

# **GOURD SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **PREAMBLE**

For the purpose of preserving and making secure the principles of our faith and to the end that this body be governed in an orderly manner, consistent with the accepted tenets of the Missionary Baptist Churches affiliated with the Baptist State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of the church, and to set forth the relationship of this body to other bodies of the same faith, we do declare and establish this constitution.

**ARTICLE I  
NAME**

The name of this organization shall be Gourd Springs Baptist Church, and is located at 4575 Ray Road, Spring Lake, North Carolina.

## ARTICLE II VISION AND PURPOSE

The vision of Gourd Springs Baptist Church is: ***Transforming Our Communities One Person At A Time.***

**Gourd Springs Baptist Church** is organized for the purpose of the advancement and promotion of the worship of God. We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired word of God and the basis of our beliefs. This shall be accomplished through the reading and study of the Holy Bible as the revealed word of God, the teaching and preaching of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, conducting regular worship services for the spiritual training, development and benefit of each member, and the winning of souls to Jesus Christ. This church shall be missionary in spirit, extending the Gospel to all the world. It shall promote and maintain the teachings and principles of The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message Christian denomination known as the Southern Baptist Convention. Its existence shall therefore be to provide regular public worship, maintain the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, uphold the doctrinal teachings and ethical standards set forth in the New Testament for the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to channel its offerings to support the spiritual endeavors and purposes set forth above, the church will have full power and authority to purchase, lease, and acquire by gift, devise or bequest and to hold, mortgage, of property, both real and personal, provided that the title to all property shall be vested in the church as here-in-set-forth.

## **ARTICLE III GOVERNMENT**

**SECTION 1.** The government of this church shall be congregational in nature, and the final authority for the operation and management of the affairs of this corporation, spiritual and temporal, shall be vested in the membership of the church. Which authority shall be exercised in the manner set forth in the bylaws? Members alone shall have the authority to adopt and amend bylaws, approve budgets, receive members and govern and conduct the affairs of this church.

**SECTION 2.** This church is a free, self-governing, independent body, congregational in nature with authority to determine for itself the use of its property and all church policies, in the manner set forth in this constitution, free of any outside control, authority or power, whether governmental or otherwise.

**SECTION 3. Association:** The church recognizes the value and mutual helpfulness in the voluntary association of churches which are in such agreement in faith and practice as to make possible a spirit of fellowship and good will. It recognizes the association and cooperation between such churches will influence the missionary, educational, and benevolent interest of each other. The church does therefore, declare its intention, as far as conscience will allow, to work in mutual cooperation with other Baptist groups.

**SECTION 4. Affiliation:** This church shall be deemed to be in friendly cooperation with the aims and purposes of the Little River Baptist Association, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and of the Southern Baptist Convention, as set forth in the constitution of these self-governing bodies. The church, through duly elected messengers, will participate in their deliberative assemblies, support the mission, benevolent, and educational programs of each.

**SECTION 5. Discontinuance of Affiliation and/or Cooperation:** The calling of a Church Conference for the purpose of voting on discontinuance of affiliation and/or cooperation from the Little River Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, or the Southern Baptist Convention, will require that the church body be notified 30 days in advance, stating the time and purpose of said conference. Discontinuance of affiliation and/or cooperation must be carried by a vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the members present and voting.

## **ARTICLE IV FAITH**

**SECTION 1. The Scriptures:** The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:20-21)

**SECTION 2. God:** There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19, II Corinthians 13:4)

**A. God The Father:** God, as Father, reigns with provisional care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

**B. God The Son:** Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed, and did the will of God, taking upon Himself the demands and necessities of human nature, and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of man from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where He is the One Mediator, partaking of the nature of God and of man, and in whose Person is affected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord. (Matthew 1:23, John 1:1, Colossians 1:15-20)

**C. God The Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired holy men of old to write scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ, He convicts sin of righteousness and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer until the day of final redemption. His presence in the

Christian is the assurance of God to bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (John 16:8, John 3:3-7, Ephesians 1:13-14, I Corinthians 12:12-13)

**SECTION 3. Man:** Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by His creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice, man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan, man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence; whereby his posterity, inherit nature, an environment inclined toward sin, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become transgressors. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. (Mark 7:12-23, Genesis 1:26-27, Romans 3:10-23, Romans 5:12)

**SECTION 4. Salvation:** Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense, salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. (John 1:12, John 3:16, John 10:28)

**A.** Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire Personality to Him as Lord and Savior. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon Principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.

