

Constitution, Bylaws, and Policies of The Layton Avenue Baptist Church

Preamble

In order to secure the principles of our church's faith, to establish and govern the responsibilities and rights of its members, and to preserve our congregation's freedom of action in relation to other churches, the members of the Layton Avenue Baptist Church declare and establish this constitution, bylaws, and policy statement.

Article I. Name, Affiliation, and Incorporation

Section A. Name. The church shall be known as the Layton Avenue Baptist Church.

Section B. Affiliation. The church shall be affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the appropriate state convention and local association of churches similarly affiliated. "Affiliation" implies, but is not limited to, financial support of the aforementioned organizations.

Section C. Incorporation. The church shall be incorporated in accordance with the laws of the State of Wisconsin governing the incorporation of religious, non-profit, 501 (C) 3 organizations.

Article II. Polity, Doctrine, and Ordinances

Section A. Polity. The governance of the church shall be vested in its membership, free from the control of any other ecclesiastical body. The church nonetheless recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation among churches, especially those affiliated with the denominational bodies with which it is affiliated.

Section B. Doctrine. The Bible shall be the authority and guide in all matters of faith and practice. The church accepts the *Baptist Faith and Message* statement adopted in 1963 and 2000 as general expressions of its beliefs and as a guide in its understanding and interpretation of scripture. The church recognizes the *BF&M* as statements of biblically informed religious convictions, but also understands that these statements are nonetheless prone to human error and shall thus have no authority over members' consciences, or be used to hamper freedom of thought and inquiry.

Section C. Ordinances. Believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper shall be the ordinances administered by the church. Both shall be administered regularly and as needed with the pastor and deacons overseeing the observances.

Article III. Covenant

Desiring to worship God and to be a part of God's mission in the world, and believing it to be our duty as church members to walk and work together as one Body in Christ, we solemnly covenant with one another to seek to fulfill the scriptural responsibilities of life together in the church.

By the empowerment of God's grace we will strive to love one another and fulfill the Law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens. We will seek to do everything necessary for the growth and health of our church by being personal witnesses to God's redemptive plan; by regularly assembling ourselves together for worship, Bible study, and fellowship; by giving generously of our substance and time, by exercising our spiritual gifts to support the church's ongoing ministry and mission; and by upholding New Testament doctrines and practices.

Furthermore, with God's help, we will cultivate personal and family devotion, rearing our children in a Christian manner, and seek to live in the world as obedient and willing servants of Christ. We will maintain modesty and sobriety in our habits, integrity in our business, purity in our lives, and Christian courtesy in daily living.

BYLAWS

Article I: Membership

The church body reserves the right to determine the membership process, and the conditions under which membership may be granted and held. A candidate's membership shall be acted upon at a business meeting.

Section 1. Candidacy. Any person may become a candidate for membership in one of the following ways:

- a) By a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and believer's baptism by immersion
- b) By promise of a letter of recommendation from another sister church
- c) By statement, in the event that no letter of recommendation is available, or when the candidate is coming from a church of similar faith and practice, including the practice of believer's baptism by immersion.

Section 2. Expectations. Members should endeavor to lead faithful Christian lives, and be actively supportive of the church through their attendance, personal involvement, and financial stewardship as indicated in the Church Covenant.

Section 3. Rights. Only members may vote in the transactions of the church.

Section 4. Termination. Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- a) Death of the member
- b) Dismissal to another Southern Baptist church
- c) Exclusion by action of the church. See (e) below
- d) Erasure upon request, or statement of membership in a church of another denomination or faith and practice.
- e) The deacons will recommend © (above) in cases where members are inactive and non-communicative with the church for the period of one year and remaining so after being contacted and encouraged by the deacon body. Note: Our Beloved shut-ins and others who are providentially hindered from being active are not involved here.

Section 5. Accountability. The mission of the church includes the taking of every reasonable measure to minister to one another and to hold one another accountable to growing in Christ likeness and reflecting the Spirit of Christ. However, should there come a serious condition which causes a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the pastor, deacons, and/or other members of the church will act in accordance with scriptural guidelines in seeking the redemption of such an individual. If the problem persists, giving the church no choice but to take disciplinary action, a majority vote in a business meeting is necessary to exclude the member. Upon evidence of repentance and reformation, the church may restore an excluded individual with a majority vote in a business meeting.

