

Constitution of the
OAKWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH
CAMP HILL, PENNSYLVANIA

PREAMBLE

Reposing our faith wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, believing in the teaching and practices of the Bible, and in those great distinctive principles for which it has ever stood: We therefore band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ and adopt for our government and plan the following articles for worship and service

ARTICLE I Name

The name of this church shall be the Oakwood Baptist Church of Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

ARTICLE II Purpose

The purpose of this church shall be the worship of God, preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, the spiritual care and improvement of its members, ministering to its own community in education and welfare, and the spread of the gospel into all the world in obedience to the command of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

ARTICLE III Affiliation

Oakwood Baptist Church may affiliate with or become a member of Baptist associations, fellowships, or conventions provided the church is in agreement with the organization's doctrinal statement. We may cooperate with and support like-minded mission agencies and endeavors. Oakwood Baptist Church is currently affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE IV Doctrinal Statement:

Section 1: THE WORD OF GOD: We believe the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are the divinely inspired, infallible Word of God, without error in the original manuscripts, and God's complete, written revelation to humankind. The Bible is sufficient and trustworthy for life, faith, conduct, and practice, and is the supreme and final authority in all matters to which it speaks. We further believe that there is but one true interpretation of Scripture, although there may be several applications. The true meaning lies in the text and is that which the divinely-guided author willed to convey. It is recoverable through careful application of a literal (grammatical, historical, contextual) method of interpretation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in the community of Christ. The Holy Spirit illumines the text, enabling the reader to embrace the significance of what God has communicated, and to see the glory of Christ in the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Section 2: THE TRINITY: We believe in one God Creator and Sustainer of all things, eternally divine, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; we believe that these are equal in every distinct perfection and they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. 1 Peter 1:2; 3:18; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:10-11; 2 Corinthians 13:14

Section 3: GOD THE FATHER: We believe in God the Father an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of humanity, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. We believe God's knowledge is exhaustive; that He fully knows the past, present, and future independent of human decisions and actions. The Father does everything in accordance with His perfect will, though His sovereignty neither eliminates nor minimizes our personal responsibility. Exodus 20:2-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 3:16; Matthew 7:7; Hebrews 7:25; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 1:11; Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 5:6-11

Section 4: JESUS CHRIST: We believe that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's eternal Son. God the son has precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections as God the father and God the Holy Spirit. We believe further that He is not only true God, but true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We also believe in His sinless life, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and His priestly intercession on behalf of His people. We further believe that He is the Last Adam, the federal head of His people. John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Hebrews 2:17; Acts 1:11; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-19; 2:9; Hebrews 1:1-4; 7:24-28; Romans 5:12ff; Matthew 1:21

Section 5: HOLY SPIRIT: We believe in the Holy Spirit, His personality and His work in regeneration, sanctification and preservation. We believe He came forth from God to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, comfort and seal forever those who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to implement Christ's work of redeeming the lost, and to empower the believer for godly living and service. We believe the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to believers as He wills for the common good. No gift signifies His baptism or filling, nor does any gift provide authoritative revelation beyond what has already been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Life in the Spirit includes trials and does not guarantee physical health, material wealth, nor confirming outward signs. John 14:16-18; 16:5-11; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9-17; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 3:12; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Section 6: MAN: We believe God originally created persons, male and female, in the image of God and free from sin. We further believe that in the Fall the human race sinned in Adam, therefore, all people are sinners by nature and choice and are spiritually dead. We also believe that those who repent of sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We believe God established marriage to be a life long covenant relationship

between one man and one woman. Marriage so defined is the only permissible context for intimate sexual expression and is the foundation for human family. We further believe that human life is precious and should be protected from beginning at fertilization, until death. Genesis 1:26-30; 2:18-25; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-4; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:37-39; 16:29-32; Romans 10:8-13; 1 Peter 1:22-23; Matthew 19:1-10; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Romans 13:8-10; Romans 5:12ff.