**B.** Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

**C.** Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

**SECTION 5. God's Purpose of Grace:** Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. All true believers endure to

the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

**SECTION 6. The Church:** A New Testament Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation, members are equally responsible. Its scriptural officers are Pastors and Deacons. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ, which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages. (Acts 2:41-47, Acts 6:1-7, Colossians 1:18-24, Revelation 2:7)

**SECTION 7. Baptism and The Lord's Supper:** Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. (Acts 18:8, Romans 6:4, Acts 8:12 & 35-38, Matthew 28:19, Luke 22:19-20, I Corinthians 11:23-30)

**SECTION 8. The Lord's Day:** The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from worldly amusements, and resting from secular employments, work of necessity, and mercy only being excepted.

**SECTION 9. The Kingdom:** The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians shall pray, and labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

**SECTION 10. Last Things:** God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring this 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 Heaven with the Lord. (Matthew 13:40-43, John 5:25-29, John 14:1-4)

**SECTION 11. Evangelism and Missions:** It is the duty and privilege of each follower of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit, by God's Holy Spirit, means the birth of regenerate life. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus, upon a spiritual necessity of the changed life, and is expressly and constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8)

**SECTION 12. Education:** The cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is coordinated with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these, the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian schools is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. In Christian education, there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the schools exists.

**SECTION 13. Stewardship:** God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have, and are, we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these, as entrusted to them, to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth. (Matthew 25:20-21, I Peter 4:10)

**SECTION 14. Cooperation:** Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as the best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over other churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of the New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

**SECTION 15. The Christian and Social Order:** Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society. Means and



methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly, and permanently, helpful only when they are rooted in regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. The Christian should oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice. He should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

**SECTION 16. Peace and War:** It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men in principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ, they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law and love.

**SECTION 17. Religious Liberty:** God alone is Lord of conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God; it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its end. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

**SECTION 18. The Family:** God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage, the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. (Genesis 2:22-24, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9, Ephesians 5:22-33, Hebrews 13:4-7)

## **ARTICLE V COVENANT**

The following church covenant is an effort to express the mutual thoughts and individual purposes of the members of the church. It is an effort to express the hopes, desires, ambitions, and intentions of those who have come together in this church to serve the Lord in fulfillment of the statement of purpose in Article II above.

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, 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 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 bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of 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 Christian 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.

# GOURD SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH BY-LAWS

## ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP

**SECTION 1. Requirements:** The membership of this church shall be composed of persons who have; given evidence of regeneration by the Spirit of God, been baptized by immersion, accepted the Church Covenant and Bylaws of this church, and been received into membership by majority vote of the church. New church members will participate in the church's new members' orientation program as developed and implemented by the church. (Acts 2:42-46, Romans 16:1, I Corinthians 1:2, II Corinthians 8:1, Philipians 1:1, Acts 11:26)

### **SECTION 2. Means of Reception:**

**A. Letter:** A member of another Baptist Church may be received by a vote of the church upon promise letter of transfer from the church where membership resides, and immersion baptism, if not previously immersed.

**B. Profession of Faith:** Persons may present themselves for membership before the church, on the basis of their profession of faith in Christ, and following their profession, baptism by immersion, if not previously immersed.

**SECTION 3. Procedure:** Those requesting church membership shall do so by responding to the invitation at the close of a regular worship service. They shall be received by majority vote of members present under watch-care until their memberships are finalized upon completion of the new members' class.

### **SECTION 4. Responsibilities of Members:**

**A.** Members under the limits, and provisions set forth in these bylaws, may act and vote in the transactions of the church

**1. Eligibility to Vote:** Members must be 18 years of age, unless the member(s) are married, to vote on all matters.

**2. Absentee Vote:** At the request of a member, absentee votes shall be granted in issues of the following nature only: calling a Pastor, dismissal of a Pastor, or election of Deacons.

