

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

For Athena Baptist Church
Revised 2011

Constitution

Preamble

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

ARTICLE I

Name

This body shall be known as the Athena Baptist Church. It was established in 1895 and incorporated on May 16, 1973, document number 729683 according to the laws of the State of Florida governing religious bodies as the **ATHENA MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH OF PERRY, FLORIDA, INCORPORATED**. Hereafter in this document this body will be referred to as “the church.”

ARTICLE II

Affiliation

The church shall be affiliated with the Taylor Baptist Association or another one of its choice which is affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and shall co-operate to the fullest extent possible. This affiliation shall continue as originally subscribed to by the church at the time of constitution.

The church further agrees that all property shall be held forever in the ownership of those who remain loyal to this stated position at the time of this constitution, these loyalties being in the fellowship of Southern Baptist Convention of churches. Be it understood that these shall hold all properties even if they be a minority.

ARTICLE III

Purpose

The purpose of Athena Baptist Church is to bring people to Jesus and into His fellowship, nurturing and equipping them for the glory of God.

This will be accomplished by carrying out the great commission of our risen Lord as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. Specifically in the local community to seek to win to Christ as many as possible, to baptize them and to provide through regular services ample opportunity for Christian development. To

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share in the same purpose and support of the world mission program of the Florida Baptist Convention, the Taylor Baptist Association, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE IV

Doctrine

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God and the basis for our beliefs. This church subscribes to the current doctrinal statement of “The Baptist Faith and Message” as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 (see Appendix). This is not the binding creed, but a statement of belief to which the church subscribes.

ARTICLE V

Conduct

The church recognizes only the Bible as authority in matters of Christian conduct. As a practical statement of Christian ethics by which the church shall expect its members to abide, the church recognizes the Church Covenant:

Having been led as we believe by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and 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 worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; 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 secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; 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 use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior. We further engage to watch over one

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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 move 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.

ARTICLE VI

Government

The government of the church, in accordance with the historical Baptist position, shall be congregational in form. All matters are to be decided democratically by majority vote of all members eligible to vote in a regular or special called business session of the church. The church recognizes the most current "Roberts Rules of Order" publication for all parliamentary procedures.

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ARTICLE I

Church Membership

Section I – General

This is an autonomous and democratic 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 temporal life of this church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

Section II – Method of Receiving Members

1. Members may be received by baptism upon a public profession of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.
2. Members may be received by letter from a sister Baptist church of like faith and practice, generally considered to be a SBC church. In the event of question, the Pastor and/or Deacons shall bring recommendations for special action.
3. Members may be received by statement. Which shall include their belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and subsequent baptism by immersion.
4. All prospective members shall be formally received after counsel and recommendation by the Pastor and/or Deacons of the church.
5. All New Members are expected to participate in the church's New Member Class.

Section III – Membership Classification and Rights

1. A member is classified as an active member if he or she attends the church at least 12 times per year and supports the church through financial gifts to the general fund of the church. Each active member is equally entitled to all blessings and benefits of the church and is equally entitled to vote on all matters pertaining to the church.
2. A member is classified as an inactive member if he or she fails to attend at least 12 times per year (unless providentially hindered,) and does not support the church through financial gifts to the general fund of the church. Each inactive member is equally entitled to all blessings and benefits of the church, but is not entitled to vote on any and all matters pertaining to the church.
3. Every reasonable effort to restore such a member to full fellowship shall be communicated through writing and/or by visitation by the pastor and deacons. If this action does not produce any favorable results of the person being restored back to full fellowship (active member status) over a period of time not to exceed 1 year.

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4. Pastor, staff member(s), and/or Deacons will submit to the church at the first regular business meeting of the church year a report of such that should be transferred to the Inactive roll. Transfer to Inactive Membership shall be made by the church clerk when directed by the church. The clerk shall notify the member by letter of such action.

Section IV – Duties of Church Members

1. Each member is expected to support the church financially through tithes and offerings, to be regular in church attendance at regular and special services.
2. Each member shall be expected to subscribe to the doctrinal position of the church and to abide by the principles of the Church Covenant.