Section 7: SALVATION: We believe in salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We further believe that salvation is based upon divine election and the sovereign grace of God ~~to~~ by which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. We believe salvation was purchased by Jesus Christ on the cross, is eternally secured by the Holy Spirit, and is received by faith, apart from any human merit, works, or ritual. We further believe salvation results in righteous living, good works, and proper social concern. Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 9:10-13; Ephesians 1:4-7; Romans 3:21-28; Titus 2:14; James 2:14-24; Romans 8:28-39

Section 8: THE CHURCH: We believe that the local church is composed of regenerated, immersed believers, voluntarily united together for the purpose of the worship of God, the fellowship of believers and the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ throughout the world. We believe that the Church of the firstborn, whose names are registered in heaven, is the bride of Christ, whom He purchased with His own blood, and is loved, chosen, called, and secure in Christ for all eternity. Acts 2:41-42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20; Hebrews 12:22-24; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:22-27; Revelation 19:6-9; 21:9

Section 9: BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES: We believe in the competence of the individual soul in direct approach to God; the priesthood of all believers, a regenerated church membership; the symbolic ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper; that each church is autonomous and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; the absolute separation of church and state; and a world-wide program of missionary endeavor in obedience to the final command of our Lord. 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Acts 8:26-39; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30; Acts 4:19-20; Matthew 22:21; Matthew 28:18-20.

Section 10: LAST THINGS: We believe that God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in the New Heaven and New Earth with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-2:1-15; 2 Peter 3:7-13; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 21:1-27; 1 1

ARTICLE V Membership

Section 1: Definition

The membership of this church shall consist of such believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that confess Jesus Christ as Lord, have been baptized in water, who take the Holy Bible as their only rule of faith and practice, and who agree to be governed by this Constitution.

Section 2: Membership Requirements: An individual applying for membership must

1. Articulate a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Be a believer baptized by immersion, who gives evidence of regeneration.
3. Be in agreement with the Statement of Faith of Oakwood Baptist Church.
4. Pledge his/her faithfulness to the membership responsibilities as set forth in the church covenant.

Section 3: Admission

Applicants may be received into membership by the church following sharing their testimony with the Church Board and recommendation to the church body at any regular worship service or business meeting of the church. Applicants will be received into membership upon two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present and voting. They may be received by:

1. **Baptism** (Immersion)
2. **Letter from a Church** of the same faith and practice.
3. **Christian experience**, if the candidate has been baptized and gives satisfactory evidence of Christian faith and character.

Section 4: Duty of Members:

1. **Attend church regularly.** (Hebrews 10:24-25)
Attendance is not simply a task that must be dutifully checked off but an opportunity to worship, fellowship, and grow up in Christ and grow together with one another.
2. **Help Preserve the Gospel.** (Galatians 1:6)
Every member must know the gospel and be able to communicate that to others. There must be a level of discernment that can detect a false gospel and a willingness to take steps to preserve the true gospel.
3. **Help Affirm Gospel Citizens.** (Matthew 16 and 18)
The congregation is God's agent to identify true believers who are to be welcomed into the fellowship and to identify the wolves in sheep's clothing that must be removed. "Regenerate Church Membership" means that every member must be a born again believer who has obeyed Jesus by confessing their faith in Baptism.
4. **Participate in Members' Meetings.** (Acts 6:1-6)
Decisions about the who and what of the gospel are made by members who gather to discern the direction that Jesus is leading them. Good decisions are made when all the members are properly informed and fully participate. When the vested authority is being properly exercised these meetings can instead be times of warm and constructive exchange that will strengthen love for each other. All active members

eighteen years of age and older shall have the privilege and duty of voting at all business meetings of the Church.

5. **Disciple Other Church Members.** (Ephesians 4:15-16, 29)
The church builds itself up as each part does its work. The Elders are responsible to train, teach, and equip the members. At the same time each member is to be involved in the process of maturing others in the fellowship. This web of relationships is built that goes beyond what the leaders alone can accomplish. One of the great joys of being part of the body of Christ is building others up; we can be a source of blessing that will increase their joy in Christ. (Philippians 1:25-26)
6. **Share the Gospel with Outsiders.** (2 Corinthians 5:19b-20 and Matthew 18:18-20)
Every Christian has been reconciled to God and has therefore been deputized by God to announce the terms of reconciliation to people around them under the sentence of death. The great commission was not given to the leaders alone but to the entire church. The echo of the gospel might be heard in the way we live but no one will ever accept terms of peace and trust Jesus Christ without someone telling them the gospel, of what God has done through Jesus Christ to save sinners.
7. **Follow Your Leaders.** (Hebrews 13:7, 17)
It is the task of leaders to equip their people to accomplish the previous six responsibilities. If the leaders fail to teach and equip the people, and if the people refuse the equipping efforts of the leaders, then the church will be dysfunctional. They will fail in their commission to make disciples, they will displease God, and they will suffer with a silent sense of shame.

