

CONSTITUTION

VILLAGE BAPTIST CHURCH

Preamble

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

I. Name

This body shall be known as the Village Baptist Church located in Bowie, Maryland.

II. Statement of Faith

The Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the basis for any statement of faith. We band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost humanity. The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

III. Church Covenant

Believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this Assembly, enter into this covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

In relation to each other, we agree: to respect and tolerate, in the spirit of Christ and in Christian fellowship, differences of opinion in all matters pertaining to church affairs and to our individual lives; to be ready always to forgive others their trespasses in the spirit with which God continually forgives our trespasses; to watch over one another in prayer; and to aid one another in times of distress and illness.

Believing that our call to be members of the church is a call to be living witnesses of God in the world, we commit our lives and destinies to Christ. Wherever people are enslaved by ignorance, poverty, fear, or prejudice, we shall strive for learning, dignity, courage, and understanding. Wherever people are separated by barriers of hostility and distrust, we shall be ministers of God's reconciling love. As we pledge our support to the work of our missionaries throughout the world, we commit ourselves to the mission to which God calls us.

We shall seek to be obedient to Christ in our daily living; in our homes, in our labor, and in our leisure, we shall strive for attitudes and actions which will reflect God's Spirit working through us. Acknowledging our human frailties and ever seeking forgiveness, we confess our need of the Holy Spirit. We shall regard our bodies as the residence of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, we shall seek to refrain from any practices detrimental to our health and influence, and strive to live a transformed life consistent with Biblical principles, in the midst of this world.

When we find it no longer possible to participate in the fellowship of this church, we will unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

IV. Character

Section 1. Polity

The government of this church is vested in its membership. It is subject to the control of no other body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are among Baptist churches. At the discretion of its members, this church will cooperate with and support selected organizations, which may include the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist World Alliance and the Alliance of Baptists.

Section 2. Doctrine

This church acknowledges the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice.

BYLAWS

V. Membership

Section 1. General

The membership reserves the right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership, as stated in the remaining sections of this article.

Section 2. Candidacy

Any person may request membership in this church by appearing before the congregation at any worship service. The requests of all such candidates shall be presented to the church for a vote at any regular business meeting by the pastor or a deacon assigned this task. Prior to this presentation, the pastor or deacon shall have counseled with the candidate.

This church accepts members in the following ways:

1. By a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, followed by the ordinance of baptism. Only after immersion shall one be considered a church member.
2. By promise of letter from another church of like faith and order.
3. By statement of having previously made a profession of faith and having been baptized by immersion, pouring or sprinkling.

Section 3. Termination

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways: 1) death, 2) dismissal to another Baptist church, 3) affiliation with a church of another faith or denomination, 4) members whose whereabouts are unknown for a period of one year, and 5) upon the request of a member.

A diligent effort shall be made to locate members before their membership is terminated under item (4) above. Termination under items (2) through (5) shall require a majority vote of those present and voting at a church business meeting.

VI. Church Officers

All church officers must be members of the church. The officers of this church shall be as follows:

Section 1. Pastor

The pastor is responsible for leading the church in functioning as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff in performing their tasks. A major concern of the pastor is to perform pastoral responsibilities. The pastor is the leader of worship, proclamation, education, and pastoral ministries and is an ex-officio member of all commissions and committees.

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The pastor's election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice shall be given.

A pulpit committee shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor, and their recommendation will constitute a nomination though any member has the privilege of making other nominations according to the policy established by the church. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one person at a time. Election shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of three fourths of those present and voting being necessary for a choice. The pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by the pastor's or the church's request.

The pastor may be requested to resign at a special business meeting called by the deacons, at which time a majority vote of those present and voting shall be required for the pastor's dismissal. This vote must be taken by secret ballot. Prior to the calling of this business meeting the deacons shall give the pastor the opportunity to resign voluntarily. The pastor shall give or be given at least one month's notice at the time of terminating responsibilities as pastor.

