

**CONSTITUTION OF NANSEMOND RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH OF SUFFOLK,  
VIRGINIA APPROVED ON DECEMBER 14, 2008**

**PREAMBLE**

This Constitution replaces and supersedes any and all prior Constitutions of the Nansemond River Baptist Church.

We, the members of the Nansemond River Baptist Church of Suffolk, Virginia, do ordain and establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves.

**ARTICLE I: Name**

The name of this church shall be known as “Nansemond River Baptist Church,” hereafter referred to as the “Church.”

**ARTICLE II: Purpose**

This Church is a nonprofit ecclesiastical corporation organized and operated exclusively for the purpose of glorifying the God of the Scriptures in promoting His worship, by exalting the Son, equipping the saints, and evangelizing sinners. To this end we are committed to proclaiming the whole counsel of God, especially His glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world and to defending the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3, NKJV)

**ARTICLE III: Articles of Faith**

As a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Articles of Faith of this Church shall be the same as that of *The Baptist Faith and Message* adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention June 14, 2000, or as amended.<sup>1</sup>

**ARTICLE IV: Church Polity**

Ultimate authority lies in Christ as the head of the Church and in the Scripture as the basis for all faith and practice. This Church shall remain free and self-governing. The government is vested in its membership and administered by its officers. In function, final authority shall reside in the membership as led by the Holy Spirit. They shall approve and/or affirm Biblically qualified leadership, to carry out Christ's purposes.

**ARTICLE V: Membership**

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized upon profession of their faith, and who has read and expresses agreement with the Church Covenant and the Constitution of this Church shall be eligible for membership.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Faith and Message* states, “Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.” We understand “pastors” and “elders” are synonymous.

**ARTICLE VI: Officers**

The officers of this Church shall be Elders and Deacons.

**ARTICLE VII: Administrative Positions**

The administrative positions under this Constitution are Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

**ARTICLE VIII: Affiliation**

- A. Believing that the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and the Southern Baptist Convention are in harmony and in the spirit of the Constitution and Articles of Faith of this Church, we agree to participate in these organizations.
- B. This Church may withdraw from affiliation with (both) the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and/or the Southern Baptist Convention but only when three-fourths of the total Church membership is present in a specially arranged business meeting called for that purpose and provided that the motion to withdraw from affiliation is carried by at least 90 percent vote. This vote shall be taken by written ballot.

**ARTICLE IX: Property Holding**

- A. The securing and maintaining of real property, buildings and equipment of this Church shall be for the express purpose of providing facilities for public worship and for the engagement of the missionary, educational, benevolent and social interests of this Church. These purposes shall be carried out in the spirit and character of this Constitution.
- B. In the event the Church should ever vote to withdraw from affiliation with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and/or the Southern Baptist Convention, the property of the Church shall remain vested in the group in the Church desiring to retain its affiliation with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and/or the Southern Baptist Convention provided this group constitutes at least twenty-five percent of the total resident membership and notarized letters of intent are submitted by the twenty-five percent of resident membership wishing to remain affiliated.

**ARTICLE X: Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any business meeting when proposed amendments have been presented to the membership in writing and posted for at least one month prior to the business meeting and have been announced from the pulpit at worship services at least two successive Sundays prior to the vote. A two-thirds majority of members present is required for passage.

**BY-LAWS**  
**Amended February 27, 2011**

These By-Laws replace and supersede any and all prior By-Laws of the Nansemond River Baptist Church, hereafter referred to as the “Church.”

**A. Membership**

Section 1 - Qualifications

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized upon profession of his faith, and who has read and expresses agreement with the Church Covenant and the Constitution of this Church shall be eligible for membership.

Section 2 - Admission of Members

The Elders shall be responsible for determining each person’s qualification for membership. Before acceptance into Church covenant membership the applicant shall attend a New Members Class in order that the Elders may ascertain his or her Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and serious intent to wholeheartedly support the total ministry of this Church.

To be admitted into Church covenant membership, applicants shall be presented by the Elders for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular Sunday worship service. The congregation shall then receive the applicant into membership by a three-fourths majority vote.

Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the Church, consistent with God’s leading and with the gifts, time and material resources each has received from God. Only those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the Church; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the Elders. However, non-members may serve the Church for purposes of support and professional consultation.

It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members’ meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote. All persons who are accepted as members, shall be entitled to vote in person (but not by proxy) provided the member is 16 years of age or older.

Section 4 - On Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored and so opposing the welfare of the Church, shall be subject to the admonition of the Elders and the discipline of the Church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline, then, should only be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

Membership may be terminated as an act of Church discipline at the recommendation of the Elders by a three-fourths majority vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members.

A member who willfully, without good reason, absents himself or herself from Sunday services for more than a year may be removed from the rolls of the Church at the annual members meeting.