Section V – Rights of Members

1. Each active member is equally entitled to all blessings and benefits of the church
2. Each active member is equally entitled to vote on all matters pertaining to the church

Section VI – Discipline of Members

1. Each member is subject to disciplinary action of the church in the event of doctrinal or moral default. All disciplinary cases are to be handled in a Christian manner after the Scriptural pattern:

Matthew 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. ¹⁶But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ¹⁷And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Romans 16:17-18 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. ¹⁸For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

1 Tim. 6:3-5 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ⁴He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, ⁵Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

2 Thes. 3:6-15 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh

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disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. ⁷For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; ⁸Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: ⁹Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. ¹¹For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. ¹²Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. ¹³But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. ¹⁴And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

2. Due opportunity shall be given the person to make apology and/or amends before dismissal.
3. The church shall always be ready to reinstate a former member upon his or her repentance and apology before the church.

Section VII – Termination of Members

1. Membership shall be terminated by death automatically, by discipline under provisions of the Bylaws Article I, Section 4, or by transfer of letter.
2. Any member who fails to attend or support the services of the church less than twelve (12) times in a year (unless providentially hindered) shall be transferred to the Inactive Membership Roll. Every reasonable effort to restore such a member to full fellowship shall be made in writing and/or by visitation by the Pastor and/or Deacons. Transfer to Inactive Membership shall be made by the church clerk when directed by the church. The clerk shall notify the member by letter of such action within 15 days of the transfer. The letter shall include the wording of this by-law section.
3. A member who has been placed on the Inactive Roll shall not be given a letter of recommendation as being in good standing nor shall he be given the privilege of voting in any business meeting of the church. However, any member on the Inactive Roll shall be granted a letter. The church requesting the letter shall be advised of the date that the member was placed on our Inactive Roll.
4. Any member who has been placed on the Inactive Roll shall upon request be restored to the active roll by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of

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the church in a regular monthly business meeting, upon evidence of his/her repentance and reformation.

ARTICLE II

General Officers of the Church

All who serve as officers of the church and those who serve on committees shall be members in good standing with the church. The officers of this church shall include, but not limited to:

1. Pastor
2. Deacons
3. Clerk
4. Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer
5. Trustees
6. Church staff

Section I – Pastor

Purpose: To lead the church in spiritual growth by giving personal direction to its total ministry, working through all duly constituted officers and committees in promotion of the church program. (See the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* for responsibilities and duties)

Section II – Deacons

Purpose: To support the total church program and to assist the Pastor in his spiritual ministry to the congregation and in all matters of concern to the total life of the church. (See the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* for responsibilities and duties).

Section III – Clerk

Purpose: The church clerk records and maintains thorough and complete records of the church business carried on during regular monthly business meetings and special called business meetings. (See the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* for job description and duties).

Section IV – Treasurer

Purpose: The church treasurer disburses monies received by the church through the direction of the church body. (See the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* for job description and duties).

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Section IV-a – Assistant Treasurer

Purpose: The church assistant treasurer receives all monies from the counting committee and makes deposits to the bank.

Section V – Trustees (Corporate Officers)

Purpose: The Trustees serve as legal representatives in all transactions related to the church. They hold title to the church property and they sign all documents related to the purchase, sale, mortgaging, or rental of church property after approval by the church in regular business session. Trustees should act only on the direction and authority of the church. Trustees shall be elected by the church annually and serve a three year term. (See the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* for job description and duties).

Section VI – Church Staff

Purpose: The church shall employ church staff as necessary to carry out the mission of the church. (See the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* for job description and duties).

ARTICLE III

Church Activities

Section 1 – Committees

1. All church committees are outlined in the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual*.
2. Committees will be formed to meet the ongoing and present needs of the church as directed by the church.
3. *Ad hoc* committees are outlined in the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual*.
4. Each committee shall select a chairperson to lead the committee and a secretary to record the business of the committee.

Section II – Organizations

1. The church shall maintain organizations for the purpose of Bible teaching, church member training, discipleship training, missions emphasis, etc. for the enrichment and growth of the church.
2. These organizations are outlined in the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual*.
3. These organizations shall conform as much as possible to that recommended by the Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

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4. These organizations shall use literature published by or distributed through the Southern Baptist Convention, i.e. Lifeway Christian Resources (an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention) or promoted through the Florida Baptist Convention if at all possible.

