

**OKATEE BAPTIST CHURCH
CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

**March 3, 2013 Origination Date
Approved Revisions March 8, 2023; July 30, 2025 & October 29, 2025**

CONSTITUTION

Preamble

We declare and establish the Constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our Christian faith, in order to govern this body in an orderly manner. This Constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and grant the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches. The Government of this church shall be vested only in the body of its members who, by abiding by its Constitution and Bylaws, make their vote final.

Okatee Baptist Church shall be in cooperation with the Savannah River Baptist Association, the South Carolina Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention and shall give support to all their mission endeavors.

ARTICLE 1 – NAME

The name of this church shall be Okatee Baptist Church, 5467 N. Okatie Highway, Ridgeland, South Carolina 29936. The church is incorporated in accordance with the laws of the State of South Carolina governing religious bodies.

ARTICLE II – MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Okatee Baptist Church is to grow a family of baptized believers in Jesus Christ who are dedicated to evangelism, worship, ministry, missions, and fellowship through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE III – STATEMENT OF FAITH

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God and the basis for our beliefs. We subscribe to the doctrinal statements of the most current copy of “The Baptist Faith and Message” as adopted by our Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE IV – CHURCH COVENANT

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

We engage therefore, by the aid of 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 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 personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our family and others; to walk daily with Christ; to be just in our dealings, faithful in all activities; to avoid all gossip, slander, and excessive anger; to avoid all habits, abuses, or excesses harmful to our spiritual, mental, or physical selves; to defend the sanctity of life; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of God.

We further engage to care for one another in brotherly love; to continually pray for one another, to comfort and encourage each other in times of need; to maintain personal relationships that are slow to anger, quick to forgive and reconcile according to scriptural guidelines.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only 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 marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of god's gift of marital, sexual intimacy.

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 in order to preserve the function and integrity of the Okatee Baptist Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Okatee Baptist Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the Okatee Baptist Church in any capacity or who serve as volunteers or any person, group or entity which makes use of any property or facilities of the Okatee Baptist Church agree to and abide by this Statement On Marriage, Gender, and Human Sexuality.

We also believe that all facilities of the Church, including buildings, grounds, vehicles and equipment of any kind either owned, rented or managed by the Church, because they exist for the purpose of carrying out the Church ministry be made available for use pursuant to such facility use guidelines as the Church may adopt and amend from time-to-time solely by those individuals, groups, organizations, companies or assemblages which do not have a professed or known conflict with these beliefs.

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in his image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including unborn babies, the aged, the physical or mentally challenged and every other state or condition from conception through natural death.

The statements contained in this document or other foundational or governing documents of the Okatee Baptist Church do not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God, speaks with final authority concerning truth and morality.

We also agree that when we move from this church family, we will unite with another church of like faith and beliefs.

ARTICLE V – AMENDMENTS

The Constitution may be altered or replaced by the introduction of a written resolution stating the alteration or replacement provided:

1. That the resolution is considered by the Constitution and Bylaws Team 4 weeks prior to being reviewed at a business meeting.
2. That the resolution is submitted and reviewed at a business meeting.
3. That a business meeting be held on a Wednesday evening at least four weeks later to vote on the resolution.
4. The resolution will be distributed at the meeting it was presented and copies made available on the foyer table of the sanctuary.
5. Acceptance of the resolution will be by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present.

**OKATEE BAPTIST CHURCH
BYLAWS**

**ARTICLE I
MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. General

This is an autonomous congregational Southern Baptist Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and daily life of this church. The membership reserves the right to determine who shall be a member of this church and the conditions of such membership.