## **B. Church Polity**

### Section 1 - Membership

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the membership of the Church is the final authority within this local Church. This authority is exercised through the election of officers to govern the Church. However, the vote of the membership of this Church at a properly called meeting, as provided in this Constitution, shall be required to effect the following actions:

- a) Accept members into the Church,
- b) Elect officers of the Church,
- c) Discipline members by dismissing them and discipline officers by removing them from office,
- d) Approve annual budgets of the Church, authorize any expenditure of the funds of the Church when such expenditure is not covered by an approved budget and approve any transactions regarding real property,
- e) Accept, reject or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the Church by the Council of Elders or raised by motion at a members meeting,
- f) Adopt, amend or repeal the Constitution of this Church,
- g) Approve the call, job description and initial salary of Vocational Pastors and Ministers,
- h) Affiliate or discontinue affiliation with any denomination, convention or association.

### Section 2 - Church Offices

The offices of the Church shall be Elder and Deacon.

### Section 3 - Elders

The leadership of the Church shall be vested in the ordained Elders, who are responsible for governing the Church, teaching the Word and tending the flock of God in this Church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. A Council of Elders shall be selected by the body of Elders to perform the duties as provided in **D.** Section 2 of these By-Laws.

The Council of Elders of this Church shall recommend to the members no less than three Elders to serve as a board of directors. The board of directors shall be called upon to perform the legal and business transactions specifically designated to them by the Laws of the Commonwealth. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the Council of the Elders and of the Church.

## Section 4 - Deacons

To ensure that the Elders are able to focus their primary attention on the ministry of the Word, prayer, and oversight of the Church, Deacons shall receive ministry task assignments from the Elders. These tasks will concentrate on meeting the practical needs of the fellowship.

### **C. Meetings**

#### Section 1 - Worship Meetings

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day and may be held throughout the week as the Elders determine.

#### Section 2 - Members' Meetings

In every meeting together, members shall act in a spirit of mutual trust, openness and loving consideration, which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The designated secretary of the Council of Elders shall determine if the requirements of a quorum are met for all members' meetings.

##### Annual Members' Meeting

There shall be an annual members' meeting, at which officers are elected, and a budget approved by the membership, no more than three nor less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year. The fiscal year will commence on January 1. For the annual members' meeting a quorum shall consist of 10% of the eligible voting Church members and the Elders shall present a meeting agenda to be approved at the start of the meeting.

##### Quarterly Members' Meetings

There shall be quarterly members' meetings. For these meetings a quorum shall consist of 5% of the eligible voting Church members and the Elders shall present a meeting agenda to be approved at the start of the meeting.

##### Special Members' Meeting

Special members' meetings may be called as required by the Council of the Elders. Any member, ministry team, or committee may bring a request to the Elders to call a special members' meeting. In the event that the two parties are not able to come to agreement on the need for a special members' meeting the requesting party may submit a written request, with the signatures of any 10% of the voting members, to the Elders. Two-thirds of the petitioning members must meet with the Council of the Elders in person to discuss the purpose of the request before the special meeting is called. The date, time and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the Church beginning at least two weeks prior to the meeting. For special meetings and all other non-annual members' meetings other than a meeting held for the purpose of amending the Constitution or Bylaws, or changing the Church's affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, a quorum shall consist of 5% of the eligible voting Church members and the Elders shall present a meeting agenda to be approved at the start of the meeting.

A special members' meeting held for the purpose of changing the Church's affiliation with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and/or the Southern Baptist Convention requires a

30% quorum of the eligible voting Church members. Special members' meetings held for the purpose of amending the Constitution or Bylaws shall require a quorum consisting of 10% of the eligible voting Church members. A two-thirds majority vote will be required for passage.

An Elder designated by the Council of the Elders shall preside as moderator at all members meetings of the Church. In the absence or incapacity of the moderator, these duties shall be performed by another Elder designated by the Council of the Elders. The Elders shall see that the stated meetings of the Church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the Church by the responsible members or ministry team leaders.

Meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, unless this Constitution specifies otherwise.

## **D. Officers**

### Section 1 - Summary

The Biblical officers in the Church are Elders and Deacons. The Corporate Officers of the Corporation shall be the President, Secretary and Treasurer.

### Section 2 - Elders

The Elders shall be comprised of men, called by God, who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

The Church shall elect Elders, gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with E.2. of these By-Laws. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church.

Elders may be identified as vocational (in the regular pay of the Church) and non-vocational (non-paid).

An Elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members of the Church (1 Timothy 5:19) with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the Council of the Elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and In Timothy 5:17-21. Any of the Elders may be dismissed by a three-fourths majority vote of the members at any members' meeting of the Church.

