

CONSTITUTION OF SOUTHWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH WOODBURY, NEW JERSEY

Preamble

In order to affirm and preserve the principles of our faith, and to guarantee that this body will be governed in an orderly and efficient manner, consistent with the accepted tenets of a Baptist church, and for the purpose of preserving with liberties inherent in each individual member of this church and other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish this constitution.

Covenant

Having been led by the Spirit of God, I have received Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, I have, according to the Scripture (John 1: 12), been born again through the Holy Spirit, and I have publicly confessed my faith in word (Romans 10:9-10) and in believer's baptism (Romans 6:3-5). I subscribe to the Statement of Belief of my church and do now enter into covenant with other members of this church as one body in Christ (I Corinthians 12: 13):

1. To walk lovingly (John 13:34-35) and humbly with my brethren (I Peter 5:6); to pray for them (1Thessalonians 1:2); to separate myself from worldliness and unchristian practices (II Corinthians 6:17).
2. To pray (James 1:5-6) for the advancement of my church in knowledge spirituality, and fruitfulness (John 15: 8,16); to uphold its program of worship, training, and teaching (Acts 2:42); to observe its ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20); 1 Corinthians 11:24-27); and affirm its doctrines (1 Peter 3:15).
3. To give regularly and willingly, as God provides, for the support of a local and worldwide ministry of evangelism, edification (II Corinthians 9:7; I Corinthians 16:2); and the relief of the needy (Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 8:3-4).
4. To serve faithfully in some activity of the church in accordance with

God's gifts to me (Romans 12:5-8), taking care to assume only such duties as can be effectively performed (I Corinthians 4:2); to improve my abilities in service by prayerful study of God's Word (II Timothy 2: 15):

5. To strengthen my family by accepting my responsibilities as given in Scripture (Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Deuteronomy 6:7); and by demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in my relationships (Galatians 5:22-23);

6. To endeavor by example (Matthew 5:16) and effort (James 2:18) to win souls to Christ (James 5:20); and to edify and exhort other believers for growth and maturity (Hebrews 10:25);

7. To follow the Holy Scripture as my rule of faith and practice (II Timothy 3: 16-17).

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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The Word of God, in its entirety, is the objective and irrefutable standard and basis of this church and is summarized in the following:

1. We believe that the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, is the verbally inspired Word of God, is inerrant in the original writings, and should be upheld as the supreme and final authority in faith and life. (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 14:37);

2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. (Deuteronomy 6:4; I Chronicles 29:11-12; Matthew 28:19; Genesis 11:5-7);

3. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of

the Virgin Mary, and is the true God-man. (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35; John 1:1,2,14; John 12:45; 14:9; 1 Timothy 2:5);

4. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person possessing all the attributes of personality and of deity, by whom believers are called, regenerated, baptized into Christ, indwelt, sealed, and filled for service; and that the distinction between the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and now in the New Testament dispensation must be recognized. i.e. there is a new and unique work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the body of Christ for which there is no Old Testament parallel. (John 16:8-11; 3:3-8; 14:26; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:13);

5. We believe in the personal existence of angels, demons and Satan; that Satan is the unholy god of this age and the author of all the powers of darkness, and is destined to the Judgment of eternal punishment in the lake of fire. (Matthew 22:30; 4:1-11; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 20:7-10; Genesis 3:1-5; cf. Revelation 20:2);

6. We believe in the direct creation of the universe and man by God, according to the Genesis account of creation and apart from any process of evolution. (Genesis 1 & 2).

7. We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death, which is separation from God, and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature. (Romans 5:12-21);

8. We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace through the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins according to the Scripture as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood and are in possession of a salvation which is eternally secure. (Ephesians 2:8-9; II Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 7:25);

9. We believe that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is a supernatural work wrought by the Holy Spirit through the gospel as revealed in the Bible, and that thereby all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ become children of God. (John 3:3-16; John 1: 12); .

