

Ridgecrest Baptist Church Constitution & Bylaws

(Revised 3/5/2014)

Introduction

A church is a fellowship of people who have accepted Christ as Savior and are united by their common relationship to the Holy Spirit. A church, like a community or an individual, is always changing. Fundamental doctrines remain the same but methods of teaching these doctrines and of moving toward objectives must change if the mission of the church is to be accomplished.

A church Constitution and By-Laws help a church preserve democratic procedures. This instrument serves as the guide for members to follow in carrying out the work of the church.

Basic theology, organizational structure, and church policies are contained in a constitution. By-Laws, on the other hand, state the methods for expediting the constitution. It should be emphasized by the church council and/or deacons. As the program of the church changes, so must its rules of governmental procedures be brought up to date.

The basic advantages of a Constitution and By-Laws are:

1. Furnishes members a written statement of their church organization, fundamental guidelines, and theological beliefs.
2. Aids in preserving democracy and harmony since predetermined guidelines have already been established by members.
3. Provides orderly procedures for guiding the transaction of the church business.
4. Serves as a basis for solving problems before problems arise.

PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith so that this body may be governed in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches of the same faith.

1. NAME

This body shall be known as the **RIDGECREST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FLORENCE SOUTH CAROLINA**

2. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the basis for any statement of faith. The church subscribes to the doctrinal statements as found in the tract titled “The Baptist Faith and Message” as adopted by the southern Baptist convention in 2000. (One copy of this tract to be attached to this constitution.) We band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind. The ordinances of the church are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

3. Church 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's Angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into this 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 spiritually; to sustain its worship, ordinances, disciplines 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 throughout all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to educate our children religiously; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.

To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings; faithful to engagements and exemplary in our deportment. To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage 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 one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in 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 some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

4. Character

Section 1. Policy

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist Churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate and support the association and state convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Section 2. Doctrine

This church receives the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in essential accord with the belief of other Southern Baptist Churches.

BY-LAWS

5. Membership

Section 1. General

This is a sovereign and democratic Southern Baptist Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains the right unto itself of exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of membership.

Section 2. Candidacy

Any person may offer himself as a candidate for membership in this church.

All such candidates shall be presented to the church at any regular worship service for membership in any of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith and for baptism according to the policies of this church.
2. By promise of a letter from another Baptist Church.
3. By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and baptism in a Baptist church when no letter is obtainable.
4. By statement of faith, that they have been a member and baptized in a former Southern Baptist Church.

Section 3. Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated in the following ways:

1. Death.
2. The church will grant letters of recommendation for transfer to another Southern Baptist church upon request of said church or upon written request of the member (Letters of recommendation will not be granted to individual members).
3. Erasure upon affiliation with a church or another denomination.
4. Exclusion by action of this church should a member become an offense to the church and to its name by reason of immoral or

unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, or nonsupport of the church. The church may terminate his membership by three/fourths vote, but only after the following efforts have been made for restitution.

- a. All accusations shall be brought to the attention of the pastor and deacons and they shall properly investigate the situation.
- b. If the party in question, in the judgment of pastor and deacons, is guilty of the charges, faithful efforts shall be made to bring the accused party to repentance and amendment.
- c. If, after faithful efforts have been made and the party in question does not make efforts to repent and amend his improper action, then he shall be given written notice by the deacons that they are recommending that the church dismiss him.
- d. The deacons and the pastor shall not delay in investigating any member that charges and dismissal recommendations are brought against. A report of recommendations shall be brought before the church in conference concerning the party in question within thirty (30) days.
- e. The accused party shall be given written notice by the deacons at least one week in advance as to the time and place where such action shall be taking place.

6. Church Staff

This church shall call or employ such staff members as the church shall need. A job description shall be written when the need for staff members is determined. Vocational staff members other than the pastor shall be recommended to the church by the personnel committee and employed by the church.

The secretaries and custodians shall likewise be recommended to the church by the personnel committee and employed by the church action.

Financial Secretary

The church shall elect annually a financial secretary. The secretary shall receive the empty collection envelopes after the money has been removed and counted by the proper persons selected by the church to serve in turn; and from these the secretary shall give donors individual credit. The envelopes shall be kept for reference for a period of seven years in a proper place at the church. The secretary will fill out the sheet for the monthly balance, which will indicate receipts from envelopes, plate or loose, and miscellaneous or special offerings. The secretary shall also be responsible for preparing and mailing quarterly or semi-annually records of contributions to all contributing members.