The Council of Elders will be responsible for oversight of the ministry and resources of the Church. A majority of the Council shall be composed of Church members not in the regular pay of the Church, and no Elder shall hold the office of Deacon.

The Council of Elders shall take responsibility to perform the following functions:

- a) Examine and instruct prospective members
- b) Oversee the work of the Deacons and appointed Church administrative positions and ministry teams
- c) Oversee worship services
- d) Administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper

- e) Equip the membership for the work of the ministry
- f) Encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error
- g) Oversee the process of Church discipline
- h) Approve membership letters of transfer
- i) Coordinate and promote the ministries of the Church
- j) Mobilize the Church for world missions
- k) Ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The Council of Elders shall have the authority to create and assign committees, ministry teams and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibility. The Council may also delegate to the Deacons the authority to appoint Deacons or other members of the Church to serve as members of such committees and ministry teams. Every committee and ministry team shall have a chairperson responsible for the overall operation of the committee and ministry team, who shall be appointed by the Council. The Council may delegate the responsibility for selecting the chairperson to the Deacons or to the committee and ministry team. The Council may also delegate to the Deacons the responsibility of developing and maintaining written procedures that govern these committees and ministry teams. The Council shall have the authority to dissolve any committee, ministry team or position which it created.

The Council of Elders may also propose paid staff positions, and the Council shall present a job description for each paid position to the membership for approval. The membership may approve all candidates to fill such paid positions or may delegate this responsibility, on a position-by-position basis, to the Council, Deacons or other staff members. The Council shall examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions.

The Council shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to the Deacons or other staff members.

### Section 3 - The Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor is an Elder and shall be the Chairman of the Council of the Elders. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Section 2 above, but shall be recognized by the Church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the Constitution.

In the absence or incapacity of the Senior Pastor, the Elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

### Section 4 - Deacons

The office of Deacon is described in I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The Church shall recognize, in accordance with the Constitutional provisions on elections, men who are giving of themselves in service to the Church, who possess gifts of leadership and who are called to further service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as Deacons.

To ensure that the Elders are able to focus their primary attention on the ministry of the Word, prayer, and oversight of the Church, Deacons shall receive ministry task assignments from the Elders. These tasks will concentrate on meeting the practical needs of the fellowship.

The Deacons shall present an itemized budget of their assigned ministry task to the Council of the Elders and Church Treasurer at least two months preceding the annual members' meeting. With the approval of the Council of the Elders the proposed budget shall be presented to the Church at least one month preceding the annual members' meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote at the annual members' meeting.

The Deacons, with the agreement of the Council of the Elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or ministry teams to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the Church.

## Section 5 – Corporate Officers

The Council of Elders shall nominate the following corporate officers annually to be approved by the members of the church at its annual meeting.

President-The Corporate President shall be nominated annually by the Board of Directors and elected by the members to perform executive officer tasks as assigned by the Board of Directors in order to help the pastor oversee the day-to-day tasks of the church.

Secretary - The Corporate Secretary shall be nominated annually by the Board of Directors and elected by the members. It shall be the Secretary's duty to attend or be represented at all board meetings and church business meetings and in cooperation with the church office to keep an accurate record of all business transactions, and to notify all officers, members of committees and messengers of their election or appointment. The Secretary shall issue letters of transfer and dismissal as authorized by the church. The Secretary shall work in conjunction with any special committees to preserve all papers and all valuable letters and records that belong to the church and preserve all true history of the church. It shall also be the duty of the Secretary to see that an accurate roll of the church membership is kept with dates and methods of admission, transfer, dismissal, change in name, correct mailing addresses and other pertinent information. It is the Secretary's duty to inform any requisite committee chairman of any action taken in a business meeting concerning that committee. All records of the church Secretary are to be considered church property.

Treasurer – In addition to and as separate role from the administrative treasurer provided for in Heading F., Administrative Positions, the Corporate Treasurer shall be nominated annually by the Board of Directors and elected by the members. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to work with the designated responsible financial personnel, to receive, keep in a bank, and disburse by counter-signed check all monies or things of value that are given to the church and insure that correct procedures are followed and records maintained concerning all financial transactions (receipts and expenditures). The Treasurer shall present a monthly financial report to the church to be preserved by the church clerk. The financial records of the church should be audited by an accounting firm or certified public accountant outside of the membership of this church and as arranged by the personnel responsible for the church finances; and all books, records and accounts kept by the administrative treasurer and financial secretary shall be considered the property of the church. The Treasurer shall, upon invitation, meet with the Board and shall be an ex-officio member of the Finance and Budget committees. Upon rendering the annual account at

the end of each fiscal year and its acceptance and approval by the church, the records shall be delivered by the Treasurer to the church Secretary, who shall keep and preserve the account as a part of the permanent records of the church.