10. We believe in the universal, spiritual priesthood of believers; that is, all true believers are priests and have the privilege of approaching God

through Christ, and of interpreting the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit. (I Timothy 2:5, I John 2:27, Revelation 1:6);

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11 We believe in the unity of all true believers in the Church which is the body of Christ, and that this is a distinctively New Testament organism not to be confounded with the saved in the Old Testament. We believe in the local church as a company of believers associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, independent and self-governing, which would fellowship with other churches of like faith and order. It is the responsibility of the local church to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, edify itself, and evangelize the world. (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27; Acts 2:42, 46-47; Matthew 28:19-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 8:36-39);

12. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried, risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; and that it is a prerequisite for church membership. We believe that the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of His death until He comes, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. (Romans 6:3-4; I Corinthians 11:23-33; Acts 10:47-48);

13. We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into Heaven, and in His present life there for us as High Priest and Advocate. (I Corinthians 15:4; Acts 1:8-11; Hebrews 4: 14-16; I John 2:1-2);

14. We believe in "that blessed hope" -- which is the catching up of all believers at Christ's imminent return, and that this event will be followed by the personal and visible (bodily) return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to this earth, where He will reign. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Revelation 20:1-15);

15. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust; the everlasting blessedness of the saved in full enjoyment of God's presence in Heaven, and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost in Hell, eternally separated from God. (1 Corinthians 15:20-24; Revelation 20: 12-15; II Corinthians 5:8).

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ARTICLE I - NAME

The official name of this church shall be Southwood Baptist Church. It was incorporated in May, 1958, as a non-profit corporation in the state of New Jersey. This church is affiliated with the state and national associations and supports the missionary ministries of Conservative Baptists.

ARTICLE II - - OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this local church shall be:

1. To proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and lead people to faith in Him as Savior and Lord.

2. To promote the preaching and teaching of the Bible for the purpose of the maturing of the saints.
3. To express worship unto the triune God, and fellowship among His children.
4. To minister in the community as an example of Christian compassion and care for personal and family needs.
5. To extend the outreach of the gospel in missionary endeavor.

ARTICLE III - AUTHORITY

This local church is a self-governing body, organizationally independent of all other churches. Agreements with the covenant and doctrinal statement constitutes the basis of cooperative service among members. This body may cooperate with other churches of similar faith for the purpose of attaining its objectives. The congregational form of government is the basis of operation of this church. The membership invests elected officers with the responsibility of leadership in order to implement the objectives of the church. However, all policies of teaching and practice are ultimately controlled by the collective membership of the church to which individual members agree to be submissive.

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

The leadership of the church shall be delegated to elders and deacons, elected by the congregation, working together in accordance with their designed responsibilities (Philippians 1: 1).

Section 1. Pastor and Elders

The elders shall be responsible, under Christ, to oversee matters in the church (John 21:16; Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28). The congregation shall seek to maintain a plurality of elders (Philippians 1: 1; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17) who shall be teachers of biblical truth, shepherds in the care of members of the local body of believers, and examples by conduct in the home, church, and community (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-3).

There shall be a minimum of four elders if qualified members are available (see Section 4). They shall be male, elected by the

congregation for a three year term. After serving two full, consecutive terms, the elder may not be eligible for reelection until one year has elapsed.

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The Pastor shall be an elder and serve as the chairman of the elders (Ephesians 4: 11). He shall be called for an indefinite term of service (see Section 4, paragraph 2). If a multiple pastoral staff is called, the general pastor shall serve as "senior pastor" and other pastoral staff members shall report to him. After five years of service, the Pastor shall prepare a written review of ministry achievements and goals for future service. This report shall be shared and evaluated with other elders and summarized before the congregation.

Each elder shall be responsible for a specific area of teaching and shepherding care. In addition to these main responsibilities, elders shall oversee the following items of congregational need: 1) recommend to the congregation areas of need to be filled by additional pastoral staff or elected officers; 2) review and approve the annual church budget before being submitted to the congregation for final action; 3) review and approve public business meeting agendas pertaining to proposals for church action; 4) maintain the discipline of the body and make recommendations at business meetings when corporate action is deemed necessary; 5) serve as agents in constitution revisions or amendments proposed to the congregation; 6) select from their number a representative to meet with stewardship deacons, ministry deacons and fellowship deacons as an ex-officio member. At the request of the other elders, an elder may serve as all ex-officio member of any other board or committee of the church; 7) prepare, approve and update job descriptions for fellow elders, deacons and appointed coworkers. In legal terms, these officers would constitute the church trustees.