7. Church Officers

All church officers must be members of the church. The term of office for all church officers, unless otherwise specified below, shall be

September 1st thru August 31st. The officers of this church shall be as follows:

Section 1. Pastor

The pastor is responsible for leading the church in functioning as a New Testament church. The pastor is the leader of worship, proclamation, education, and pastoral ministry. A major concern of the pastor is to perform pastoral responsibilities, lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff in performing their tasks. He shall preside at meetings of the church.

The pastor is encourage to take two days per week as his own to do as he and his family may desire. He is to have a minimum two week vacation including two Sundays off each year. Upon approval of the Deacon Body he may receive additional weeks off including Sundays with a maximum of four weeks. He may also take two additional Sundays off to be in revivals, etc. He may use this time as needed, but is not to use more than two weeks or miss more than two Sundays consecutively. The church shall pay pulpit supply pastors for these Sundays.

The pastor may use the convention expense allowance for any Southern Baptist convention or seminar.

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose of which at least one week's public notice shall be given through at least two of the following; the church bulletin, internet, or by standard mail.

A pastor search committee shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor, and their recommendations will constitute a nomination, though any member has the privilege of making other recommendations to the pastor search committee. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one man at a time. Election shall be by ballot, an affirmative vote of 90% of those present being necessary for a choice.

The pastor thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his or the church's request.

The pastor shall give at least thirty days notice at the time of resignation before terminating responsibilities as pastor.

Section 2. Deacons

There may be four deacons for the first one hundred church members and one for each fifty members thereafter whose names are on the church roll until a maximum of nine deacons is reached.

For every deacon needed each member of the church shall be allowed to vote for the man they feel to be best qualified for the office of deacon by his witness and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and to his church and should be tither as set down in 1st Timothy 3:8-13.

Deacons shall be elected in the following manner:

The Deacon body will present 2 names as candidates for each vacant deacon position to the church for voting. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor and those receiving the most votes will be the elected deacon(s).

The deacons shall serve on a rotation basis. Each deacon shall be elected to serve a three year term. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect to fill the unexpired term. After serving for three years, no deacon shall be eligible for re-election until the lapse of at least one year. There is no obligation to reinstate a deacon after he has rotated off the active diaconate nor shall there be any obligation to reinstate as an active deacon a person who comes into the membership of the church from another church where he has served as a deacon.

In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. The tasks of the deacons is to assist the pastor in performing pastoral responsibilities.

The deacons shall elect their officers and be organized to assist the pastor.

Section 3. Moderator

The Moderator shall be the pastor. In the absence of the pastor, the chairman of the deacons shall preside; or in the absence of both, the clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator shall be elected.

Section 4. Clerk

The church shall elect a church clerk. It shall be the duty of the clerk to keep in a suitable book a record of all the actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The clerk is responsible for keeping a register of the names of members with dates and means of admission or erasure. When a request for a church letter is received from another

church, the clerk shall send a letter of recommendation. The letter shall be sent only if the person in question is on the church membership roll. The clerk shall preserve on file all communications and written official reports and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary as indicated in these by-laws. The church may delegate some of their clerical responsibilities to the church secretary. All church records are church property and should be filed in the church office when one is maintained.

Section 5. Treasurer

The church shall elect a church treasurer. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of vouchers approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to render to the church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements for the preceding period.

Section 6. Church Ushers

Every regular church usher shall be selected by the nominating committee and elected by the church. The ushers shall be led by a head usher also selected by the nominating committee and elected by the church. The ushers are to greet people as they enter and leave the church, seat people at the proper time, provide bulletins and other materials at the time seating. The ushers will be attentive to the needs of the congregation and the pastor.

Section 7. Church Council

The Church Council shall function as the administrative organization of the church with the expressed duties of serving as correlating agency for programs and organizations of the church. It shall be for setting church goals, planning the annual church calendar, under stewardship presenting the names in nomination to the church for the annual election of officers and for the election of officers as needed throughout the year and shall present to the church, from time to time as needed, any church policy that they feel wise.

The Church Council shall not have the power to change any church programs or policies as this is to be done only by the church. All major recommendations shall be presented to the church for approval.

The Church Council shall meet at least quarterly and other meetings shall be called as needed. The pastor shall serve as moderator and the church clerk as secretary. All meeting will be open meeting and any church member may attend. However, only church council members shall have voting privileges.

The Church Council shall be composed of the Pastor, Chairman of Deacons, Church Treasurer, Church Clerk, Sunday School director, Discipleship Training Director, Brotherhood and WMU Directors. Music Director, Nursery Chairman, Youth Director and any others as needed.