Section 5: Removal from Membership:

1. Members may be dismissed from this church:
 - a. By letter to unite with some other church of like faith and practice.
 - b. By exclusion:
 - (1) Any member persisting in unrepentant sin (see Church Discipline ByLaw).
 - (2) Any member who fails to attend the regular services of the church (providing they are physically and mentally able) for a period of three months shall be placed on the inactive list. Members placed on this list shall be notified the same week of the action of the Church Board. They shall be given three months time in which to appear at the services of the church and if they do so, they shall be restored to the active list. If they fail to appear at the services of the church during this three month period, their names shall automatically be removed from the membership list of the church. After a name has been removed from the membership list, any who desire reinstatement will have to follow the usual procedure of obtaining membership.
 - c. By erasure in the case of death or by request of the member.

2. All requests for separation shall be referred to the Church Board.

Section 6: Membership Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions, to educate our children in the scriptures; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealing, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from drunkenness and the illegal use and abuse of drugs; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that, when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with a church of like faith and practice where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE VI CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Jesus Christ has graciously given leaders to the church to guide and direct the congregation in carrying out the mission He assigned to them. Jesus defined the leadership structure as a plurality of leaders selected by the church to direct and oversee the affairs of the church and provide pastoral care and nurture. The goal of the Elders is to discern the direction that Christ, the only head of the church, wants the congregation to go. After prayerful deliberation to seek this direction, they will lead the congregation to understand and follow this directive. Acts six gives an excellent example of leaders and congregation working together to solve the problem of the Grecian widows being neglected. The Elders are given the authority to lead the church and make most routine decisions with the trust and the blessings of the congregation. In more significant cases the congregation will be informed, deliberate, and then decide the direction the church should go. When congregation and leaders are well aligned, it is an indication the

direction affirmed is the very direction that Christ wants the church to go.

Section 1: Pastors/Elders /Bishops

The Scripture uses three different terms to refer to the same leader in the church. The leader in the church is called an Elder to emphasize his maturity and wisdom, he is called a Pastor to emphasize his shepherding role as comforter and caregiver, and he is called Bishop to emphasize his oversight and management of the fellowship. At Oakwood we recognize a Lead Pastor who provides leadership for the other Elders who are called Elders or Pastors.

1. The qualifications for Elders shall be as set forth in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1.
2. The duties of the Elders are teaching, preaching, prayer, defending and maintaining the doctrinal integrity of the church, have general oversight of the church by tenderly watching over the membership and spiritual interests of the church. The Elders shall meet with the applicant(s) for membership.
3. The Lead Pastor shall be the moderator of the church; the elders shall be ex-officio members [members with full rights] of all boards and committees; the elders may call any board, committee, or the church together for a special meeting to transact business of the church.
4. Elders who are recommended to the church shall be ratified by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the eligible voting members of the congregation present and voting. A posting of the recommendation for elder shall be made on the church bulletin board, and notice of the nomination shall both be made two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting at which the voting is to take place.
5. The church will select a Lead Pastor by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the eligible voting members present and voting. Each candidate for the pastorate shall be voted on before hearing another. A notice of at least one week shall be given at a regular worship service of the church, an official noticed posted on the bulletin board, and an email notification prior to the date of voting. The pastor shall be called for an indefinite term.
6. Elders may be removed from eldership by the Church as follows:
 - a. upon the Elder's request for reasons sufficient unto himself, or
 - b. a congregational vote in which a simple majority [two-thirds] of the eligible voting members present and voting, carries.
7. Dissolution of the pastoral relationship or Eldership is brought to the congregation for a vote either by the recommendation of the Elders or by request to the Elders in the form of a petition signed by ten percent of the eligible voting members. A notice of at least one week shall be given at a regular worship service of the church prior to the date of voting. Dissolution shall be effective immediately after an affirmative vote.
8. An Elder shall not serve as a Deacon.
9. A meeting of the full Elders may be called at the request of any Elder or by ten percent of the members for the purpose of discussion of any item deemed to be of significant importance to the church.