Section 2. Diaconate

The diaconate shall serve in the stewardship, ministry, and fellowship areas of the church. They shall coordinate operational and functional activities (Acts 6:1-6; Romans 12:7; Philippians 1:1). They shall be examples by conduct in the home, church, and community. The diaconate shall consist of male and female members (deacons, deaconesses); (Romans 16:1-2; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). A male chairman shall be elected in each diaconate area from among their members. (1 Timothy 2: 12).

There shall be a minimum of two members of the diaconate in each area of stewardship, ministry, and fellowship if qualified members are available (see Section 4). It is not necessary that there be an equal number in each area. They shall be elected for a three year term. After serving two full consecutive terms, a deacon or deaconess may not be eligible for reelection until one year has elapsed. .

In order to facilitate the deacons' and deaconess' tasks, their responsibilities shall be subdivided as follows:

Diaconate of Stewardship - Responsibility for finances, buildings, grounds, and equipment.

Diaconate of Ministry - Responsibility for missions, evangelism, worship, and education.

Diaconate of Fellowship - Responsibility for care of the ill and needy, community needs, recreation, and social interaction

Each deacon and deaconess shall be elected in accordance with one of the three divisions of service. In addition, a further subdivision of responsibility may be desirable. Each deacon shall serve in accordance with a specific job description. This description may be self-developed and approved by the elders or it will be prepared by the elders (Acts 6: 1-6).

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Section 3. Appointed Co-Workers

Members of the diaconate shall appoint ministry directors, superintendents, committee chairman or members, church treasurer, teachers, etc. Appointees shall normally be members and all shall subscribe to the Statement of Belief and Covenant of this church. They shall be appointed for specified responsibilities and terms of service (not to exceed two years).

Section 4. Election of Officers

Two elders and two deacons shall serve as a general nominating committee. They shall be chosen by the congregation or, if deferred, elected by the respective boards. Meetings of that committee shall be posted for public notice in the narthex of the church and members may submit recommendations. Recommendations from the congregation to

the nominating committee must be submitted three Sundays prior to the scheduled meeting called for the purpose of congregational voting. The names nominated for all positions to be voted by the congregation are to be posted on the church bulletin board in the church narthex two Sundays before the scheduled meeting. All elders and deacons shall be members of the congregation, chosen by ballot at an annual meeting or special meeting identified for that purpose, and approved by a majority vote of eligible members present. They shall meet the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3: 1-13; Titus 1:6-9; I Peter 5:1-3.

Members of the congregation may vote for candidates for office via an absentee ballot when it is known that for a good reason they will not be able to be present at a regularly called business meeting. Absentee ballots may only be used to vote for candidates for a church office. Absentee ballots do not count toward the number needed for a quorum. Absentee ballots would be available in the church office two Sundays before the scheduled meeting. Absentee ballots would be assigned by name and a record of absentee ballots taken and returned.

The nominating committee, and two additional members elected by the congregation, shall serve as a pulpit committee to review and recommend persons to be considered for the office of pastor when such vacancy exists. The pulpit committee shall serve until a pastor is called or shall be replaced or reelected at the second annual meeting following their appointment. Only one candidate shall be presented for vote at anyone time. A pastor's call and call for additional pastoral staff shall include written agreement of salary, housing allowance, and benefits as well as clear designation of responsibility, duration of service, and place within the organizational leadership of the church. It must be approved by a three-fourths vote of eligible members present by ballot at a business meeting identified for that purpose.

Except for the pastor and staff, the terms of service shall begin at the meeting of election and continue until a business meeting when successors are elected, unless terminated by resignation or discipline. Elders shall be nominated when a need is seen and qualified person identified. At least two candidates for elder and diaconate shall be nominated for each vacancy, if qualified members are available. No nominations shall be made for these offices from the floor. Expiration of terms shall be spaced, if possible, to provide continuity in leadership.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Steps to membership include the following:

- 1 Personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; testimony to that in believers baptism; subscribing to the church Statement of Belief and Covenant.
2. Request of letters of recommendation, or dismissal from any place, of previous membership, if applicable.
3. Completion of membership application and personal interview with elders.
4. Recommendations for membership shall be given by the elders to the membership for vote at business meetings.
Names of candidates shall be posted for review by the church members two Sundays prior to the business meeting.

