

CONSTITUTION OF THE RICHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Richland Baptist Church, in order to work for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, do hereby band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers under the authority of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches. We adopt as our constitution the following articles:

ARTICLE I—NAME

This body of believers shall be known as the Richland Baptist Church of Kingdom City, Missouri, located at 5301 County Road 220.

ARTICLE II—PURPOSE

The purpose of this church shall be the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ and His gospel by following the teachings and practice of the New Testament in worship, proclamation of the gospel, Christian education and training, benevolent work, missionary labor, and ministry.

ARTICLE III— STATEMENT OF FAITH

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God and the basics for our beliefs. *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000, shall be the doctrinal guide for the Richland Baptist Church and shall govern its work. We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind. The ordinances of the church are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper (See Article III of the By-Laws).

ARTICLE IV—CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children religiously; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from drunkenness; to use our influence to combat the use of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense but always ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE V—POLITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership (See article I of the Bylaws). All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.

This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation among Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical and biblical, this church will cooperate with and support the Heart of Missouri Baptist Association, the Missouri Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention, and financially support the Cooperative Program in education, evangelization, missions, and ministry.

ARTICLE VI—MARRIAGE AND WEDDINGS

Our statement of faith, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, expresses our fundamental biblical conviction that Christian marriage is, by definition, the spiritual and physical uniting of one man and one woman in an exclusive covenant commitment for their joint lifetime. Christian marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church. As such, the Richland Baptist Church believes that wedding ceremonies on church property are spiritual observances of worship of God, who created this divine institution. As worship services, weddings on church property shall be officiated by one or more licensed and/or ordained ministers of the gospel. The church may decline to make its facilities and/or ministers available for any wedding if it is determined that one or both of the parties are not biblically and/or legally qualified to marry. Such determinations may be made by the pastors or the deacons, subject to the direction of the church.

No minister or employee of the Richland Baptist Church shall officiate any marriage ceremony unless such marriage is consistent with this policy.

ARTICLE VII—DISSOLUTION OF CHURCH AND DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

Section 1—In the event of the dissolution of the Richland Baptist Church, all property of the Richland Baptist Church, real, personal, and mixed of whatever kind and wherever located, shall be transferred to the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Section 2—Dissolution of the church may occur, if the church by official action, votes to dissolve as a church or upon termination of regular worship services for more than twelve (12) consecutive months. Upon such action the trustees are authorized to sign all necessary documents to convey the property as herein provided.

ARTICLE VIII—AMENDMENTS

Changes in the constitution may be made at any regular or special-called business meeting of the church, provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting. The meeting to make any amendments must be announced from the pulpit during two consecutive Sunday morning services prior to the meeting. Amendments to the constitution shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the church members present and voting.

BYLAWS OF THE RICHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH

ARTICLE I—CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1—General

This is a sovereign and congregationally-governed Baptist church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership. The pastoral leadership team shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership before making a recommendation to the members. Membership is conferred at a regularly scheduled family or members meeting at which point membership in other churches is relinquished by newly affirmed individual(s).

Section 2—Qualifications and Candidacy

1. A profession of faith in Jesus Christ accompanied by evidence of regeneration and repentance.
2. Baptism, following regeneration, as part of a commitment to following Christ. Immersion will be required for membership by persons who were sprinkled with water (or immersed) as infants in other Christian traditions.
3. A commitment and willingness to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the confession of faith.
4. A promise to keep the commitments expressed in the church membership covenant (indicated through signature).
5. Consistent evidence of regularly assembling with the church for nothing less than weekly family groups (aka Sunday School) and Sunday worship services.
6. Completion of the "Membership Matters" class and a membership interview.

Should there be any dissent as to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the pastors and ministerial staff for investigation and the making of a recommendation to the church within thirty (30) days. A three-fourths vote of those church members present and voting shall be required to elect such candidates to membership.

Those under the age of eighteen (18) may be voted into membership after professing their faith in Jesus Christ, meeting with a pastor, signing the church covenant, and being baptized. Then, upon a child's eighteenth (18) birthday (or graduation from high school), he or she must individually fulfill all the qualifications for admission to membership of the church (*those qualifications not yet already fulfilled*) to *continue* to be considered a member.

Section 3—New Member Orientation

All candidates for membership shall receive a copy of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, the *Church Covenant*, the *Constitution and Bylaws of the Richland Baptist Church*, and the *Policy Manual* and have time to read these documents and meet with a church leader to discuss any questions.

