

# **Constitution of the Black Creek Baptist Association**

## **Preamble**

Whereas, we believe it to be of great advantage for churches of the same faith and practice to be associated together for mutual support and assistance, the Black Creek Baptist Association, is organized for the purpose of creating such a union to facilitate the cooperation of associating churches in carrying out our Lord's Great Commission. This Association is recognized as the basis of practical cooperation between the churches and shall not be vested with any ecclesiastical power.

## **Article I – Name and What We Are**

This body shall be known as the "Black Creek Baptist Association, Inc." The association shall consist of those Southern Baptist churches of like faith and order who freely enter into covenant relationship with one another under the Lordship of Christ. The process by which such churches covenant together and by which such association can be terminated is set forth in more detail in the Black Creek Baptist Association Bylaws.

Being led, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit, to enter into covenant as an association of churches, we join ourselves together through this larger fellowship:

- To watch over one another in love and to nurture the spiritual welfare and fellowship of all churches in the Association;
- To provide a forum for the consideration of our Christian faith and the evaluation of those points of doctrine and policy which affect our life together;
- To assist the churches in planning, conducting, evaluating, and improving their programs of work designed to reach their objectives;
- To carry out the Great Commission of our Lord (Matthew 28:18-20) within and beyond the bounds of the Association through biblical principles of personal and corporate evangelism and discipleship; and,
- To facilitate the exchange of information and assistance between associated churches, the Florida Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention, their agencies and other Christian bodies.

## **Article II – Purpose and Objective**

- A. The purpose of the Black Creek Baptist Association (BCBA) shall be to promote unity and Christian love among Southern Baptist churches within the area of the BCBA. The BCBA shall be composed of churches which may be included by the consent of the churches and the BCBA. It shall cooperate with other associations, the Florida Baptist Convention (FBC) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to encourage support of the Great Commission through the Cooperative Program.
- B. The objective of the BCBA shall be to support, promote, and participate in evangelism, discipleship, missions, Christian education, and fellowship.

### Article III – Membership

- A. The membership shall consist of churches composing of the Black Creek Baptist Association.
- B. Criteria for membership in the Black Creek Baptist Association:
1. Membership in the Association is open to Southern Baptist Churches in the Clay County area (including those communities surrounding Clay County). Participation in the Association shall be voluntary.
  2. The Holy Bible is the authority for the faith and practices of the Association. The churches which associate with the Association shall adhere to, maintain and propagate the doctrines, purpose, objective, faith and practices of Southern Baptist churches which cooperate with the Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. A non-exclusive list of such beliefs and tenants is set forth in the doctrinal statement known as *The Baptist Faith and Message* drafted and adopted by Southern Baptists in the year 2000.
  3. Any church seeking admission into the Association must present its application in writing to the Credentials Committee at least 60 days before the association Pastor's Executive Committee meeting prior to the annual meeting of the Association. Upon approval of the Pastor's Executive Committee, the Credentials Committee shall present the recommendation to any business meeting of the Association.
  4. The Association maintains no oversight, authority or control over any associated church. When it appears that the behavior or doctrine of any member church is unseemly, the Association or its Pastor's Executive Committee may authorize the Moderator to request the Credentials Committee to investigate and counsel with the church, and report its findings and recommendations to the Pastor's Executive Committee. If such a church is found to be untrue to the criteria for membership in the Association as stated in **Article III – Membership**, number 2, and no hope of reclamation is imminent, the Association, at its next annual meeting, may withdraw from it with a majority vote of its messengers.
  5. Should the Association become aware that any member church has:
    - a. Ceased adhering to one or more of the doctrine, faiths or practices set forth in *The Baptist Faith and Message (2000)*;
    - b. Has engaged in a practice—or pattern of practices—that is inconsistent with the doctrine, tenets of traditional Southern Baptist beliefs of *The Baptist Faith and Message (2000)*; or
    - c. Refuse to fulfill the financial contribution requirement of at least \$250.00 annually, for one (1) year;
    - d. Shall fail to cooperate by sending messengers to the last associational annual meeting.
  6. The Moderator shall request the Credentials Committee to confer with the church. If satisfactory reason is not given, and there is no evidence the church is making an effort to keep alive the association with cooperating churches, the Credentials Committee shall bring its findings to the Pastor's Executive Committee. Then the Association, with a majority vote of its messengers may withdraw its membership.