**3. Qualification for Absentee Vote:** Members may utilize their right to an absentee vote if one of the following conditions exist: hospitalization of the member (spouse will qualify for absentee vote), death of immediate family

member (spouse, children, mother, father, brother, and sister) or a deployed military member.

**B.** Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church administered by the church.

**C.** Active members shall have access to the principal records of the church including minutes of its governing body and principal financial reports. However, consistent with Baptist doctrine and practice, these rights shall not include the right to review or inspect individual donor records and personnel files.

**SECTION 5. Duties of Members:** Once an individual becomes a member, the church expects him or her to be active. Each member shall be expected to; be faithful in all duties of the Christian life (Matthew 7:16; 1 Peter 4:10; Hebrews 10:24-25), be in regular attendance at services of the church, and tithe regularly.

**SECTION 6. Termination of Membership:** The church shall dismiss from its membership those who; are removed by death, unite with other churches, request a church of like faith and order to ask for a letter of transfer, request membership to cease, or are found guilty of unchristian conduct as deemed by the Deacon body, after due process of dealing with such members as hereinafter provided.

**A.** Should a member fail to keep the church advised of change in name and/or address, or membership in a new church, over a period of six months, the Deacon body may terminate their membership – this policy shall not effect; invalids, students, members of the armed forces, and those for whom the policy would constitute a hardship.

**B.** The active Deacon body will be responsible to the church to maintain a current church membership roster. In order to maintain and keep our membership roster current, Deacons should follow the directive in this constitution: **Section 5. Duties of Members:** "Once an individual becomes a member, the church expects him or her to be active. Each member shall be expected to; be faithful in all duties of the Christian life, be in regular attendance at services of the church, and tithe regularly." **Article V: Covenant** states, "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." Hebrews 10:25 states, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*"

**SECTION 7. Discipline of members:** This section is set forth in the spirit of Christian love to remind the church and its members of their great responsibility as set forth in the scriptures: Matthew 18: 15-17, Galatians 1: 8-9, II John 10-11, Romans 16: 17, II Thessalonians 3:6-11, I Corinthians 6:11-12, Galatians 6:1, Titus 3:10.

**A.** Should a member become an offense to the church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, the Deacon body may discipline the member, up to membership termination.

**B.** All matters of discipline shall follow scripture, the church constitution and by-laws. If any member fails to answer any summons in person, or in writing, within a reasonable amount of time as deemed by the Deacon body, the membership shall be terminated.

**C.** Any member who has been terminated for any offense may be restored at the discretion of the Deacon body.

## **ARTICLE II MEETINGS**

**SECTION 1. Worship Services:** This church shall conduct regular worship services on every Lord's Day and on Wednesday evening. The Lord's Supper shall be observed on occasions deemed appropriate by the Pastor and Deacons.

### **SECTION 2. Business Meetings**

**A. Annual Meeting:** The annual business meeting of the church shall be the September quarterly meeting. The annual meeting shall include the election of officers and other appropriate business.

**B. Regular Meetings:** This church shall conduct regular business meetings on Wednesday night following the first Sunday on the last month of each quarter (March, June, September, and December). All church business shall be conducted at these regular meetings. The only items discussed will be that which is on the agenda. If a committee or organization director has an item to present before the church, the director will be responsible for notifying the chairman of Deacons, at least 14 days prior to the meeting, so the item may be put on the agenda.

#### **1.) CHURCH CONFERENCE MEETING PROCEDURE**

- I. Reading of Minutes
- II. Unfinished Business
- III. Report of Church Treasurer
- IV. Report of Church Organizations
- V. Report of Church Committees
- VI. New Business
- VII. Deacons Report
- VIII. Pastors Report

#### **C. Special Called Meetings:**

1. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor or a majority of the Deacon body, but in the event the Pastorate is vacant, the chairman of Deacons shall call such meetings. Such called meetings must be announced publicly at a service of the church at least one week prior to the called meeting. Nothing is to be discussed except that for which it was called. Special called meetings shall be held during Wednesday night services with the exception of new member reception, which will be held during Sunday service.