Section 2. Qualifications for Membership

Any person may offer himself or herself as a potential member in this church. They shall be presented to the church for a vote of affirmation at any church service for membership in any of the following ways:

- A. By profession of faith in Jesus Christ followed by baptism by immersion; Upon recommendation of the pastor, the Deacons by unanimous consent may suspend the requirement for immersion baptism as a condition of membership in cases of physical inability or severe hardship.
- B. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Southern Baptist church or church of like faith which baptizes by immersion;
- X. By statement of prior conversion experience and biblical baptism when no letter is obtainable.
- Δ. Associate Membership is available to any person who is a member in good standings at any Southern Baptist affiliated Church and in this community on a temporary basis. Associate members must be approved by the Church membership at a regular or special business meeting. Associate members will not be eligible to vote or hold any office as described in the Church Bylaws.

Section 3. Responsibilities of Membership

Members are expected to be faithful and obedient in all areas of the Christian life, to attend regularly the services of this church, to give financially to its support, to share in its organized work, and to fulfill the obligations of The Church Covenant in Article IV of our Constitution.

Section 4. Voting

Members and members only may vote in the transactions of the church. Members must be physically present at the time of voting.

Section 5. Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways: 1) death of the member. 2) transfer of membership to another church, and 3) exclusion by action of the church (see Section 6. Discipline, below). 4) A member desiring to discontinue membership in the Church, may have his or her name removed from the roll upon written request to the Pastor or Deacons.

Section 6. Discipline

It shall be the purpose of Okatee Baptist Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastor, other members of ministerial staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. Redemption rather than punishment should be the guideline which governs the attitude toward the troubled member.

After attempts of Biblical guidance and counseling, if the troubled member has not come to a point of repentance, then every reasonable measure shall be taken by the pastor and by the deacons to resolve the problem. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. But, finding that the welfare of the church will best be served by the exclusion of the member, the church will take the following actions:

1. Request the troubled member appear before the church and be given an opportunity to address the issue(s).
2. By a two-thirds vote at a special called meeting, the church may declare the offender to no longer be a member of the church.

Any person whose membership has been terminated for any condition, upon his request, may be restored to membership by a vote of the church upon evidence of his repentance. (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-2)

ARTICLE II CHURCH MEETINGS

Section 1 Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning and evening, and Wednesday evening for worship of Almighty God. Services of worship may be called at other times and led by the ministerial leadership of our church. These meetings shall be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people. Pastor and Deacons may change service schedule as necessary.

Under certain conditions, such as weather or conflicting schedules, the Pastor may cancel or postpone church services or other activities. This cancellation must be prior approved by the Chairman of Deacons or two other Deacons in his absence. Under severe weather conditions, the Pastor may cancel all activities without prior permission.

Section 2. Business Meetings

The church shall hold regular business meetings on the last Wednesday evening of the months of January, April, July, and October. A Budget Approval business meeting shall be held during December or earlier to approve the following year's budget. The Church Annual Business meeting shall be held in October.

Section 3. Special Business Meetings

The church may conduct special business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. Such meetings are called by the pastor and/or chairman of deacons giving at least one week's notification and the subject matter during the announcement time of services and the Sunday bulletin. Only the announced business may be transacted at such a called meeting.

In the event of an emergency, the Pastor or the Chairman of the Deacons may, with the consent of two-thirds of the Deacons, call an emergency meeting without full notice to the members. Such notice, as is possible, will be given to the membership and action shall be limited to the items requiring the emergency meeting.

Section 4. Quorum

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

Section 5. Parliamentary

Robert's Rules of Order, latest version, is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church.

ARTICLE III CHURCH OFFICERS

The officers of this church shall be members of the church. The officers shall be the Pastor, other Ministerial Staff, Deacons, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Trustees and Sunday School Director. All officers shall be elected by the church.

Section 1. Pastor

By virtue of his calling and position, the Pastor is the spiritual leader and administrator of the church. The Pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. He shall work with the Deacons and church staff to lead the church in the achievement of its mission which is to grow a family of baptized believers in Jesus Christ who are dedicated to evangelism, worship, ministry, missions, and fellowship through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. He shall be an ex-officio member of all organizations and teams. He shall have charge of the pulpit ministry of the church.

The Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. A Pastor Search Team shall consist of the Chairman of the Deacons, Chairman of the Personnel Team, and five members of the church recommended by the Nominating Team that are elected by the church. The Pastor Search Team is responsible for seeking God's guidance in presenting their recommendation for a godly man to serve as Pastor (1 Timothy 3:1-7). The Team shall bring forth only one name at a time for consideration. The selection of the Pastor shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least two weeks' public notice has been given to the membership.

The election shall be by ballot with a three-fourths vote of affirmation. Should the recommendation fail to receive three-fourths vote, the Pastor Search Team will be instructed to seek out another Pastor and the meeting shall be adjourned without debate and closed with prayer.

The Pastor thus elected shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request. In the event of the resignation of the Pastor, the church requests at least a two-week notice. In the event a conflict arises between the church and the Pastor, the Deacons and Personnel Team shall meet with the Pastor to make every attempt to resolve any conflict or issues. Should the issues not be resolved and dismissal is deemed necessary, the recommendation to dismiss the Pastor shall be brought before the church at a special called business meeting of which at least two weeks' public notice has been given to the membership. The dismissal shall be by ballot with a three-fourths vote. Termination shall be immediate, with the Personnel Team, Finance Team, and the Deacons determining the conditions of severance.

Section 2. Other Ministerial Staff

Other ministerial staff (Associate Pastors, Ministers of Education, Music, Youth, etc.) may be called to assist the Pastor in carrying out his responsibilities and functions of the church. The recommendation to call other ministers shall be made by the Personnel Team after consultation with the Pastor, Deacons, and Finance Team.

A job description shall be prepared by the Personnel Team. A compensation package shall be prepared by the Personnel Team and approved by the Finance Team and the church. The selection of the proposed minister or termination of existing ministerial staff shall be by the same procedure as the Pastor above.

Section 3. Fellowship of Deacons

The title "Deacon" carries with it the original meaning of servant. In Acts 6, men were set aside to assist the disciples in ministry. This enabled the disciples to devote their attention to prayer and ministry of the Word. Therefore, the Deacon serves the Lord and His church by serving alongside the Pastor and other church staff so that they can fulfill the ministry to which God has called them.

A Yokefellow is a man who meets all the spiritual qualifications of a Deacon but has never been ordained to serve as a Deacon. He will be elected to serve a one-year term and serve alongside the Deacons. He will attend all Deacons' meetings and serve in certain capacities. He will not be allowed to vote in a Deacon's meeting or serve the Lord's Supper. This is an excellent opportunity for him to gain experience and prepare himself to serve in the Deacon ministry. This is also an excellent opportunity for the church

to develop and observe a Yokefellow as he serves. After the one-years' service, the church will decide if it is the appropriate time for the Yokefellow to be elected to serve as a Deacon.

Deacons and Yokefellows shall be chosen on the basis of spiritual qualifications as set forth throughout God's Word and specifically in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. A Deacon or Yokefellow should be a man at least 21 years of age and a member of the church for at least one year. If new deacons are needed for immediate service, the one year Church membership requirement may be waived after the Deacon Nominee receives approval by the Pastor and the Fellowship of Deacons.

Deacons and Yokefellows will be nominated by the Deacon Nominating Team composed of the Pastor and the Fellowship of Deacons. Deacon nominations will be presented and approved at a Church Business Meeting. The Pastor and Chairman of Deacons will visit each nominee to talk about their qualifications, duties, and willingness to serve. The Deacon Nominating Team will present only the number of names to fulfill the needs of Deacons and Yokefellows at the October business meeting. The Deacons shall elect their own officers.

The appropriate number of Deacons will be selected each year to serve a three-year term. Following the completion of a three-year term or the completion of an unexpired term of 19 months or longer, the Deacon must remain off the Deacon nomination for one year. When a Deacon does not complete a three-year term, the Deacon Nomination Team will recommend someone, and they are to be elected by the church to complete the person's three-year term. If the term to be completed is less than 19 months, the person would be eligible to be nominated for a three-year term without having to wait one year. The Deacons shall determine the number of Deacons required to meet the needs of the church.