Section 2. Deacons

1. One deacon shall be selected for every 6 families, but at no time shall there be fewer than three deacons. Village Baptist Church follows the Deacon Family Ministry Plan, through which the deacons can join the pastor and church staff in ministering to the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of each church member and family. All members of the church except the pastor and active deacons shall be considered eligible nominees for deacon.
2. In accordance with the meaning of the word and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. The duties of the deacon include:
 - a. Serve with the pastor in ministry to the congregation;
 - b. Be an example to the church in performing its tasks;

- c. Serve the Lord by conducting the caring ministry of the church, doing the work of benevolence through judicious use of the Deacons' Fund, visiting the sick, and being alert to the spiritual needs of the congregation;
 - d. Heighten the spiritual tone in the church by example and work, facilitating the spread of the Gospel and promoting unity within the church; and
 - e. Assist in serving the Lord's Supper.
3. In order to fulfill this role in keeping with scripture (Acts 6:1-6, 1 Timothy 2:8-13), the deacon qualifications include:
- a. Have compassionate concern for the work of Jesus Christ and His church;
 - b. Be of honest report, trustworthy, steadfast in convictions and responsible in speech;
 - c. Maintain a Christian home;
 - d. Be faithful in the attendance and support of worship services and programs of the church; and
 - e. Be a member of the church for at least one (1) year.
4. Deacons shall be selected at large by secret ballot and shall serve on a rotation basis. Each year the term of office of approximately one third of the number of deacons shall expire. The term of office shall begin with the acceptance of the call and shall end three years later upon acceptance of the call by their successor. After serving a term of three years, no deacon shall be eligible for re-selection until the lapse of at least one year.
5. All active deacons (i.e. members duly selected who accepted the call) shall be ordained. However, all ordained deacons will not necessarily be active, only those deacons selected by Village Baptist Church.
6. In case of death, resignation, removal or incapacity to serve, the church shall fill the unexpired term provided the unexpired term can be filled prior to the first Sunday in April of the third year of the term, a period of greater than six months. For unexpired terms of six months or less and for temporary vacancies (e.g. extended periods out of town) the active deacons shall fill the vacancy with inactive ordained deacons as required. Removal shall be for cause by two-thirds of members present and voting at any regular business meeting. Incapacity to serve shall be determined by majority vote of members present and voting at any regular business meeting.
7. The congregation shall consider the selection of deacons more a matter of the church "calling out the called" than of electing representative government. The selection process shall be conducted in two steps, as follows:
- a. In August of each year, the pastor shall prepare and publish a list of qualifications of deacons. Those members wishing to have their names removed from consideration as deacons may notify the church office accordingly.
 - b. On the third Sunday in September, a preliminary ballot shall be distributed by the deacons to all members. The preliminary ballot shall include the names of all members except the pastor, the active deacons, and those wishing to have their names removed. At that same time, the pastor shall announce that following each church service on the first Sunday in October, a special Business Meeting will be held for the deacon selection process. The voting procedure shall be explained. Each member may complete one selection ballot for those believed to be qualified for the office of deacon. Members may vote for as many candidates as there are vacancies; they may vote for fewer. The ballot may be returned to the deacons on

that Sunday, mailed to the church office, or returned on the fourth Sunday in September.

- c. All returned preliminary ballots shall be counted by two or more active deacons, and the final ballot shall be prepared from the members with the most votes. The number of names selected for the final ballot shall be at least five times the number of deacon positions to be filled, with a larger number to be allowed in case of ties.
 - d. The members selected for the final ballot shall be contacted for confirm their willingness to serve; names will only be removed by request of the member.
 - e. On the first Sunday in October, immediately after each worship service a special Business Meeting shall be held and the final deacon selection ballot shall be presented to the congregation.
 - f. The voting procedure shall be explained. Each member may complete one selection ballot for those believed to be God's choice for the office of deacon. Members may vote for as many candidates as there are vacancies; they may vote for fewer.
 - g. After the ballots have been marked, they shall be collected by the active deacons.
 - h. Two or more active deacons shall tabulate the ballots, after which the ballots shall be destroyed.
 - i. The member(s) receiving a plurality shall be extended the call by one of the deacons who counted votes. If the call is not accepted by the member, the member with the next highest vote count shall be extended the call until the call is accepted. This process continues until all vacancies are filled. The deacons, in consultation with the pastor, shall settle a tie vote, if there is one.
 - j. Upon acceptance of the call the names of the new deacon(s) shall be announced.
8. In the event that an unexpired term of more than 6 months exists, a special business meeting shall be called and the procedures for regular selection shall be followed, using the same ballot as the most recent selection. A member selected to fill an unexpired term shall be eligible for immediate re-selection when that term expires.
9. Because of the special nature of deacons and their relationship to the church, all the results other than the name(s) of the new deacon(s) shall be kept secret. Deacon selections are special meetings (X, Section 3.) which will be presided over in accordance with VI., Section 3, and recorded by the clerk (VI., Section 4).