2. In the event of an emergency, the Pastor or chairman of the Deacons may, with consent of at least half 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 limited to the items requiring the emergency meeting. No meeting under this provision may be called in regard to personnel matters.

**D. Moderator:** The Moderator shall be the chairman of Deacons. In his absence the assistant chairman or appointee from the Deacon body shall conduct the meeting.

**E. Quorum:** To constitute a quorum for any church meetings twenty (20) eligible voting members must be present.

**F. Procedure:** The usual order of business shall be that as set forth in Article 2, Section 2 B.1. Except where specific provisions are made herein, Robert's Rules of Order shall be a general guide for the conduct of all business meetings of the church, except that the moderator may deviate from such rules in the interests of full discussion and harmony.

**G. Voting:** All items of business, unless otherwise provided for herein, shall be approved or disapproved by a majority vote of those members present and voting.

**H. Matters Requiring Special Procedures:** On any motion presented before a business meeting a member may request that the motion be referred to the Deacons, who will have up to thirty days to make a non-binding recommendation regarding the proposal. Upon their recommendation or the expiration of 30 days, the congregation may vote upon the motion.

**I. Minutes:** The Church Clerk shall keep minutes of each regular and called business meetings and record same. The minutes of all business meetings shall be property of the church and kept at the church office and available to all members for inspection.

## **ARTICLE III OFFICERS**

The officers of this church shall be required to do the work of the church in any of its departments or organizations. The church body will elect all officers and ministry leaders by the start of the church year. They shall be active members in good standing at the time of election. The officers, ministry leaders, and committee member's positions will become effective on September 1<sup>st</sup>, the church year will run from September 1<sup>st</sup> – August 31<sup>st</sup>. All officers must have been a member of the church for one year, unless otherwise recommended by the Deacon body and approved by the church. Based on **Article V: Covenant**, any ministry leader or committee member who does not remain in good standing may be asked to step down. All church leaders, Sunday School teachers, Preschool teachers, youth and children's workers must have completed a background check, before serving actively.

### **SECTION 1. Senior Pastor:**

**A. Call:** Whenever a vacancy occurs, a Pastor shall be called by the church to serve until the relationship is dissolved at the request of the Pastor or the church. One week's notice must be made available to the church of a special called meeting for the purpose of calling a Pastor. The election shall be upon recommendation of a special committee, elected by the church, to seek out and nominate a Pastor, a minister of the gospel, whose Christian character and qualifications fit him for the office. The committee shall bring only one name at a time for the consideration of the church, and shall require a three-fourths vote of those church members present.

**B. Duties:** The Pastor shall be in charge of the welfare and oversight of the church; he shall be an ex-officio member of all organizations, departments and committees; he shall conduct religious services on stated and special occasions, administer the ordinances, minister to the spiritual needs of the members of the church and community; he shall perform other duties that usually pertain to that office. He shall have special charge of the pulpit ministry of the church and shall inform the Deacons of the pulpit supply when he is absent. It shall be his special responsibility to present Christ to the lost, to minister to the spiritual needs of the members of his congregation, and through prayer and study, to render effective preaching and Pastoral ministries. The Senior Pastor is solely responsible for the church staff, ministerial and non-ministerial, who assume his delegated responsibilities.

**C. Termination:** The Pastor is called to serve until the relationship is dissolved at the request of either the Pastor or the church.

**1. Resignation:** The Pastor may resign in writing but shall normally provide at least two weeks' notice before the termination of his services. Such



written resignation, if without conditions, shall be final and binding when read at a congregational meeting or delivered to the church. If any written resignation is subject to conditions, it shall be effective and binding when accepted by majority vote of the church.

**2. Removal.** A Pastor may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a properly called meeting. Such a vote shall be initiated by the recommendation of the Deacons and held only at a called meeting in regard to which notice of the pending action has been provided, and the Pastor is provided an opportunity to be heard. Removal shall be effective immediately upon the adoption by a three-fourths vote of church members present on a motion terminating the Pastor, but salary and benefits shall continue for not less than thirty days. Any resolution to dismiss may also contain recommendations concerning other financial aspects of the termination including severance pay.