**Article IV – Meetings**

A. As set forth in the Constitution, the Black Creek Baptist Association shall hold an Annual Meeting each year. Typically, the Annual Meeting is held during the fall, but can meet as needed. The Leadership Team shall be responsible for working with the Association staff to set the agenda for the Annual Meeting. The Leadership Team shall have much flexibility and discretion when setting the agenda and order. The following items of business shall be conducted at each Annual Meeting:

1. **Reports to the Association Membership;**

- a. Reports to the Association will be presented in written form whenever possible.
- b. Reports to be adopted by the Association shall be subject to discussion prior to vote.

2. **Election of Officers and other Leaders;**

3. **Approval of Budget;**

4. **Messenger Input;**

- a. Unlike Special Meetings, the Annual Meeting shall have a time set aside for messenger comment or questions.
- b. Any messenger may take up to three (3) minutes to bring a question or make a comment on any issue or topic pertinent to the Association and its operation.
- c. The Moderator may choose to respond to such comment or question (or seek a response from any interested person or team), or he may choose to simply take such comment or question under advisement.

5. An “inspirational” message will be delivered to encourage and charge participants to continue doing kingdom advancement work and ministry.

B. All member churches shall elect their messengers for voting capacity at the annual meeting of the Association. Each church constituting the Association shall be entitled to four (4) messengers, and every church having one hundred (100) members shall be entitled to six (6) messengers and one (1) additional messenger for every fifty (50) members thereafter,

1 – 99 Members	4 Messengers
100 – 149 Members	6 Messengers
150 – 199 Members	7 Messengers
200 – 249 Members	8 Messengers
250 – 299 Members	9 Messengers
300 – Up Members	10 Messengers

C. Each messenger shall register his or her attendance upon arrival at any Association meeting wherein business will be conducted and a vote taken. Such registration will require the messenger to provide his or her name and address to the Clerk. **The first time a messenger is sent by a particular member church, the messenger must also provide the Clerk with a letter from such church confirming the person’s status as a duly elected/nominated messenger.** The Association retains the sole discretion to refuse to recognize any messenger who is unable or unwilling to register as set forth herein.

D. Other meetings of pastors, staff, volunteers, and associational staff will meet regularly as needed.

- E. In case of emergency or other need, as determined by the Director of Missions (Interim or Consultant) and/or Leadership Team, the Moderator shall call a special meeting. Notice of such special session shall be provided to associated churches as set forth in the Bylaws.

#### **Article V – Officers of the Corporation**

Trustees/Chief Executive Officers: The Moderator, the Vice Moderator, Clerk/Treasurer, and the chairman of the Properties/Legal Committee, will be Chief Executive Officers of the Association, who shall have the authority to sign and execute all legal documents authorized by the Association. They shall meet as necessary to fulfill their respective obligations.

A. The Black Creek Baptist Association shall elect four (4) Officers:

1. The Moderator – shall preside over meetings of the Association. As Moderator, he shall be a member of the Leadership Team. In the annual filings with the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, the Moderator shall be listed as “President” of the corporation (such title shall not convey any additional obligations or authority, however).
2. The Vice Moderator – shall preside over the Association meetings in the absence of the Moderator and/or at the Moderator’s request. The Vice Moderator shall be responsible for the introduction of new pastors and staff members – as well as involved lay members – to the Association. In the annual filings with the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, the Vice Moderator shall be listed as “Vice President” of the corporation (such title shall not convey any additional obligations or authority, however).
3. The Clerk – shall make and preserve records of all Association meetings. Additionally, the Clerk shall be responsible for the Association’s minute books. In the case of absence of both the Moderator and Vice Moderator, the Clerk may serve as presiding officer for any Association meeting (or be responsible to retain a temporary moderator for that meeting). The Clerk is the only non-voting officer of the Association. As such, the Clerk will participate, but not vote as an officer, in either Association meetings or meetings of the Leadership Team.
4. The Treasurer – shall be the financial officer for the association and work with the Finance Committee. In the annual filings with the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, the Treasurer shall be listed as “Secretary/Treasurer” of the corporation (such title shall not convey any additional obligations or authority, however). The Treasurer shall be bonded and responsible for:
  - a. Disbursing all monies in accordance with the budget and/or upon authorization of the Leadership Team;
  - b. Assisting in planning an annual budget to provide for the program of work in the Association;
  - c. Reporting as to the financial receipts, expenditures and assets of the Association; and,
  - d. Arranging an annual audit of the financial records.