Section 2: Distinction Among Elders

The New Testament envisions a plurality of Elders sharing the oversight and care of the local church. Within this body of men, however, there will be recognized diversity of gifts that should express itself in a uniqueness of function and responsibility. Moreover, though all Elders must be “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2), it is biblically warranted that a man (or men), by virtue of the call of God and the appropriate gifts of the Holy Spirit, may be publicly set apart as “pastor-teacher” (Ephesians 4:11) and is referred to as the Lead Pastor. This may carry with it a greater measure of influence and regard among the members of the congregation. This is not inconsistent with the principle of shared leadership. Sameness of office is not synonymous with equality of influence. The Lead Pastor, by virtue of his gifts and responsibilities, is a leader among leaders, though his authority does not formally extend beyond his voice among the Elders. All Elders should recognize this as a spirit of mutual submission and work together in a collaborative atmosphere of respect and love (Ephesians 5:21).

Section 3: Deacons

1. The qualifications for Deacon shall be as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
2. The term of the Deacon shall be three years and this term is to rotate in such a manner as to retain experienced personnel in office. In the event of a vacancy, a replacement should be elected within sixty days to complete the unexpired term.
3. The Deacons shall have the following general areas of responsibility: assisting with ordinances, personnel, discipline, and restoration. These responsibilities are general and are to be handled by the Deacons as a whole. Individual Deacons’ responsibilities will be: finance (in conjunction with the elders), building and grounds, and benevolence.
 - (a) The Deacons will work with the elders on the church finances for all monetary matters of the church.
 - (b) The Deacon(s) in charge of building and grounds shall be responsible for the care and maintenance of the property of the church and may call upon one or more members of the congregation to assist him in the performance of these duties.
 - (c) The Deacon(s) in charge of benevolence shall be responsible for maintaining contact with the congregation as a whole in order to communicate the needs of the church and its surrounding community to the elders and to the remainder of the congregation. They will make recommendations for dispensing of funds and distribution of food and services.
4. The Deacons shall have regularly scheduled monthly meetings.

It shall be the duty of Deacons to:

 - (a) Hold stated meetings as part of the Church Board.
 - (b) Prepare and distribute the elements of the Lord's Supper.
 - (c) Use the Deacons Fund of the Church for the relief of the poor and needy.

- (d) Exercise general supervision over the physical interest of the church property and its members, provided they shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property of the Church without the specific authorization of the Church.
- (e) Advise and cooperate with the elders in the performance of their duties.
- (f) With the elders, consider all applications for membership and requests for dismissal and report, with recommendation thereon, to the Church.
- (g) They shall elect their own officers.
- (i) If the church is without an elder, the chairman of the deacons shall serve as the moderator of the church.

Section 4: DUTY OF OFFICERS

1. Duty of Treasurer: It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive and disburse all funds of the Church. He/she shall give a receipt to the financial secretary for all monies received and duplicate checks for all monies spent. He/she shall make a quarterly report to the Church in writing of the condition of its finances and at the annual business meeting make a detailed report of receipts and disbursements during the year.

2. Duty of Financial Secretary: The Financial Secretary shall help the Treasurer count the offerings and prepare the deposit. He/she shall keep a record of all monies received and spent by the treasurer. He/she shall receive a receipt from the treasurer for all monies received by him/her and duplicate checks for all monies spent. He/she shall keep a record of all individual contributions and prepare an end of year report for contributors.

3. Duty of Church Clerk: The Church Clerk shall keep a record of all proceedings of the Church at the various business meetings; keep a registry of members; sign all letters of dismissal; supervise the keeping of the Sunday School Records; conduct such correspondence as the business of the Church may require; and perform such other duties as may be referred to him/her. In the absence of the Church Clerk, an Elder will sign any official correspondence.

Section 5: Organizational Year: The fiscal year of the church shall begin the first day of January and close the last day of December. The elected officers shall assume office the first day of January. The exception to this rule will be when an office has been declared vacant during the year and a special election is held to fill the vacancy until the next regular election.

Section 6: Church Board: The Church Board shall be comprised of the Elders and Deacons.

ARTICLE VII Ministry Leaders

All ministry leaders shall be approved by the Church Board. Ministry leaders include the

leaders of: Children's Ministry; Youth Ministry; Education Ministry; Worship and Music Ministry; VBS Ministry; Women's Ministry; and other ministries approved by the Church Board.

ARTICLE VIII Affirmation of Doctrinal Statement and Church Covenant

All church officers, ministry leaders, and lead teachers of any class or Bible study shall affirm their adherence to the Church's doctrinal statement and Church Covenant without reservation before installation to office or position and shall provide a written or verbal affirmation at each annual business meeting. Missionaries whom the church supports financially shall affirm the church's doctrinal statement annually.