The Church council will present three names to work with the Sunday School Director and Discipleship Director to form nominating committee to get all General Officers for the next church year. This committee will begin in April and make their final report in July. The

Church council shall function from September 1st through August 31st of the following year. Vacancies shall be filled by church election.

8. Committees

Section 1. General

All church committee members shall be presented by the nominating committee and elected by the church unless otherwise indicated in the description below. The committee members to be elected each year shall serve for a one year period. The term of office for all committee members, unless otherwise specified below, shall be September 1st thru August 31st.

Section 2. Baptism Committee

This committee shall consist of deacons and wives. The baptism committee is elected to assist the pastor in preparing for the ordinance of baptism. The committee is responsible for preparing the candidates and the baptistery for the ordinance. This is a deacon committee.

Section 3. Flower Committee

The flower committee is responsible for securing, arranging and disposing of floral arrangements for church services and for providing flowers for sick and bereaved members.

Section 4. History Committee

The history committee is to preserve and use the historical records of the church. The committee is especially concerned with gathering and preserving available church records, recording full and accurate records, and using the records to help members appreciate their heritage and mission.

Section 5. Lord's Supper Committee

The Lord's Supper committee prepares the elements and the equipment for the observance of the Lord's Supper. The committee does the preparatory and maintenance work needed to observe the memorial service. The committee will prepare the elements on a schedule approved by the church. This is a deacon committee.

Section 6. Nominating Committee

The nominating committee coordinates the staffing of all church leadership positions that are filled by volunteers. The nominating committee recommends persons for all volunteer positions to be elected by the church.

Upon the election of the Sunday School Director and the Discipleship Training Director, the Nominating Committee will be duly constituted. This body will function as the Nominating Committee until the election of a new nominating committee at the regularly scheduled quarterly business meeting the following April. The Sunday School Director and Discipleship Training Director will not begin their duties as Sunday School Director and Discipleship Training Director until the new church year starts. No person may serve on the Nominating Committee for

more than three consecutive years except for the Sunday School Director and Discipleship Training Director.

Section 7. Properties Committee

The properties committee assists the church in matters related to properties administration. Its work includes such areas as maintaining all church properties for ready use, recommending policies regarding use of properties, recommending employment of maintenance personnel, and assigning responsibility to appropriate personnel for supervision.

Section 8. Recreation Committee

This committee seeks to serve the entire church in seeing that all recreation activities sponsored by the church or any organization unit are properly planned and that they contribute to the ultimate objectives of the church. The committee will plan all church activities and serve as a resource to others who plan activities.

Section 9. Nursery Committee

The nursery committee is to coordinate the church's nursery activities and to help nursery parents and teachers work together. The committee will see that adequate provisions are made for nursery children each time they are at church.

Section 10. Benevolence Committee

The benevolence committee is to perform acts of benevolence to persons in need in the name of Christ and His church. These needs may be physical, social or mental. This is a deacon committee.

Section 11. Personnel Committee

This committee shall consist of the active deacons of the church. They shall recommend to the church all staff members, paid and volunteered, as needed.

Section 12. Finance Committee

This committee shall consist of three (3) at large members, one (1) Deacon, and the Church Treasurer. This committee is charged with reviewing monthly financial statements, keeping the Deacons advised monthly and reporting to the church at the quarterly business meeting on our budgeted expenditures and financial needs.

This committee will also be charged with reviewing financial procedures, they will point out areas that need improvement to the Deacons, and work with the Deacons to make sure that we are using the best practices available. (See Financial Policies and Procedures for the small-medium membership churches. SCBC)

Section 13. Bereavement Committee

The bereavement committee is to provide support for families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. The primary function of this committee is to provide meals after funerals.

9. Educational Ministries

Section 1. General

All organizations of the church shall be under church control, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church. It is

understood that the pastor is an ex officio member of all the organizations named. The term of office for all educational ministries' officers, unless otherwise specified below, shall be September 1st thru August 31st.

Section 2. Sunday School

There shall be a Sunday School divided into departments and classes for all ages and conducted under the direction of a general superintendent for the study of God's Word. Sunday School is to be conducted each Sunday morning.

The tasks of the Sunday School shall be to teach the biblical revelation; lead in reaching all prospects for the church; lead all church members to worship; witness, learn, and minister daily; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

Section 3. Discipleship Training

There shall be Discipleship Training divided into departments for all ages and conducted under the direction of the general director. Discipleship Training is to be conducted each Sunday evening. The Discipleship Training shall serve as the training organization of the church.