## B. Terms of Office

1. With the exception of the Clerk, Officers, members of the Leadership Team, and members of the Finance Committee shall serve one (1) year terms, and shall hold their respective offices until they resign or their successors are elected. Members of the Nominating Committee serve staggered three (3) year terms. Subject to approval by the members at the Annual Meeting, all Officers and members of the Leadership Team shall be eligible to succeed themselves, except the Moderator, who shall only be eligible to succeed himself once. Members of the Nominating Committee must allow one (1) three (3) year term to transpire after rotating off, before being eligible for re-election.
2. Any office or other position of leadership which becomes vacant during the course of the year (e.g., by resignation, removal, death, or any other reason) may be replaced during that year by vote of the Leadership Team. Such replacement officer or leader shall serve the remainder of that year only. The Nominating Committee shall nominate candidates to fill such position thereafter.
3. Any term limits set forth herein may be temporarily suspended (for a finite duration) if such suspension is approved by a three-quarters (3/4) of the messengers present at the Annual Meeting or any meeting called for that purpose.

### **Article VI – Money Matters**

The Black Creek Baptist Association shall have authority to receive funds by voluntary contributions for carrying out its purposes. The Treasurer shall be ultimately responsible to oversee all contributions to, and expenses of the Association, and shall issue a report regarding such income and expenses to the member churches of the Association at the Annual Meeting. The duty to oversee use of the Association funds and other resources is delegated to the Director of Missions (Interim or Consultant), Leadership Team, and Association Office Staff.

### **Article VII – Inspection of Association Records**

The Black Creek Baptist Association will provide member churches access to its records in accordance with Florida law. Therefore, any request for access to the Association records must be in writing and directed to the Clerk at the mailing address listed on the Black Creek Baptist Association annual report to the Secretary of State.

### **Article VIII – Indemnification of Association Staff and Leadership**

Should any member(s) of the Black Creek Baptist Association staff, its Officers or Ministry Teams be faced with actual or threatened litigation as a result of the performance of their proper and normal duties, the Association will obtain sufficient and appropriate legal defense and/or indemnify such person(s) for costs and expenses relating to such actual or threatened litigation. This obligation to indemnify and/or provide a defense shall cease if at any time it is discovered that the person(s) in question acted contrary to Holy Scripture, in violation of law, or otherwise acted in any way that was dishonest or lacking complete candor.

### **Article IX – Use of Association Facilities**

The Black Creek Baptist Association staff shall oversee implementation of a facilities use policy. Such policy will ensure that the facilities of the Association are used in a manner which is consistent with our beliefs as Southern Baptists (e.g., in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and *The Baptist Faith and Message [2000]*). The staff shall also be charged with ensuring that any use of all or part of the Association grounds or facilities will be done in a manner consistent with our beliefs as Southern Baptists. Moreover, any and all use of the Association property shall be sufficiently documented and memorialized so as to protect the Association from unnecessary exposure to liability.

### **Article X – Revision or Amendment of this Constitution**

The Constitution may be altered or amended by consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the messengers present at any meeting called for that purpose. Prior notice of the proposed changes to this Constitution (such notice to include the specific verbiage to be voted upon) shall be given to all churches of the Association, no less than sixty (60) days prior to any vote on such alteration or amendment.

### **Article XI – Bylaws**

The Black Creek Baptist Association may amend or adopt such bylaws as may be needed from time to time by simple majority vote at any Annual Meeting of the Association and may amend or repeal by the same procedure.

### **Article XII – Parliamentary Law**

The Black Creek Baptist Association shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order*.