ARTICLE IX Oakwood Baptist Day School

The Oakwood Baptist Day School is a ministry of the Oakwood Baptist Church, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, and is owned and operated by the Oakwood Baptist Church. The ministry of Oakwood Baptist Day School has been created to supplement and support the purpose, mission and outreach of Oakwood Baptist Church and is governed by the Oakwood Baptist Church Board. The Day School is dedicated to educating, evangelizing, and so discipling the children in their care. The ultimate goal is to bring entire families to become disciples of Jesus Christ

The Church Board of the Oakwood Baptist Church is the authority for the Oakwood Baptist Day School and shall serve as the School Board. The Director of Oakwood Baptist Day School shall be hired by the Church Board and is responsible to their oversight.

Responsibilities of the School Board

1. The Church Board is responsible to hire and fire the Director. In its role of oversight the Church Board shall hold regular meetings with the Director and schedule special meetings when the need occurs.
2. The Board shall make decisions on all non-budgeted major purchases, over \$500.
3. The Board shall set the policy of the School in regard to objectives, programs, pupil entrance requirements, employee requirements, health requirements, rules and regulations, finances, tuition rates, and teacher/employee wages.
4. The Board is responsible to see that the curriculum and program is kept in harmony with the stated objectives and principles of Oakwood Baptist Day

ARTICLE X Committees

Section 1: Nominating Committee: The Church Board shall select a nominating committee from church members. They shall nominate a slate of officers to be presented at the annual business meeting. Each nominated officer must be approved by the Church Board. This slate will be posted at least one week before the annual meeting.

Section 2: Other Committees: Other committees than those specified by the constitution may be appointed by the Church Board as the need arises.

ARTICLE XI Meetings of the Church

Section 1: Stated Meetings and Reports:

1. Public Worship each Lord's Day
2. Once each week the members shall meet for prayer
3. Observance of the Lord's Supper at least once a month
4. Annual Business meeting shall be held in the month of November.
 - a. Discussion and approval of the church budget
 - b. Annual election of Deacons and Other Officers
 - c. Ministry reports
 - d. Discussion of any other item of business brought to the floor by members of the church body or officers.
5. The End of Year Business meeting shall be held in January.
6. Semi-Annual Business Meeting
 - a. Review the annual budget
 - b. Discussion of any other item of business brought to the floor by members of the church body or officers.
7. Public notice of all business meetings must be given from the pulpit at least one Sunday prior to the meeting.
8. Quarterly Treasurer Reports shall be available to church members in the months of January, April, July, October.

Section 2: Special Business Meetings:

Special Business Meetings may be called by the elders/pastors. Special Business meetings may also be called by the clerk on a written request specifying the purpose and signed by not less than one-third of the members. Public notice of such meeting shall be given from the pulpit on the Lord's Day next preceding the proposed meeting. When in the case of adoption, repeal, or amendment of the by-laws or amendment to the constitution, this specially called meeting shall take place within three weeks of the

request and shall be announced in at least two of the regularly scheduled worship services prior to the meeting.

Section 3: Quorum: One-third of the voting members of the church shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 4: Voting: All voting shall be by one of the following two methods:

1. By Ballot for:

- Election of Elders and Deacons
- Calling of a pastor
- Dismissal of a member
- Dissolution of pastoral relationship or Eldership

2. Show of hands:

- All matters of business not previously discussed.
- A ballot vote may be requested by any member on any question to come before a business meeting. Such request will be honored.

Section 5 Eligible Voting Members

All persons eighteen years of age and older whose names appear on the membership roll shall be considered eligible voting members of this church.

ARTICLE XII Finances

Section 1: Basis:

The basis for operational funds is entirely dependent upon the prayerful and voluntary gifts of the Lord's people. Before the annual meeting the Church Board shall receive an estimate of the needs of the various ministries of the church, and shall prepare a detailed spending budget of the proposed expenditures for the coming year. When this spending budget is approved by the congregation, it should be the basis for current liabilities. No changes or unauthorized disbursements shall be made by anyone without the advisement of the Church Board and the consent of the church.