In the event a Pastor vacancy exists, the Fellowship of Deacons can extend the tenure of the current Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons to a maximum of six months after the new Pastor is selected. The tenure extension can be revoked at any time by the Fellowship of Deacons.

Section 4. Moderator

The Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons shall be the Church Moderator. If the Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons desires not to serve as Church Moderator, the Vice Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons shall serve as the Church Moderator. In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons, the Clerk shall call the meeting to order for the purpose of electing a Church Moderator for the meeting.

Section 5. Clerk

The Clerk shall be nominated to the church by the Nominating Team at the October business meeting for a one-year term. The Clerk shall be eligible to be nominated each year.

The Clerk shall record and keep the minutes of all business meetings. The Clerk shall be responsible for keeping a record of all members; with dates of joining the church, transfers to other churches, deaths, and baptism. The Clerk shall issue Transfer of Letters to other churches. The Clerk shall keep on file all official documents of the church. The church may delegate some of the clerical duties of the Clerk to the church secretary. All church records are property of the church.

Section 6. Treasurer

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer are non-compensated positions and shall be nominated by the Nominating Team at the October business meeting for a one-year term. They shall be eligible for nomination each year and are not mandatory rotation positions. The Treasurer can also serve as the Finance/Steward Team Captain. Duties of both the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer will be provided in the Church Handbook.

Section 7. Trustees

Trustees shall be nominated by the Nominating Team at the October business meeting to serve a three-year term. There shall be a total of three Trustees to serve on a rotation basis of three years; with one rotating off and one rotating on each year. Following a three-year term the Trustee are not eligible for nomination for one year. The Nominating Team shall present the Trustee Officers at the October Annual business meeting.

Trustees shall hold in trust the church properties. The Trustees shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. It shall be the function of the Trustees to affix their signature to legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property or other legal documents where the signatures of Trustees are required. The Trustees shall have oversight of all legal documents of the church. They shall annually elect a chairman and other such officers as they deem appropriate.

Section 8. Sunday School Director

The Sunday School Director shall have general oversight of the Sunday School operations and administer its affairs subject to the approval of the Sunday School Team. The Sunday School Director will work closely with the Sunday School Team in securing qualified teachers. The Sunday School Director will seek the best methods of religious education and endeavor to adopt them. The Sunday School Director will have meetings with the Sunday School Teachers as needed. The Sunday School Director will serve as a member of the Sunday School Team and will report at the regular business meetings of the Church.

ARTICLE IV CHURCH TEAMS

Section 1. General

Church Teams are designated to help with the various administrative tasks of the church. They should not replace the final authority of the church under the leadership of Christ. Church Teams shall be assigned specific tasks, given authority to accomplish those tasks, and the financial resources approved through the church budget to accomplish those tasks. Each team shall be empowered to administer the funds approved by church budget, provided the financial policies of the church are followed. All policies relating to the team's function and policies must be approved through the Constitution and Bylaws Team, the Fellowship of Deacons and Pastor. Teams are accountable to the church and should report to the church at each quarterly business meeting.

All members of Church Teams shall be members of the church. Team Chairpersons of Church Teams shall be nominated by the Nominating Team and approved by the church. The church shall have Standing and Special Teams to perform the ministries of the church.

Standing Teams are permanent teams to meet the ongoing ministries of the church. The Standing Team members shall serve on a three-year rotation system, with one-third to be elected each year at the October business meeting. The Nominating Team may present nominees throughout the year to fill unexpired terms when vacancies occur. The Audio/Visual Team does not rotate.

A Special Team shall be nominated by the Nominating Team and elected by the church to serve for their assigned task and the completion of their assigned task. The church shall set aside an approved budget for the Special Team.

Team Chairperson Duties:

- Know and communicate the purpose and responsibilities of the team
- Create and submit an annual budget to the Stewardship Team
- Follow the financial policies and procedures of the church
- Serve as a member of the Church Council
- Report team actions and plans to the Church Council and church business meetings
- Develop and recommend policies and procedures of your team to the Constitution and Bylaws Team for the church to adopt
- Communicate and coordinate your activities with other teams that would be affected in accomplishing your team's goals
- Recommend Team Members to the Nominating Team for approval.