**D. Vacation and Sick Leave:** The Pastor is authorized two weeks' vacation, total time not to exceed five Sundays away. The church would like to honor the tenure of our Pastor by adding an additional week of vacation for every five years of completed ministry, not to exceed four weeks annually. (1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) Absences in case of family sickness or death will be excused by the active body of Deacons. All other absences will be approved by the church.

**SECTION 2. Associate Pastor:** It shall be the duty of the associate Pastor to assist the Pastor in all the Pastoral duties specified in the bylaws.

**SECTION 3. Interim Pastor:** In the event the church does not have an associate Pastor, the Deacons shall recommend to the church a man to serve as interim Pastor who shall perform the duties of the pulpit ministry with freedom as set forth in Article III, Section 1, Paragraph 2. He will serve in an advisory capacity in the administrative matters of the church.

**SECTION 4. Deacons:**

**A. Number, Qualifications and Terms:** There shall be at least five Deacons for the first 200 members of the church and one additional Deacon for each 100 additional members up to 500 members; and thereafter, one additional Deacon for each 50 members. The Deacons shall be elected from among those members who have proven themselves to have Scriptural qualifications according to I Timothy 3, Titus 1, and Acts 6:3. They shall be elected for a term of three years. After serving the three-year term, there must be a one-year interval prior to being nominated to serve again.

**B. Election:** Eligible men must be 21 years old and have been a member in good standing of Gourd Springs Baptist Church for at least one year. Members of the church shall be given opportunity to submit names of prospective Deacons to the active Deacon body by the specified ending date. The prospective Deacons that have received the most nominations, according to the vacancies, will be selected.

**C. Duties:** It shall be the special responsibility of the Deacons to present Christ to the lost and minister to the spiritual needs of the members of the church. The Deacons shall assist the Pastor in his oversight of the church to ensure that the purposes and articles of faith contained in these Bylaws are maintained. The active serving Deacons shall, meeting and acting together, constitute the Deacon body of Gourd Springs Baptist Church.

**SECTION 5: Clerk:** The clerk shall be elected annually upon recommendation of the nominating committee. It shall be his/her responsibility to attend, or be represented, at all church business meetings, to keep an accurate record of all business transactions, to prepare annual associational letter and to see that it is properly transmitted to the associational clerk. The clerk shall; issue letters of dismission, preserve all papers, valuable records and letters that belong to the church, and preserve a true history of the church. It shall be the duty of the clerk to see that an accurate roll of the church membership is kept, the dates and methods of a dismission, change in name, correct mailing addresses and other pertinent information about each member.

**SECTION 6. Treasurer:** The church shall elect a treasurer annually. It shall be the duty of the treasurer, or his/her designee, to receive, keep in bank and disburse by check, upon proper authorization all money or things of value that are given to the church in accordance with instructions from the church. The treasurer shall keep at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements; rendering an account regularly to the church to be preserved by the church clerk. All books, records, and accounts kept by him/her shall be the property of the church. The treasurer shall be a member of the budget and finance committee.

**SECTION 7. Assistant Treasurer:** The assistant treasurer, in the absence of the treasurer, shall have the same responsibilities of the treasurer.

## **ARTICLE IV COMMITTEES**

**SECTION 1. Standing Committees:** The church shall have at all times the following standing committees: Nominating Committee, Budget and Finance Committee, Building, Grounds and Equipment Committee, Baptism, Lords Supper, Benevolence, Flowers, Hospitality and Fellowship, Ushers, Association Executive, Cemetery, Constitution Committee and any additional committees deemed necessary for the proper function of the church.

### **A. Nominating Committee:**

- 1.) Five-member committee recommended by the Deacon body and elected by the church at the March quarterly business conference.
- 2.) It shall be the responsibility of this committee to present nominations for officers, teachers, and committees at the June quarterly business conference.
- 3.) Throughout the year this committee shall have the responsibility of nominating all church and organizational officers, not otherwise designated, to serve in the various capacities and positions of the church and its organizations, and on standing committees; vacated by removal, death, expiration of term of office or failure to function.

### **B. Budget & Finance Committee:**

- 1.) Composed of the treasurer and four active members elected by the church.
- 2.) Responsible for preparing and submitting a proposed budget to the church at least 10 days before the budget is to be voted on by ballot at the December quarterly conference. A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the finance committee. In the event that the budget is not agreed upon, the church will revert back to the previous year's budget until a new budget is agreed upon.