Section 2: Dissolution:

Upon the dissolution of Oakwood Baptist Church, the Church Board shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all the assets of the church exclusively for the purposes of the church in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, education, religious or scientific purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Church Board shall determine. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed

of by the Court of common Pleas of the county in which the principle office of the Church is then located, exclusively for such purposes as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

ARTICLE XIII Calling an Elder/Pastor

Section 1: Pulpit/Search Committee: When it is necessary to call a Lead Pastor, the Church Board shall act as the pulpit/search committee. It shall be the duty of this committee to take necessary steps to secure a~~n~~ Lead Pastor. The committee shall investigate the merits of every man under consideration, in regard to his personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability, in determining his fitness for said pastorate/eldership. When a suitable man is found, the committee shall recommend him to the church for consideration

Section 2: Call: The call of a Lead Pastor shall come before the church at a regularly called meeting, notice of such meeting and its purpose having been read from the pulpit on the two previous and successive Sundays. An affirmative vote of at least two thirds majority of the members present and qualified to vote shall be necessary to extend a call. Each candidate shall be presented to the church individually. The vote shall be by written ballot.

Section 3: Length of Call: The Lead Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period of time. If a salary and other compensation is to be given, it shall be fixed at the time of the call, and may be changed by a vote of the church at any regular business meeting, provided that such change has been recommended by the Church Board. Sick leave, paid vacation, sabbaticals, extended mission trips, temporary interim pastorates and leave of absences will be determined by the Church Board.

Section 4 Termination: See Article VI, Section 1, part 6 &7.

ARTICLE XIV Rules of Order

The rules of parliamentary procedure as found in the manual, *The New Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches* shall govern the business proceedings of this church in all cases where such rules do not conflict with this Constitution and By-Laws. This shall include the order of business.

ARTICLE XV Amendments

This Constitution, after due notice, may be amended at any business meeting of the Church by a two-third vote of those present and voting, provided the proposed change

has been presented in writing to the Church at least one month previous.

Amendments may be brought to the church by:

1. Recommendation from the Elders
2. A petition containing the amendment signed by a minimum of ten percent of the members of the congregation.
3. Posting of the amendment shall be made in a conspicuous location in the church for four consecutive weeks or shall be published in the church bulletin on four consecutive Sundays.
4. The proposed amendment shall be voted on only at a business meeting specially called for the purpose. Passage of the amendment shall be by a two-thirds majority of the members of voting age on the membership roll.

ARTICLE XVI – BYLAWS

Upon recommendation of the Elders, the church may adopt bylaws to assist in the administration of its affairs. Those bylaws adopted should be attached to and made addenda to this constitution. Bylaws may be adopted, amended, or dropped upon three-fourths affirmative vote of those present and voting at any regular or specially called business meeting of the church. Notice of the proposed action along with a copy of the proposed or in question bylaw shall be posted in a conspicuous place in the church over the signature of the church clerk for at least two weeks prior to the voting or in the church bulletin for at least two consecutive Sundays. Announcement of such posting and voting is to be made at regular worship services or business meetings of the church on at least two different occasions before the voting. No bylaw shall be adopted or amended which would in any way be in conflict with the intent and purposes of this constitution.

MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY BYLAW

“We believe that the term 'marriage' has only one meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture.

“We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman, who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

“We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

“We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

“We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

“We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church.”

CONGREGATIONAL AUTHORITY BYLAW

The central question of church leadership is, “Who does what around here?” This translates into a need to understand authority in the church as given by God. Authority is the legitimate power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. Ultimate authority rests in God; every other proper authority is given by God. God has given Jesus Christ all authority in heaven and in earth as a reward for His redemptive success. God has given to the church the Bible as the final authority (called “veracious authority” from the root “verity”). God has given authority to the church in the form of Keys of the Kingdom. The church has the authority to bind and loose, that is to receive members and remove members. The Elders have been given authority to lead and equip the congregation to do its job; the congregation is to submit to, respect, and welcome this authority. The Elders in turn submit to the congregation as they exercise the Keys of the Kingdom.

This may seem confusing at best or contradictory at worst. The common misunderstanding is that there is only one kind of authority and if the Elders have it the Congregation doesn't and vice versa. In fact, there are different kinds of authority that do not work against each other but work together in a complementary way. Think for instance of a corporation; there is one kind of authority the CEO exercises, another the Board of Directors exercises, and another that the Shareholders exercise. In a good corporation these authorities are not competing, they are not conflictual, they are not seeking to broaden their authority to encroach on other authority but are working in their own spheres of responsibilities to make the corporation profitable.