Section 3. Moderator

The church shall elect annually a moderator and vice-moderator other than the pastor or chairperson of the deacons. The function for the moderator shall be to preside at all business meetings. In the absence of both the moderator and the vice-moderator, the chairperson of trustees shall preside.

Section 4. Clerk

The church shall elect annually a clerk who shall keep in a suitable book, a record of all the actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The clerk is responsible for keeping a register of the names of the members with dates of admission, dismissal, or death, together with a record of baptisms. Upon application for membership by letter, the clerk shall request the letter from the designated church. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church. The clerk shall keep on file written official reports and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary, as indicated by these bylaws. The church may delegate some of the

clerical responsibilities to the church secretary. All church records are church property and should be filed in the church office when one is maintained.

Section 5. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The church shall elect annually a church treasurer and an assistant treasurer. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of vouchers approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money, or things of value paid or given to the church. At each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements for the preceding quarter shall be filed. The treasurer’s report shall be reviewed annually by the Stewardship, Budget, and Finance Commission, an auditing committee, or a public accountant. The treasurer and assistant treasurer shall be bonded or covered by insurance for an amount commensurate with church finances. 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 clerk, who shall keep and preserve the account as a part of the permanent records of the church. The duty of the assistant treasurer shall be to serve in the absence of the treasurer so that the fiscal business of the church can remain current. The assistant treasurer may also assist the treasurer at the treasurer’s direction.

Section 6. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall be elected by the church annually. The financial secretary shall receive the empty collection envelopes after the money has been removed and counted and the financial secretary shall give donors individual credit. The financial secretary shall keep the envelopes for reference for a period of five years. The financial secretary shall be responsible for preparing and making and mailing quarterly or semi-annually records of contributions to all contributing members.

Section 7. Trustees

Five trustees elected by the church will hold in trust the church property. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action. It shall be the function of the trustees to affix their signatures to legal documents involving the sale, mortgaging, insuring, or purchase or rental of property or other legal documents where signatures of trustees are required. Trustees shall serve on a rotating basis, with one new trustee being elected every three years. In case of death, resignation, removal, or incapacity to serve, the church will elect a member to fill the unexpired term.

VII. Church Staff

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

VIII. Church Council

Function: The church council shall provide leadership in coordinating and developing an active, well-balanced, long-range program which will best accomplish the mission of the church. The council shall calculate and recommend to the committee on Stewardship, Budget, and Financial administration, the pastor’s compensation for inclusion in the budget.

Membership: The council shall consist of the pastor, chairpersons of the commissions, the treasurer, and the church clerk. As the need arises, representatives of other church activities and organizations will be invited to sit with the council.

Organization: The council shall elect its chairperson from among its members. The chairperson shall preside at its meetings, which shall be at least monthly.

Duties:

1. Formulate and recommend to the congregation suggested church objectives and goals.
2. Develop strategies for reaching church goals.
3. Review and coordinate suggested program plans and actions by the Church Officers and Commissions, and provide for adequate communication among church officers and organizations.
4. Evaluate program achievements in terms of church objectives and goals and report evaluation to the congregation.
5. Prepare an annual calendar.
6. Arrange the agenda for church meetings and notify church members of called meetings.
7. Make the necessary arrangements for all elections.
8. Calculate and recommend to the Commission on Stewardship, Budget and Financial administration, the pastor's compensations for inclusion in the budget.

Section 1. Commission on Worship and Music

Function: The commission shall assist the pastor in assuring the congregation on the conditions most conducive to the fullest and most meaningful worship experience.

Membership: This Commission shall consist of five persons, unless otherwise determined by the congregation, including the choir director.

Relationships: The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church. The commission shall work through the church council and report to the church.

Duties:

1. Study and reappraise constantly the elements of worship as preparation for growth and development in worship habits.
2. Encourage the use of appropriate and effective music in worship services and oversee the music program.
3. Make the necessary preparation for observing church ordinances.
4. Select the ushers and instruct them in their duties.
5. Provide bulletins, hymn books, flowers, and other appurtenances which may be needed.
6. Assist the pastor in securing supply ministers.
7. Plan and promote special worship opportunities.

Section 2. Commission on Mission Action and Convention Relations

Function: This Commission is an administrative service that assists the church in the planning, promoting, and overseeing of its programs of mission action outside the local church, and convention relations.