### **C. Counting Committee**

- 1.) Composed of the Deacons and finance committee.
- 2.) Open all envelopes, count and deposit all money in the bank and give empty envelopes to the financial secretary for record.

**D. Buildings, Grounds, & Equipment Committee:**

- 1.) Maintain buildings, equipment, and appearance of all church property, making such repairs and improvements as deemed necessary by the committee.
- 2.) Obtain church approval on all disbursements over \$1,000.00, with the exception of emergencies as deemed by the chairman of Deacons and chairman of the finance committee.

**E. Baptismal Committee:**

- 1.) Composed of the active body of Deacons and their wives.

**F. Lord's Supper Committee:**

- 1.) Composed of the active body of Deacons and their wives, whose duty shall be to prepare for the observance of the Lord's Supper.

**G. Bereavement Committee:**

- 1.) The Bereavement Ministry consists of the Pastor, the Bereavement Ministry Director, the Deacon Ministry, the Prayer Director, the Cemetery Committee Director, the Music Ministry Director, The Media Committee Director, the Flower Coordinator, the Hospitality & Fellowship Director, as well as the Church Secretary and the Social Media Coordinator.
- 2.) When a death occurs in our church family, the Pastor will notify the Bereavement Ministry Director to put in motion our care plan and reach out to directors to support the arrangements.
- 3.) When a death occurs of a nonmember and the funeral will take place at GSBC, the Bereavement Ministry Director will reach out to directors to support the arrangements.

**H. Hospitality & Fellowship Committee:**

- 1.) Purchase supplies pertaining to social fellowship activities.
- 2.) This committee shall be responsible for coordinating all social activities of the church.

### **I. Usher Committee:**

- 1.) Greet all members and visitors of the church and to assure that proper seating is available.
- 2.) Receive the offering of the church and turn it over to the counting committee.
- 3.) Arrange offering plates, put the communion table and pulpit furniture in order.
- 4.) Make sure all doors are unlocked and all lights are turned on before service and everything is locked and secured after the service.
- 5.) Direct visitors to the proper classrooms and an accurate count of members at each service.

### **J. Associational Executive Committee:**

- 1.) Composed of the Pastor and the chairman of Deacons, whose duty it is to represent the church at the executive meeting of the Little River Baptist Association.

**K. Cemetery Committee:** This committee shall initiate and maintain plots of the cemetery. The plot map shall be in the possession of the committee and one shall be at the church.

- 1.) Be responsible for the laying off of all graves.
- 2.) Make all decisions concerning who shall be buried in the cemetery, utilizing the rules and by-laws set forth in the constitution.
- 3.) Members are elected to serve until removal by death, movement of church membership, or at the request of the member.
- 4.) Responsible for directing the family and the funeral director to the proper plot prior to the digging of any grave.

#### **5.) Cemetery Guidelines**

- a. Only flat head stones, which can be mowed over, can be used.
- b. There is a \$50 donation, per plot, for church members, not to exceed two extra plots.
- c. There is a \$350 donation, per plot, for non-active members.

d. Money donated will go into a separate savings account for expenses and upkeep of cemetery. Money to be used at the discretion of the cemetery committee.

e. Before plots can be guaranteed, 100% of the donations must be donated.

f. There shall be no equipment, except small lawnmowers, used on cemetery grounds without prior approval of cemetery committee.

g. The funeral home is solely responsible for all grave openings and closings.

h. Prior to any burial, grave must be laid out by member of cemetery committee with funeral home representative.

i. No permanent plants, trees, or fences of any type can be placed in the cemetery, without full consent of the cemetery committee.

j. Once floral arrangements become damaged or no longer attractive, the cemetery committee will contact the responsible person to remove it. If it is not removed within five days of notification, the committee will remove it.

k. All graves are required to have vaults of minimum standards to prevent cave-ins. Exceptions will be made by cemetery committee and the chairman of Deacons.

l. In the event of a death, where plot has not been guaranteed, the cemetery committee will assume responsibility of burial location.

m. Gourd Springs Baptist Church assumes no responsibility for accidents, vandalism, or any other acts of malicious intent to plots, below or above the ground.