Authority in the church is similar. Jesus Christ rules with unquestioned authority; He is the monarch, the King. Elders lead (rule) by counsel, encouragement, and training; this leadership is commissioned by Christ and is to be respected and welcomed by the congregation. The Congregation rules by exercising the Keys of the Kingdom. It might be helpful to think in terms of jurisdiction; just as Pennsylvania police officers have no jurisdiction in Indiana, so Indiana officers have no jurisdiction in Pennsylvania. In the same way, there are differing responsibilities (jurisdictions) that congregations and leaders are given. The Leaders are responsible for “the how” issues; how will teaching be done, how will the people be trained and equipped, who will plan and do the preaching. They take the lead in administrative responsibilities and financial oversight of the budget that the congregation approves. This translates into, “... no business meeting when minor details of administration or finances are presented to the congregation for their approval.” The congregation is responsible for receiving and removing members and for proscribing the

truth that we confess; it is what Leeman calls the “who and the what.” It is the congregation and not just leaders who determine if one’s profession of faith is genuine and if the teaching is consistent with the gospel. Paul said the church should remove even an Apostle if his teaching violates the gospel already received. These two areas of jurisdiction between congregation and leadership are not conflictual, but complementary. When they work properly the harmony and peace in the church will be strong; when sin disrupts the proper function of authority then the church will suffer.

God gives one kind of authority to Elders to lead and equip the congregation. The critical passages are Hebrews 13:7 and 17, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15, 1 Timothy 5:17. Some of these passages are directed to the Elders and give them instructions and guidelines that they must follow; they are under the supreme authority of Christ. Other passages speak to the congregation and explain how they are to respect and obey the leaders that Christ assigns to them. Elders are gifts that God has given the church for their benefit.

God gives another kind of authority to the congregation. The key texts are Matthew 16:13-20, 18:15-20, and 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 and 6:1-11; 2 Corinthians 2:5; Galatians 1-2. In some of these texts Christ explicitly authorizes the church to exercise the Keys (the Matthew passages) and in others he gives examples of the church actually exercising the Keys (Pauline Epistles). The authority to bind and loose gives final authority to the Congregation; however, we must remember that Elders are also part of the congregation and take part in this task as well. It is important to realize that the exercise of the Keys is only and always when the church is gathered together in the presence of the Savior and King, Jesus.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE BYLAW

Faithful Churches believe and practice the biblical teaching of discipline of members in matters of heresy, division and strife within the church, gross immorality, a disorderly walk, or a personal offense against another believer and sin of omission.

Purpose and Guidelines for Implementation:

This policy is to establish a guideline for the implementation of biblically-based discipline at Oakwood Baptist Church. It will serve the general membership by providing a guideline for initiating disciplinary requests and a definition of when discipline is appropriate. It will serve the Elders by providing a procedure for investigating disciplinary requests, initiating disciplinary action when appropriate and report-back/follow-up as required.

Purpose of Discipline:

Discipline is a biblically mandated means for accomplishing four purposes in the life of the

body and individual believers.

1. Restoration

Restoration of a sinner (Galatians 6:1, Romans 15:2, 2 Timothy 4:2, 1 Corinthians 5:5) and/or restoration of unity within the body (Philippians 4:2) are the primary purposes of any disciplinary action. Therefore, any action is to be taken in love (2 Corinthians 2:8; 6:6) and must include the willingness to forgive (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). Christian love and justice, patterned after God's character, does not allow sin to be ignored (Revelation 3:19).

2. Example to the body

In disciplining offending members, we demonstrate to the remainder of the body the seriousness of sin (1 Timothy 5:20). This teaching value of discipline must remain subordinate to the rule of restoration and love.

2. Order in the body

A church body divided by dissension is ineffective (1 Corinthians 1:10; 11:18; 3:1-3). Therefore, public disciplinary actions are to be guided by the principle of love and the biblical standards of conduct. Extreme caution must be used so that community or individual standards of separation are not raised to a level of biblical imperatives.

4. To protect the reputation of Christ's Church

(John 1:13-17, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8) Christians have been instructed that their love for one another is the sign of discipleship (John 13:34-35; 17:20-21). For example, immorally or dishonest business dealings by church officials would serve as a negative witness if ignored by the church.

