacons

Ordination of Deacons is a spiritual ceremony conducted for all first-time elected Deacons. An ordination service for all candidates will be planned as soon as possible after elections.

The ordination service will be planned and conducted by the presiding pastor.

Section 3- Commissioning Missionaries

Any present member of Great Swamp Baptist Church, who by his or her leadings and convictions feels called of God to the work of missionaries, may, by a simple majority vote of members present at any regular church meeting, be commissioned by the church to missionary related service, long term or short term.

Article Nine

Fiscal Responsibilities

Section 1- Accounts & Records

The financial year will begin January 1 and end December 31 of each year.

The Program year and membership records will begin September 1 and end August 31 of each year.

The Deacon Leadership will be voted on the second Sunday in August and activated into office to serve September 1 for a three-year period.

The Nominating Committee enlistment will begin in May and will conclude with a full report on or before the August business meeting.

Section 2- Policy Manuals

Any Policy and Procedure Manual is a direct reference of the Bylaws – a continuation of practice and procedure to carry out the work of the church. There are six potential sections of a Policy and Procedures Manual:

- 1) Personnel – Personnel Committee
- 2) Finance – Finance Committee
- 3) Facilities – Building and Grounds Committee
- 4) Ministry – Staff and Mission/Ministry Teams
- 5) Leadership- Nominating Committee / Staff
- 6) General Administration – Staff/ Deacons/ Church Council

Section 3- Inspection of Records

Every active/resident member (member in good standing) will have the absolute right, at any reasonable time, to inspect all records, reports and documentation of every kind with exception of personnel records, contribution records, confidential counseling session records, and screened leadership reports.

Members are welcome to inspect all possessions of the physical property owned by the church as well as church records by appointment.

A copy of the Incorporation, Bylaws, Policies & Procedures will be maintained in the Church Office for inspection by church members.

Section 4-Auditing Procedures-Financial

The Finance Committee should establish an Internal/External Audit of all Financial Books on a two-year basis.

Audits financially demonstrates the wise stewardship of time and material resources, assures the key risk areas are being managed by adequate internal controls, that financial disclosures portray the ministry's financial condition, results of and reasonable compliance to laws and regulation, both inside and outside the church.

4-Auditing Procedures-Security

All leadership of children under 18 years of age and employees will be properly screened at time of enlistment and hiring, and these records will be constantly and accurately maintained.

These records will be secured in the church office.

Screening of such leadership will be conducted by the Deacons.

Article 10

Dissolution

If Great Swamp Baptist Church should ever cease to be a Southern Baptist, Congregational-led body of believers and be dissolved, all of its assets remaining after payment of all outstanding debts and obligations, costs, and expenses of such dissolution will be distributed to Savannah River Baptist Association (beneficiary), a nonprofit organization, operating exclusively for religious purposes, as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of IRC of 1986 or any succeeding regulations. Assets may be distributed only to organizations which agree with this church's doctrinal statements in the articles of Incorporation.

Members of Great Swamp Baptist Church, defined in the Bylaws, who are members in good standing at the time of dissolution, will, in a called meeting, vote to designate the beneficiary described above, to receive the assets of the church after dissolution.

No assets of the church shall be distributed to any member, officer, or staff of this church or any other individual.

Article Eleven

Amendments To The Bylaws

Section 1- General Procedures

The Bylaws, Policies & Procedures will be reviewed at least annually by the Standing Committees responsible, part or whole, for the documents. Any amendments, modifications, or changes should receive unanimous approval by the Standing Committee empowered to administrate the document and unanimous approval by the By-laws Committee prior to submission to the church congregation for affirmation.

Section 2- Amendment Styles

Proposed changes to this document from the floor of the church during Business Conference should be referred back to the By-laws Committee.

All amended Bylaws should have a footnote on every page of the document noting date of last amendment.

Section 3- Notifications & Reviews

Any proposed changes must be posted in the church bulletin and made available for a period of four weeks for the purpose of affirmation by the congregation.

A questions or comments forum needs to be called for the document changes to be visually and audibly presented. Questions would be directed to the By-laws Committee and the Standing Committee to which the amendment applies.

Section 4- Presentation and Vote

A vote should be taken regarding the proposed changes. The voting regarding changes to Bylaws and Policy & Procedures can normally occur at regular business meetings if a proper Questions and Comments Presentation and “reading” have been addressed four weeks prior.

Documents are usually considered “active” after the vote for amendment has taken place.

Section 5-Documentation Distribution

New Documents or Sections of amended documents will be distributed to the membership. These will be located in the church foyer or church office.

Members will be requested to sign a sheet stating they have received the new document.

Article 12

Step of Faith Christian Academy was established on February 3, 1999 by Great Swamp Baptist Church. It is a ministry of the church for the purpose of Christian education.

The By-Laws Committee in conjunction with the Long Range Planning makes the following recommendation:

That the Long Range Planning Committee be disbanded.

This will be voted on at the September Business Meeting.

Adopted May 13, 2009

1. The By-Laws committee recommends that Article Nine in the Constitution and By-Laws be amended as follows:

Fiscal Responsibilities be changed to Annual Responsibilities

Motion Carried

2. The By-laws committee recommends that Article Nine in the Constitution and By-Laws be amended as follows:

Addition to Section 1- Homecoming will be observed the 3rd Sunday in October **Motion Carried**

3. The By-Laws Committee recommends that the Policies and Procedures Manual be amended as follows:

Recreation and Parks Committee be dissolved **Motion Carried**

4. The By-Laws Committee recommends that the Policies and Procedures Manual be amended as follows:

Additions to Finance Committee Section

Any special event and/or non budgeted items will be...(this is additional wording to bullet 9)

Any new designated fund(s) must be presented to the Finance Committee, who, in turn, will present to the Church for approval

Non-budgeted items up to \$1500 may be approved by the Finance Committee Chairman, after consulting with the Finance committee, without prior Church approval.

Non-budgeted items up to \$500.00 may be approved by the Finance Committee Chairman without prior Church approval

All non-budgeted items will be itemized in the Monthly Treasurer's Report **Motion Carried**

5. The By-Laws Committee recommends that the Policies and Procedures Manual be amended as follows:

Addition to Administrative Assistant section

Will receive any funds not deposited by the Toll Committee

Any non-designated funds given to the Church will be deposited into the General Fund. **Motion Carried**

6. The By-Laws Committee recommends that the Policies and Procedures Manual be amended as follows:

Addition to Toll Committee section

Any non-designated funds given to the Church will be deposited into the General Fund. **Motion Carried**