Section III – Church Meetings

A. Worship Services

1. The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening for the worship of Almighty God.
2. Prayer, praise, singing, preaching, instruction and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services.
3. The pastor shall direct the services for all the church members and for all others who may choose to attend.
4. The church may decide, at its discretion, to cancel a service or move a service to another location.

B. Regular Business Meetings

1. The regular business meeting shall be held quarterly as directed by the church during or after an evening service on the second Sunday of each quarter (March, June, September, December).
2. The church may elect to have monthly business meetings held on the second Sunday of each month if necessary.
3. The quorum consists of those members who attend the business meeting.
4. The pastor will have the authority to move the meeting to another Sunday evening if necessary.
5. *Roberts Rules of Order* will be used for all parliamentary procedures.
6. Minutes will be kept by the church clerk or assistant clerk in the clerk's absence. If both are absent a person designated by the church body at the beginning of the meeting.
7. The following is a suggested order of business:
 - Call to order / Prayer
 - Reading of minutes or previous meeting or stated purpose for special called meetings.
 - Treasures report
 - Unfinished business
 - Department reports
 - Special committee reports
 - Granting of letters/Receiving of letters and Discipline matters

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- New Business
- Adjournment

C. Special Called Business Meetings

1. The church may conduct a special called business meeting to consider a matter of a special nature and significance, such as, calling a pastor, electing deacons, etc.
2. Announcement of the special called meeting and its purpose is to be stated from the pulpit during three regular scheduled services before the scheduled special called meeting. This announcement constitutes “Due Notice.”
3. The quorum consists of those members who attend the special called business meeting, provided “Due Notice” has been given.

D. Special Meetings

1. The church shall sponsor such special services and meetings as it desires, such as revivals, study courses, etc.
2. Associational meetings shall be held at the church with prior approval of the church at a regular scheduled business meeting.

Section IV – Church Ordinances

A. Baptism: The church shall receive for baptism any person who has received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

1. Baptism shall be by immersion in water
2. The pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism.
3. Baptism is an act of worship and shall be conducted reverently.

B. The Lord’s Supper: The church shall observe the Lord’s Supper quarterly, unless otherwise scheduled by the church.

1. The observance shall be administered by the pastor and the deacons.
2. The Lord’s Supper shall be offered to any believer in Christ as their Lord and Savior who is present during the observance of the Lord’s Supper.

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ARTICLE IV

General Policies

Section I – Use of Property

1. All facilities of the church shall not be considered exclusive property of any one group, but shall be used freely at different times by any and all functions of the church.
2. The church shall employ at its discretion a person(s) for custodial duties.

Section II – Church Finances

1. Proper accounting procedures for receiving monies during Sunday services or revival services during the week shall be followed by the counting committee.
2. A yearly budget shall be prepared and presented to the church during or before the December business meeting.
3. All tithes and offerings shall be recorded and a yearly report given to each contributing member no later than the last Sunday in January for the previous year.
4. Financial reports shall be prepared and made available to church members at the regular business meeting.
5. These procedures are outlined in detail in the *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual*.

Section III – Church Policies and Procedures Manual

1. The *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* shall contain the duties and responsibilities of each committee and organizational leaders authorized by the church.
2. The *Athena Baptist Policies and Procedures Manual* shall be reviewed by the church council each year.
3. Any additions, revisions or deletions of church policies require:
 - (1) Recommendation of the church officer or organization to whose areas of assignment the policy relates.
 - (2) Discussion and approval by the church council.
4. Procedures may be added, revised, or deleted by:
 - (1) Recommendation of the church officer or organization to whose areas of assignment the policy relates.
 - (2) Discussion and approval by the church council

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Section IV – Amendments

1. Changes in the constitution and bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting.
2. Amendments to the constitution and bylaws shall be by a 75% vote of church members present.

This Constitution and By-laws of the Athena Baptist Church have been duly approved by the members present on December 4, 2011.

Constitution and Bylaw Committee
Rev. David McMullen
Judy McMullen
Helen Houck