Article II: Pastor, Deacons, and Officers

Section 1. Pastor. The church has final authority for selecting and calling its pastor. The pastor's election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose. To seek out a suitable candidate, the church shall appoint a search team that includes at least one deacon. The team's recommendation shall constitute a nomination, and the team shall nominate only one candidate at a time for consideration. Election shall be by secret ballot of members in attendance, with an affirmative vote of a three-fourths majority needed for election.

The pastor will serve the church under terms outlined in a "covenant" or other formal document agreed upon at the time of his calling. Such a document will include a provision for an annual review and evaluation. The pastor shall serve until his relationship with the church is terminated by resignation or by formal congregational action, carried out according to the following stipulations:

- a) Action to terminate a pastor can only be taken at a business meeting called expressly for the purpose of considering the matter of his employment. Rules outlined in Article IV, Section 2 regarding called business meetings shall apply in this circumstance.

- b) The vote for termination shall be by a secret ballot, with an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the ballots cast being necessary to carry the motion. The termination shall be effective immediately.
- c) Except in the case of gross misconduct by the pastor, the church shall arrange for an equitable severance compensation.

Section 2. Deacons. In accordance with the New Testament origin and function of the office, deacons are to possess the heart of a servant and to demonstrate moral and ethical integrity, as indicated in such passages as Acts 6:1-7; and I Timothy 3:8-13. Moreover, they are to be mature believers and exemplary in their churchmanship, as demonstrated in their consistent tithing, worship attendance, Bible study participation, and involvement in the ministry and mission of the church.

The church shall elect deacons by ballot at a regular or called business meeting. The optimal number of deacons shall be a ratio of one deacon per ten resident families, with a deacon's normal term being three years. The deacons shall serve on a rotating basis, with approximately one-third of the deacon body changing annually. In cases where a deacon's term is unfulfilled, the church may choose to elect another deacon to fulfill that unexpired term. After serving a three year term, a deacon shall be eligible for re-election only after the lapse of one year. Thus elected, deacons shall be ordained by the church except when already ordained by this church or another church of like faith and order.

Section 3. Officers. In addition to the pastor, the officers of the church shall be the moderator, clerk, and treasurer, all of whom are recommended by the administration team or other administrative body of the church. The officers, excluding the pastor, are elected annually by the congregation.

Article III: Organizational Structure

The church's organizational structure is intended to provide an effective and efficient means for fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) and for pursuing the church's particular vision.

Section 1. Essential ministries. Provision shall be made organizationally to facilitate the ministries of worship, discipleship, missions, pastoral care, fellowship, and administration.

Section 2. Restructuring. Ministry structures may be added, combined, subdivided, or otherwise adjusted as needed according to the policies governing the church's organizational structure.

Section 3. Oversight. An organizational body shall be provided to facilitate coordination and evaluation for the church's overall structure, with the pastor leading said body, or in the absence of a pastor, a person selected by the body.

Under the church organizational structure, the Steering Team functions in this capacity (see “Church Policies” below, under “Team Structure”).

Article IV: Church Meetings and Parliamentary Procedure

Section 1. Worship. Worship services shall be held regularly on Sunday mornings, and on other occasions as desired and scheduled.

Section 2. Business meetings. Regular business meetings of the church shall be held no fewer than four times annually, with one meeting designated for electing officers, adopting a budget, and for other items of business requiring annual church action. At all business meetings, resident members in attendance shall constitute a quorum. “Special” business meetings in addition to the above may be called by the pastor, deacons, or by the clerk upon written request of twelve adult members. Such meetings will have a clearly stated purpose or agenda, announced at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

Section 3. Voting procedures. Recommendations or motions ordinarily will be acted upon verbally, by a show of hands, or by a secret ballot, with a simple majority necessary for adopting a motion. For decisions requiring church-wide action (see Section 4 below), absentee voting will be permitted for those unable to attend a business meeting, according to the following guidelines:

- a) ballots must be requested in writing from the church clerk at least ten days in advance of the business meeting;
- b) ballots must be signed and submitted to the church clerk at least two days in advance of the business meeting. The clerk or the clerk’s designee will be responsible for submitting the ballots at the business meeting.
- c) In the event of unforeseen circumstances such as an accident or sudden illness, the above guidelines may be waived at the discretion of the administration team.