Situations Requiring Discipline:

The following are categories of sin requiring church disciplinary action:

- 1. Doctrinal Error/Heresy** -- teaching of doctrine contrary to scripture or the Articles of Faith (Galatians 1:9, 2 John 11).
- 2. Division & Strife** -- disrupting the harmony of the Body through gossip, complaining, criticism or creating factions. (Romans 16:17).
- 3. Gross Immorality/Disorderly Walk** -- unrepentant immorality by a church member (1 Corinthians 5:13). Improper fulfillment of marital roles may also be the basis for action even when no "immorality" is present. The Christian home is the earthly illustration of Christ's relationship with the church (Ephesians 4:21-33) and all the church's resources should be available to strengthen members' homes.
- 4. Personal Offense Against Another Believer** -- The church may become involved in situations

where one member has allegedly wronged another (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Church action should only take place after a personal attempt at reconciliation by the individual with the grievance to resolve the problem (Matthew 18:15).

Responsibility for Discipline:

The responsibility for disciplinary action shall rest with the Congregation. The Church Board will take the initiative to evaluate any disciplinary issue and gracefully but consistently follow the policy procedures to correct and restore. If resolution and restoration cannot be achieved, then the Church Board will present the case to the entire church for their final judgement.

Process of Discipline:

Following Christ's example in Matthew 18, when there a grievance between two individuals, the first step is for the sinning brother to be approached privately by the offended party(ies), his sin is rebuked, and repentance is encouraged. If he repents then the process is complete (in certain situations such as Elders sinning or gross moral failure, public rebuke and censure may still take place).

If he does not repent after the private admonition then the one who confronted him is take others with him as witnesses for a second admonition to repent. If repentance takes place the process of discipline comes to an end (restorative steps may be required to repair the damage done by sin to others involved).

If he does not repent after the admonition with the offended party(ies) and other witnesses, then the matter should be presented to the Church as follows: Any grievance shall be presented in writing to the Church Board by any church member or one in regular attendance. Due to the seriousness of these issues, no action will be taken on anonymous or verbal allegations. A personal complaint of one member against another shall only be considered when direct attempts by the injured party at reconciliation have been unsuccessful.

The grievance shall then be examined by the Church Board to determine its accuracy. The preferred means shall be by witnesses. Grievances that cannot be verified shall be dismissed.

After the confirmation of an allegation, the offending individual shall be contacted by representatives of the Church Board to be confronted with the accusation. Recognizing that restoration is the primary goal of discipline, the seriousness of the sin is to be stressed (**rebuke** - 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:13; 2:15) and there is to be the exhortation to repent and to do what is right (**exhortation** -2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 3:13, Titus 2:15). A request to answer the charge shall be made.

In case of denial or the conflict of testimony, a meeting between the accused and his accusers and/or witness may be required. Two Church Board Members shall be present at such a meeting.

In the case it is discovered that the accused is innocent, the grievance shall be dismissed and appropriate action shall be taken by the Church Board to clear the reputation of the accused.

If at any time in this process the individual acknowledges the sin, repents and makes confession of the sin before God and those present, an immediate plan for restoration shall be put into action. Such a plan may include apologies to wronged individuals, restitution, lifestyle changes, discipline, counseling or public censure/restoration. The broader the impact of the sin, the more public the restoration plan. (Note: for Elders/church leaders, public censure and restoration may be warranted even in matters that remain private (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

If the individual refuses to confess the sin and forsake it, it is required that the individual be removed from positions of service within the church. Withholding of the Lord's Supper may be appropriate as well.

If repentance still does not follow, the charge should be brought before the body for possible censure (1 Timothy 5:20) and/or loss of membership (**exclusion** - Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13). The public censure should be announced at least two weeks prior to a regularly scheduled corporate meeting **or** a special corporate meeting called for that purpose (timing to be determined by the Church Board based upon the severity of the charge).

All disciplinary actions shall be carried out with much prayer and by self-examination of those in authority, fully recognizing human weakness and the power of sin (Matthew 7:5). All actions shall be held in strict confidence until such time as they need to be made public for the purpose of public censure or restitution. Should the individual begin to share information publicly that causes further division or questions the authority or intent of leadership, it may be appropriate to share information with the informed party.

Feedback to the individual registering the grievance shall be made, but details will be revealed only at the discretion of those responsible for the disciplinary action. If an accusation cannot be confirmed, the informer shall be warned about the seriousness of any accusation of another believer. The informer may also be told of existing extenuating situations that have made discipline inappropriate, details of which may or may not be revealed.

Any disciplinary action of the Church Board may be appealed to the congregation. Such requests must be in writing and submitted to the Church Board at least two weeks prior to a regularly scheduled corporate meeting **or** a special corporate meeting called for that purpose (timing to be determined by the Church Board based upon the severity of the charge). All rights to confidentiality are forfeited by such an appeal.