Team Member Duties:

- Know the purpose and responsibilities of the team
- Attend and participate in meetings and activities of the team
- Inform the chairperson if you become unable to complete your commitment to the team.

Needed teams will be determined annually by the Nominating Team after consultation with the Pastor and the Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons. Church Teams and responsibilities will be listed in the Church Handbook.

ARTICLE V

CHURCH PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1 General

All church program organizations shall be under church control with all Team Leaders and workers being members of and elected by the church. All Team Leaders will be members of the Church Council and bring a report to the church at church business meetings.

Section 2 Discipleship Process

The Discipleship Process is the strategy in our church to teach believers the disciplines that can lead to a transformed life in Christ, to train believers to share their faith with unsaved people and build confidence as they witness on a regular basis. Discipleship Process will also help equip believers to identify their spiritual gifts, choose a worthy ministry, and do ministry with compassion and competence. The Discipleship Process shall provide classes for all ages and be conducted under the leadership of the Discipleship Director.

Section 3 Men's Ministry

The Men's Ministry is the strategy in our church that builds up and helps the men of the church become spiritual leaders and provides an avenue of outreach and mission opportunities to the community. The Men's Ministry shall be under the direction of the Men's Ministry Director.

Section 4 Sunday School

Sunday School is one of the foundational strategies in our church for leading people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for building Great Commission Christians through Bible study groups that engage people in evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship. The Sunday School shall provide classes for all ages and be conducted under the leadership of the Sunday School Director.

Section 5 Women On Missions

The Women on Missions is the strategy of our church to equip adults, youth, children, and preschoolers with missions' education to become radically involved in the mission of God for special projects of the church. The Women on Missions shall be under the direction of the Women on Missions Leader.

**OKATEE BAPTIST CHURCH
CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
March 3, 2013 Origination Date**

**AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
OCTOBER 5, 2022**

Deacons and Yokefellows shall be chosen on the basis of spiritual qualifications as set forth throughout God's Word and specifically in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. A Deacon or Yokefellow should be a man at least 21 years of age and a member of the church for at least one year. ***If new deacons are needed for immediate service, the one year Church membership requirement may be waived after the Deacon Nominee receives approval by the Pastor and the Fellowship of Deacons.***

The revision to the Constitution and Bylaws was approved by a unanimous ballot vote on October 5, 2022.

**AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
MARCH 8, 2023**

Several amendments were proposed and unanimously approved by ballot vote on March 8, 2023.

The original constitution (March 3, 2013) is on file in the main office. A working copy of the Amendments (dated November 1, 2022) is also on file in the main office.

**AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
JULY 30, 2025**

In the event a Pastor vacancy exists, the Fellowship of Deacons can extend the tenure of the current Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons to a maximum of six months after the new Pastor is selected. The tenure extension can be revoked at any time by the Fellowship of Deacons.

This revision to the Constitution and Bylaws was approved by a unanimous ballot vote on July 30, 2025 (on page 8 under Fellowship of Deacons).

**AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
OCTOBER 29, 2025**

Section 4. Moderator

The Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons shall be the Church Moderator. If the Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons desires not to serve as Church Moderator, the Vice Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons shall serve as the Church Moderator. In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons, the Clerk shall call the meeting to order for the purpose of electing a Church Moderator for the meeting.

Section 6. Treasurer

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer are non-compensated positions and shall be nominated by the Nominating Team at the October business meeting for a one-year term. They shall be eligible for nomination each year and are not mandatory rotation positions. The Treasurer can also serve as the Finance/Steward Team Captain. Duties of both the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer will be provided in the Church Handbook.

The above revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws were approved by 2/3 vote on October 29, 2025 at the Annual Business Meeting. (Pages 8 and 9).