Membership: This Commission shall consist of five persons, unless otherwise determined by the congregation.

Relationships: The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church. The commission shall work through the church council and report to the church.

Duties:

1. Devise, in cooperation with the Commission on Education and the Pastor, appropriate education procedures which will intensify the desire of the members to participate in the total missionary effort of the church.
2. Research, develop, recommend and implement plans for meeting mission needs.
3. Act as liaison with affiliated conventions on missions projects.
4. Request and administer resources, according to the church's policy and procedure, for the tasks assigned to the Commission.
5. In cooperation with the Commission on Outreach, establish and maintain communications with other community groups and promote such community programs as are in keeping with the mission of Christ's church.
6. Evaluate constantly the financial contributions of this church to missions and recommend for the next fiscal year (a) specific missionary endeavors to be aided, and (b) the extent to which such efforts should be supported.

Section 3. Commission on Outreach and Evangelism

Function: This Commission is an administrative service that assists the church in the planning, promoting, and overseeing of its programs of outreach and welcome.

Membership: This Commission shall consist of five persons, unless otherwise determined by the congregation.

Relationships: The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church. The commission shall work through the church council and report to the church.

Duties:

1. Devise, in cooperation with the Commission on Education and the Pastor, appropriate education procedures which will intensify the desire of all church members to participate in the welcome, outreach and evangelism of the church toward members of the community who need the message, support, and opportunities for service which the church has to offer.
2. Research, develop, recommend and implement plans for meeting outreach and member orientation needs.
3. Promote and advertise church activities to the community.
4. Request and administer resources, according to the church's policy and procedure, for the tasks assigned to the Commission.
5. In cooperation with the Commission on Missions and Convention Relations, promote such community programs as are in keeping with the mission of Christ's church.

6. Evaluate constantly the financial contributions of this church on outreach and recommend for the next fiscal year (a) specific outreach activities and efforts and (b) the extent to which efforts should be supported.

Section 4. Commission on Education

Function: This Commission is an administrative service that assists the church in achieving the highest goals in Christian scholarship and maturity.

Membership: This Commission shall consist of five persons, unless otherwise determined by the congregation, including the Sunday School Director.

Relationships: The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church. The commission shall work through the church council and report to the church.

Duties:

1. Study and plan the educational needs of the church.
2. Plan and direct an education program that meets the needs of the church.
3. Recommend the best available literature for the educational ministry of the church.
4. Work with the nominating committee in selection of teachers and directors needed for the implementation of the education program.
5. Administer a program of training for teachers.
6. Encourage attendance at and participation in assemblies and conferences which best meets the needs of the church.
7. Give leadership in areas such as Sunday School, Training Union, special Bible studies, church library, Vacation Bible School, study courses, and audiovisual aids.

Section 5. Commission on Stewardship, Budget, and Financial Administration

Function: This Commission shall be responsible for administering the fiscal program of the church commensurate with the principles of Christian stewardship.

Membership: This Commission shall consist of five persons, unless otherwise determined by the congregation, including the treasurer.

Relationships: The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church. The commission shall work through the church council and report to the church.

Duties:

1. Administer a program of stewardship development and challenge the members to dedicate themselves to the concept of Christian stewardship.
2. Institute a unified budget, in cooperation with the other Commissions which is most suitable for the particular aims of this congregation. Such things as building fund, bond sinking funds and all other special funds shall come within the realm of responsibility of this Commission.
3. Use an approved system of accounting.
4. Administer the budget and have authority to indicate to a particular commission what proportion of its funds may be encumbered at a given time.
5. Arrange for the counting and deposit of church monies.

Section 6. Commission on Church Property and Space

Function: This Commission is an administrative service that assists the church in the care of all property and buildings; studies and recommends the use of space and furnishings as it relates to church programs and activities; studies the need and recommends the acquiring of property and the creating of space that seems necessary and administers work assigned to it.

Membership: This Commission shall consist of five persons, unless otherwise determined by the congregation.

Relationships: The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church. The commission shall work through the church council and report to the church.