The tasks of the Discipleship Training shall be to teach systematic theology, Christian history, Christian ethics, and church policy and organization; give orientation to new church members; train all members to worship, witness, learn and minister daily; recruit and train potential leaders; provide for specialized training; provide organization and leadership for special projects of the church; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

Section 4. Woman's Missionary Union

There shall be a Woman's Missionary Union with such officers and such forms of organization as needed. The tasks of the woman's Missionary Union shall be to teach missions, lead persons to participate in missions; provide organization and leadership for special mission projects of the church, provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

Section 5. Brotherhood

There shall be a Brotherhood made up of such standard organizations, including Royal Ambassadors, as needed. This program shall be directed by the director who shall be elected by the church. The tasks are to teach missions; lead all men, young men and boys to participate in mission activities; provide organization and leadership for special projects of the church and the denomination.

Section 6. Music Ministry

There shall be a Music Ministry under the direction of the Director of Music. Such officers and organization shall be included as needed. The music tasks shall be to teach music and hymnody; provide music and musicians for the congregational services and the organizations of the church; lead persons to participate in hymn singing, train persons to lead, sing and play music; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

10. Church Meeting

Section 1. General

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning and evening for preaching, instructions, evangelism and the worship of Almighty God and on Wednesday night for prayer. These meetings will be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the pastor.

Section 2. Regular Business Meetings

Regular business meetings shall be held quarterly on a designated Wednesday night. Should there be any unusual business or matter of unusual interest to be brought before such regular quarterly meetings, notice shall be given the membership one week prior to the meeting. In case of an extreme emergency, the Pastor, Chairman of Deacons and the Church Clerk shall have the authority to call such a meeting of the church.

Section 3. Special Business Meetings

A specifically called business meeting may be held to consider special matters of significant nature. A one (1) week notice must be given for the specially call business meeting.

Notice of all specially called business meetings of the church shall be given by announcement one (1) week prior to the meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impracticable.

Section 4. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of at least twenty (20) church members.

Section 5. Voting Eligibility

At any business meeting called by the church, only church members present at the meeting are eligible to vote.

Section 6. Parliamentary Rules

Robert's Rules of Order is adopted as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church, the deacons and the committees. The church shall provide a copy of Robert's Rules of Order for the general membership to borrow and a copy for the moderator.

Section 7. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall be January 1st and ends on December 31st.

11. Church Finances

Section 1.

The elected deacons, in consultation with the church council, shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for all local and worldwide expenses. The proposed budget will be made available to the congregation no later than the last Sunday in October. The proposed budget will be presented for a vote at a regular business meeting convened for that purpose by the moderator on the first Wednesday in November.

Section 2.

All funds, for any and all purposes, shall pass through the hands of the treasurer and be properly recorded on the books of the church.

Section 3.

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts.

Section 4.

An audit committee shall be elected by the church consisting of at least three (3) persons. They shall conduct at least an annual audit of the financial records.

12. Discipline

Section 1.

Should any unhappy differences arise among members, the aggrieved members shall follow, in a tender spirit, the rules given by our Lord in the eighteenth (18) chapter of Matthew.

Section 2.

Should any case of gross breach of covenant, or of public scandal occur, the deacons shall endeavor to remove the offence; and if this effort fails, shall report the case to the church.

Section 3.

All such proceedings shall be pervaded by the spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance, but should an adverse decision be reached, the church may proceed to admonish or declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the church.

Section 4.

Any person whose membership has been terminated for offence may be restored by vote of the church, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation or, if on account of continued absence, upon satisfactory explanation.

13. Church Property and Equipment

The church retains ownership and the right to govern and regulate the use of all church properties and equipment.

All church properties and equipment are governed under the rules and regulations formulated and approved by the church for each individual property or piece of equipment. These rules may be updated or changed periodically at the desire of the church.

The church will not allow the property to be used in any way which is deemed contrary to our Biblical faith or heritage.

14. Amendments

Changes in this constitution and by-laws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church, provided such amendments shall have been presented in writing at least thirty (30) days previous, and a copy of the proposed amendments be furnished to each member, amendments to the constitution shall be by two-thirds (2/3) vote of all members of the church present entitled to vote; amendments to the by-laws shall have a concurrence of a majority of the members present and voting.

15. Trustees

The trustees, or their successors, in office, shall as provided by law and the action of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, hold in trust the title to all property of the church and shall represent the church in all legal matters of responsibility regarding the purchase, improvement and disposal of the church property. They shall execute all legal papers relating to the church, as the church may direct. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property of the church without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. Three (3) trustees will be elected to serve for as long as the church authorizes their terms. Vacancies may be filled at any time by the church.