## **E. Elections**

### Section 1- Principles

The process for Church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

- a) Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process,
- b) Nominations should proceed with the support of the Elders,
- c) All candidates for Church office should be treated with the grace, kindness and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members,
- d) The election process shall express a spirit of mutual trust, openness and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Section 2 - Election of Officers

The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the Church. Names of nominees to serve as Elders and Deacons shall be presented by the Council of the Elders and made known to the Church at least one month prior to voting. The Elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process.

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the Elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders at least two weeks prior to the relevant Church members' meeting.

The moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a three-fourths majority of all votes cast for any office.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated. Elections for officers may occur during the course of the year at any special members' meeting, upon recommendation of the Elders.

### Section 3 - Calling of the Senior Pastor

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an Elder must be followed. In addition, however, the Church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential Senior Pastor, and before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Articles of Faith, Church Covenant and Constitution. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as Senior Pastor must be given at least two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a special members' meeting.

#### Section 4 - Calling of Vocational Pastor

In the calling of any man to the position of a Vocational Pastor (or vocational staff position), the same basic process of calling an Elder must be followed. In addition, however, the Church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the spiritual gifts of any potential Vocational Pastor, and before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Articles of Faith, Church Covenant and Constitution. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as a Vocational Pastor must be given at least two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a special members' meeting.

#### **F. Administrative Positions**

##### Section 1 - Summary

The administrative positions under this Constitution are Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. All persons holding these positions must be members prior to assuming their responsibilities.

The Church, upon nomination by the Council of Elders, shall elect at the annual meeting members to the positions of Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. The functions of Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall not be performed by one member. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be bonded by the Church in a suitable amount. The Elders shall provide a written description of duties to the Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

## **NRBC's CHURCH COVENANT**

(Adopted 12/14/2008 and Revised. 11/6/2011)

By the grace of God we have been led to repent of our sins (Luke 15:10) and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior (John 20:31). We have confessed our faith (Romans 10:9-10) and have been baptized as believers by immersion (Matthew 28:19). Now, therefore, in the presence of God and by His grace, we joyfully and thoughtfully enter into a holy covenant with the members of Nansemond River Baptist Church (Gen. 9:11, 15:18, 17:1-9, 21:27, 31:44, Exodus 34:10, 1 Samuel 20:16, 2 Kings 23:3, 2 Chronicles 34:31-32, Neh. 9:38, 1 Cor. 5:11-12).

We promise to walk together in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 13:34-35).

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25) but faithfully attend the Church's meetings for worship, prayer, study, and fellowship (Acts 2:42, Col. 3:16); we will use our spiritual gifts for the common good (1 Cor. 14:12; 26).

We pledge to faithfully participate in the ordinances of the Church, which are baptism (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39) and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-30, Acts 2:41-42, 1 Cor. 11:23-29). We will strive after unity in both doctrine and conduct (Phil. 1:27-28). We will both submit to the Church's discipline upon ourselves and lovingly assume our responsibility to participate in the discipline of other members, as taught in Scripture (1 Cor. 5:11-12, Matt. 18:15-18).

We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to this Church for its general ministry and expenses (2 Cor. 9:10-12), the relief of the poor (Romans 15:26), the cause of reformation and revival (2 Cor. 11:9; 8:3), and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations (Matt. 28:18-20).

We will strive by God's grace to live as ambassadors of Christ in the world (2 Cor. 5:20); and denying ungodly desires (Titus 2:12) we will seek to fulfill our calling to lead a holy life (1 Peter 1:15) and to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).

We will be just and honest in our dealings and faithful in our responsibilities and commitments (Eph. 6:10-17).

We will abide by the standards of sexual purity, integrity, and faithfulness as taught in the Bible (1 Cor. 6:18, Eph. 5:3-5).

We will reject all heretical beliefs and practices, using Scripture as our final authority (Rom. 16:25-27, 2 Tim. 3:16).

We purpose to watch over one another in brotherly love (Rom. 12:10), to remember one another in prayer (James 5:16), to help one another in sickness and distress (1 Tim. 5:10, James 1:27), and to cultivate compassion (Matt. 9:36).

Believing that the pursuit of peace with others accompanies true faith in Christ (Ps. 34:14, Rom. 14:19), we will be slow to take offense (1 Cor. 13:4-7), always eager to seek the reconciliation Christ commands (Matt. 5:23-25), and will work to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Phil. 1:27; John 17).

We resolve to practice personal and family worship, to train our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and of all the world (Deut. 6:6-9, Pro. 22:6, Matt. 28:19-20).

We promise that if, in the providence of God, we leave this Church we will diligently seek to unite with another Church where we can continue to carry out the spirit and principles of God's Word (Acts 14:26-28, Heb. 10:25, Acts 17:1-4).