**L. Church Council:**

1.) Consist of Deacon Representative, ministry leaders, and all department directors.

2.) Meet bi-monthly to ensure the church calendar is up to date with current church events.

**M. Trustees:**

- 1.) Proposed by the Deacon body and elected by the church.
- 2.) Members are elected to serve until removal by death, movement of church membership, or at the request of the member.
- 3.) There shall be three trustees who are to hold title to all church property for the benefit of those members of the church who adhere and submit to the regular order of the church and who follow the established usages, customs, doctrines, practices, and organization of the church.
- 4.) Shall execute all contracts, deeds, mortgages, or other instruments when authorized to do so by the church in conference.

**N. Constitution Committee:**

- 1.) Responsible for reviewing and revising the church by-laws and constitution as needed.
- 2.) Revisions will be presented and voted on by the church body.
- 3.) Composed of at least one active Deacon and a minimum of 2 other members.

**SECTION 2. Temporary and Other Committees:** The Deacon body may elect, at any time, committees as deemed necessary.

## **ARTICLE V LICENSE AND ORDINATION**

**SECTION 1. License:** Any member of the church who, in the judgment of the church, gives evidence that he is of God to the work of ministry, may be given license to preach the gospel upon the recommendation of the Pastor and Deacons, provided three-fourths of the members at any regular church business meeting approved the action. It is understood that the performance of civil duties by the member shall be governed by state law.

**SECTION 2. Ordination:** In the event this church has been requested to ordain a member who has been called as a Pastor of a Baptist church, it shall, upon the recommendation of the Pastor and Deacons, express its approval provided three-fourths of those present at any regular church business meeting cast favorable votes. The church shall then call a council of local Baptist ministers and Deacons to examine the candidate and report back to the church (Associational Council on Ordination may be used if one exists). If the report of the council is favorable, the church shall proceed with the ordination.



## **ARTICLE VI FINANCES**

**SECTION 1. Budget:** The church budget year will run from January 1<sup>st</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup>.

**SECTION 2. Accounting Procedures:** All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the designated persons, and be properly recorded on the books of the church.

**SECTION 3. Expenditures and Receipts of Funds:**

**A.** No funds shall be disbursed without the express authorization of the church as provided in the budget or separate authorization. A purchase order must be submitted and approved by the finance committee chairman, treasurer, or chairman of the deacons prior to any purchases made. Exceptions for emergency situations may be made. A receipt must accompany the approved purchase order for the disbursement to be taken out of the budgeted line item or separate authorization.

**SECTION 4. Audit:** The finance committee shall arrange an annual audit of a type and nature they deem appropriate of the church's financial records.

## **ARTICLE VII CHURCH STAFF**

The church may employ such staff as it deems appropriate to its mission. For all such persons, the church shall establish a job description, means of supervision, appropriate applicable personnel policies, and the means of selection and termination if not covered below.

**SECTION 1. Ministerial Staff Other Than the Pastor:** The ministerial staff other than the Pastor shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for such offices. Those staff members of whom the church requires evidence of a personal call of God to minister shall be recommended to the church by the Pastor and Deacon body. Only one name shall be presented, and no nomination shall be made except that of the Deacon body. Election shall be by ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present being necessary for a choice. Should the person recommended by the committee fail to receive a three-fourths vote, the meeting shall be adjourned without debate.

**SECTION 2. Non-ministerial Staff:** Non-ministerial staff members shall be employed as needed. All staff members shall be an active member of Gourd Springs Baptist Church, exceptions may be considered by the Deacon body and the Pastor. Such employment and termination of services shall be with the recommendation of the supervising staff member.

## **ARTICLE VIII AMENDMENTS**

These by-laws may be amended, altered or repealed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at any regular business meeting of the church. Such amendment or repeal, shall have been given to the Clerk in writing and the proposed change shall have been presented to the church at least 10 days prior to the time the vote is taken. A copy of these by-laws shall be available for all members of the church, and kept at the church office and by the clerk.

**\*\* This document supersedes all other versions,  
and becomes effective December 2, 2020\*\***