Duties:

1. Inspect all church properties periodically and maintain inventory.
2. Conduct an annual evaluation of space allocations to determine areas needing readjustment and enlargement.
3. Recommend rearranging and maximum utilization of existing space and acquisition of new space as needed to provide for continued growth.
4. Work with the Commission on Outreach and Evangelism in acquiring and maintaining property and space for mission purposes.
5. Recommend to the personnel committee the employment, training needs and the supervision needs of maintenance personnel.
6. Develop and recommend an adequate insurance plan to protect all buildings and properties.
7. Develop and recommend maintenance policies and procedures.
8. Prepare recommendations for the Commission on Stewardship, Budget and Financial Administration and administer budget regarding maintenance of all property.
9. Assist church in determining, acquiring, and administering adequate worship space.
10. Assist church in arranging, equipping, and administering parking space.
11. Assist in recommending and maintaining proper and adequate furnishings for the church programs and activities.
12. Assist other church Commissions in responsibilities relating to church property and space.
13. Recommend policies regarding the use of space and properties.

Section 7. Commission on Fellowship and Recreation

Function: This Commission shall assist the church in a creative program of fellowship and recreation.

Membership: This Commission shall consist of five persons, unless otherwise determined by the congregation.

Relationships: The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church. The commission shall work through the church council and report to the church.

Duties:

1. Plan, recommend, and administer recreation activities.
2. Plan appropriate fellowship meals.
3. Administer proper athletic activities.
4. Sponsor wholesome social events.
5. Develop and administer church kitchen policy.

IX. Standing Committees

Section 1. Nominating Committee

Function: The Nominating Committee coordinates the staffing of all church leadership positions that are filled by volunteers, with the exception of the deacons. This committee shall recommend persons for election by the church. Nominations from the floor are admissible.

Membership: This Committee shall consist of five persons. These shall be elected annually from the floor at the November business meeting. This committee shall elect its chairperson.

Section 2. Personnel Committee

Function: The duties of the Personnel Committee shall be to:

1. Produce and revise as required the job descriptions for each paid personnel position. An annual review of each job description shall be performed.
2. Perform personnel advertisement and interviews for prospective paid church employees excluding the pastor.
3. Serve as the church representatives for personnel matters including employee complaints and church concerns and commendations.
4. Perform other personnel duties as delegated from the church.

Membership: The Personnel Committee shall consist of three church members who are not paid employees of the church. The committee shall consist of a member of the Church Council, a member of the Stewardship and Finance Commission, and the third member shall be nominated by the nominating committee and elected by the church.

Section 3. Nursery Committee

Function: It shall be the duty of the nursery committee to:

1. Select nursery staff workers and arrange hours and terms of service.
2. Determine principles of operation for the nursery.
3. Prepare schedules for the operation of the nursery.
4. Recommend needed supplies and equipment to the church.
5. Be directly responsible for the staffing of the nursery during designated church activities.

Membership: This committee shall consist of four persons. The chairperson and members shall be recommended by the nominating committee for election by the church.

X. Church Meetings

Section 1. Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly for instruction, worship, and prayer. The church shall observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper at least quarterly, and baptism as often as necessary.

Section 2. Regular Business Meetings

Regular business meetings shall be held in February, May and August on the third Sunday of each month, and November on the second Sunday. Should there be any unusual business or matter of unusual interest to be brought before such regular monthly meeting, notice shall be given the membership no later than the prior Sunday.

Church officers, commissions, standing committees, and program personnel shall be elected at the August business meeting, with the exception of the treasurer and assistant treasurer, who shall be elected at the November business meeting. All those elected to positions shall begin their term of office on September 1, following the election, except for the term of office of church treasurer and assistant treasurer which shall coincide with the church fiscal year.

Other committees may be established by the church as the need arises.

Section 3. Special Business Meetings

A specifically called business meeting may be held to consider matters of a significant nature. Notice of all specially called business meetings of the church shall be given at least one week prior to the meeting by announcement from the pulpit or by the weekly bulletin (unless otherwise specified elsewhere in these bylaws).

A special business meeting for the purpose of presenting, discussing, and voting on the church budget shall be held during the first week in December, with the date and time to be announced at least one month in advance.

Section 4. Quorum

The quorum consists of those who attend the business meeting, provided that it has been properly called.

Section 5. Parliamentary Rules

"Robert's Rules of Order, Revised" is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church in matters not specifically covered by the constitution and bylaws.

Section 6. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall run from January 1 through December 31.

XI. Amendments

Changes in this constitution and bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church, provided such amendments shall have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting, and copies made available to church members before the day of the business meeting at which it is to be voted on. Amendments to the constitution shall be by two-thirds vote of all members of the church present and voting; amendments to the bylaws shall have a concurrence of a simple majority of the members present and voting.