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Section 2. Membership Changes

The following letters may be granted by vote of church members upon recommendations of the elders:

1. A letter of recommendation may be issued for members wishing to join another Baptist church of like faith.
2. A letter of dismissal may be issued for members wishing to join another church.

Section 3. Non-attendant Membership

1. Members, habitually absent from worship services of the church will be considered non-attendant and may be excluded in quorum consideration. The reasons for their absence shall be evaluated by church elders regularly.
2. Non-attendant members may be dropped from the church roll by vote of church membership if:
 - a) They are unresponsive to efforts by elders or other church members

to be restored to active fellowship.

b) They remain non-attendant for a period of two years.

c) They request termination of membership.

d) They have moved and not given the church notification of their residence.

3. Whenever possible, written notification shall be given to those dropped from church roll.

Section 4. Termination

Membership is terminated when one or more of the following apply.

1. When a member joins another church and notification is received.

2. When restoration of a non-attendant member is unsuccessful (see Section 3).

3. When membership is terminated through discipline for unrepentant sin (see Section 5).

4. When a member dies.

Section 5. Discipline

Members whose conduct or belief is contrary to biblical principles and/or to the constitution of this church and to the name of Christ shall be dealt with according to scriptural principles of discipline for the sake of restoration (Matthew 18:15-17); private offenses (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17); public offenses (I Corinthians 5:3-5; II Thessalonians 3:6). The elders will guide the congregation as necessary in these matters. Members may also appeal for discipline of elders, first to the elders themselves and, if unsatisfied, in accordance with Article VI, section 6. Removal of elected officers or termination of membership would require a three-fourths vote of eligible members by ballot at a church business meeting.

ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS

Section 1.

The church shall schedule regular weekly meetings for worship, instruction, fellowship and prayer.

Section 2.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed on the First Lord's Day of each month, or at such times which may be more appropriate.

Section 3.

The fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31, and the annual business meeting of the church shall be scheduled on the third Sunday evening of January. Three designated business meetings shall be called throughout each year to inform and seek congregational involvement. These meetings shall be scheduled for the third Sunday evening of April and September and the first Sunday evening of December. At the December meeting, a total church budget for the year will be adopted. .

Section 4.

Special business meetings may be called by the elders if at least one week's notice is given. The quorum at business meetings shall be twenty percent of the eligible members with minimum voting age established at eighteen years.

Section 5.

Robert's Rules of Order shall be observed. The elders shall appoint annually church members to act as moderator and clerk of business meetings.

Section 6.

Members may request a special business meeting by petition to the elders. Such petition must state the purpose and must be supported by signatures from ten percent of active members. (For notice requirements, see Section 4.)

ARTICLE VII - FINANCES

This church shall be maintained by the free-will tithes and offerings of members and those attending its services. This church will not conduct community canvas programs to secure funds. Supportive ministries may list fair charges to meet expenses. All ministries shall operate on a non-profit basis with public accounting of all receipts, and disbursements. All funds received shall be deposited in banks under direction of stewardship deacons and books shall be audited annually.

The church budget shall be prepared by stewardship deacons and submitted to other officers for review and revision prior to presentation at the budget business meeting. It should be available to members for review one week prior to the business meeting.

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ARTICLE VIII - ORDINATION

After examination by the elders and upon recommendation by the elders, the church, upon three-quarters affirmative vote, may call a counsel of elders and deacons of other churches of like faith to examine the qualifications of a candidate to set him aside for the gospel ministry. The elders upon review of the report from the council may proceed with an ordination service.

Such a candidate shall be a member of this church, engaged in an active ministry of productive service and possessing scriptural qualifications and training. Ordination standards of the Conservative Baptist Regional Association shall be considered.

ARTICLE IX -AMENDMENTS

Proposed changes to this constitution shall be commissioned and reviewed by the elders or by a committee elected from the congregation consisting of representation from elders, deacons, and other members of the congregation. The statement of belief of this constitution may be added to or amended by a vote of ninety percent of eligible members.

The remainder of this constitution may be added to or amended at any regular meeting, or special meeting called for the purpose, by a vote of three quarters of the qualified voters present, provided that notice of such action shall have been announced from the pulpit and the intended addition and/or amendments posted for all members to read at least four weeks prior to the meeting.