Section 4. Decisions requiring church-wide action are:

- a) calling and /or terminating a pastor;
- b) adopting a budget;
- c) real estate transactions;
- d) amendments to the constitution or bylaws
- e) election of officers

Section 5. Parliamentary Procedure. *Robert’s Rules of Order, Revised* is the authority for rules of decorum and procedure for all business meetings of the church.

Section 6. Amendments. The constitution and bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote at any regular business meeting or at a called meeting for that specific purpose, provided that the proposed change is stated and distributed in

writing a month in advance. Policies may be amended by a simple majority vote at any regular or special called business meeting.

CHURCH POLICIES

Team structure

The church is organized with a structure that includes the following teams:

Worship – responsible for planning and coordinating the overall corporate worship experience, including music, creative arts, observance of ordinances, audiovisual issues, and special events.

Discipleship – responsible for coordinating the church’s overall program of discipleship growth, including Bible study programs, Christian growth seminars, membership assimilation into appropriate ministry and service, new member education, children’s worship, child care, and children’s discipleship ministry.

Missions – responsible for promoting, teaching, and supporting missions through outreach/evangelism, educational programs, church planting efforts, and other special projects and opportunities that may arise.

Guest Relations/Outreach – responsible for overseeing the church’s welcome center, greeters, and the process of responding to guests and other prospects.

Pastoral Care – responsible for acting in a timely and appropriate fashion to provide for the pastoral care needs of the congregation, including family events and crisis support, visitation of the sick, funeral coordination, and other special needs that may arise. The team will consist of, but not be limited to, the church’s deacons.

Fellowship – responsible for planning and coordinating the church’s ministry of hospitality, including social events, congregational meals, seasonal celebrations, and other special church-wide events.

Administration – responsible for: 1) recommending church officers; 2) overseeing properties, including facilities management, landscaping, décor, and custodial service; 3) coordinating the church’s stewardship program, including budgeting, and budget promotion; 4) managing personnel issues, including staffing, benefits, reviews (excluding the pastor), and records; and 5) maintaining the church’s technological capabilities and resources; and 6) overseeing the church’s finances, including the ordering of audits when deemed necessary.

Steering – consists of team leaders and is responsible for facilitating coordination and evaluation of the church’s overall structure, with the pastor serving as team leader. Members are mutually responsible for managing their team’s budgets and expenditures in a balanced and prudent way.

Team membership: September is a time of “open-enrollment” for team membership insofar as the function of teams is emphasized at this time, with church members being encouraged to follow their calling to, interest in, or passion for a particular ministry represented in a particular team. Church members may join teams at any time of the year, but September marks the beginning of a new team “season” and is thus the optimal time for becoming involved.

Team leaders are annually elected by respective teams.

Teams are defined and governed according to the following principles:

- 1) Teams are self-directed in accordance with the church’s overall vision, and empowered to act upon initiatives within established boundaries such as budgets and purpose statements. Teams make decisions, solve problems, overcome challenges, and spend their budget without need for additional permission from outside the team.
- 2) Teams have line items in the church’s budget to spend at the team’s discretion, except in the event of an overall budget shortfall or unforeseen circumstance at which time the steering team will negotiate overall budget reductions or a re-allocation of funds.
- 3) Teams report their activities, plans, and expenditures to the steering team on a regular basis, and to the congregation no less than four times annually.
- 4) Non-team members (including non-church members) may attend meetings except in rare cases where sensitive issues are involved, but may not vote.
- 5) Team leaders are encouraged to recruit additional team members as needed. Membership in more than two teams is discouraged.

Church Fundraising Policy

Acknowledging the occasional need to conduct fundraising campaigns for camps, mission trips, and other “extracurricular” activities, the following guidelines shall apply:

- 1) A fundraiser is an event that sells a product or service with proceeds directed for a clearly stated and specifically defined purpose.
- 2) Fundraising events shall be approved by the sponsoring team. Fundraising events shall have a defined starting date and ending date.
- 3) The number and nature of the fundraising events will be determined by the Steering Team.
- 4) All proceeds are to be received by the church treasurer and accounted for no later than one week after the product or service has been received or rendered.

Adopted January 8, 2006
Amended October 1, 2006
Amended December 9, 2007
Amended June 22, 2008