All candidates for membership will also be required to attend a new member's class ("Membership Matters") covering these documents, before being accepted as a member.

Section 4—Duties and Privileges of Members

1. Members are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the qualifications of membership and the duties contained 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.
2. All *active** members shall have full voting rights at age twelve (12) on all motions, recommendations, resolutions, and other matters that come before the church in regular and special business meetings. **NOTE: Any reference in the Bylaws to "active" members indicates a member who is in good standing with the church and has been attending at least two services/week (Sunday School/Family Groups; Sunday morning worship; Wednesday evening service) at least 75% of the time over the past six months.*

3. Every *active* member of the church is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the church.
4. Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.

Section 5—Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

1. Death of the member.
2. Transfer to another Baptist church.
3. Exclusion by action of this church by a three-fourths (3/4) vote at a business meeting.
4. Erasure upon request or proof of membership in a church of another denomination.

The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline (see Matthew 18:15-20 and section 6 below).

All resignations or transfers of membership by members in good standing shall be made official upon an affirmative vote of the active membership at a regularly scheduled members' meeting.

Section 6—Church Discipline

1. The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by 1) maintaining the moral and doctrinal purity of the congregation (1 Corinthians 5:6), 2) deterring believers from sin (1 Timothy 5:20), 3) promoting the spiritual welfare of the offending party by calling him or her to repent and turn to the Lord (Galatians 6:1).
2. Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties (as specified in the church covenant) 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 pastors and the discipline of the church, according to the instruction and example of Scripture.
3. Church discipline can include admonition by the pastors or congregation, suspension from communion for a definite period, deposition from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).
4. In ordinary cases of discipline, according to Matthew 18:15-17, it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's misconduct or doctrinal drift 1) to warn and correct them in private, seeking their repentance and restoration. 2) If they do not heed this warning, then the member issuing correction shall return, but accompanied this time by one or two other members who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. The first and second warnings may occur with no specified interval of time. 3) If the erring member still refuses to receive correction and demonstrate repentance, then the matter shall be brought to the attention of the pastors, if it hasn't already. If, after a thorough investigation, the pastors find there is sufficient evidence that the erring member has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then 4) the pastors shall inform the membership of the church at a members' meeting or special called meeting that they may collectively call the erring individual to repentance before the next meeting of the membership. If the erring individual demonstrates visible evidence of repentance, then notice of such action may be given at a members' meeting or special called meeting of the church. 5) If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the fellowship and membership of the church. They shall be welcome to join the church for worship, but shall be regarded as one who does not know the Lord. If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates visible signs of repentance and requests reinstatement before the pastors of the church, then the pastors shall inform the membership at a members' meeting or special called meeting and, if the church members are in

agreement that the repentance is observable and genuine, he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of membership.

5. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the pastors in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the third stage of discipline, (i.e. the informing of the church at a members' meeting or special called meeting in order that the church may call the erring member to repentance) or to the fourth stage of discipline, (i.e. a vote of the membership to dismiss the erring member from the membership of the church) when one or more of the following has occurred:
 - a) Where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public and detrimental to both the purity and witness of the church (1 Cor. 5:1-5);
 - b) Where the disciplined party has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine deemed false or erroneous by the pastors, then chosen to disregard the reproof and instruction of the pastors (Romans 16:17);
 - c) Or where the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from factious and divisive conduct and has chosen to disregard such warning (Titus 3:10-11).
6. By agreeing to "participate in the giving and receiving of corrective discipline as the church decides," as stated in the church covenant, the members of this church agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of their dismissal or because of the public disclosure to the membership of any comments or actions relevant to the third or fourth stages of church discipline.
7. Members, who are under discipline by the church forfeit and waive the right to resign their membership in this church. Resignation of membership is possible only by members in good standing and not under any disciplinary action of the church.
8. Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend this church are not guaranteed confidentiality regarding issues of a sensitive or personal nature which may need to be disclosed to others. This includes, but is not limited to, notification of the authorities if a crime has been committed or if a real threat of someone being endangered exists (Romans 13:1-7), as well as other violations of Scripture that may not result in physical danger.
9. Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the pastors, a member, non-member regular attendee, or any other individual may be notified that he or she is not to be present upon church property for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others or for the welfare of the church. Such required absence may, but need not, be concurrent with the discipline of that person.

ARTICLE II—CHURCH OFFICERS, COMMITTEES AND MINISTRIES

All who serve as officers of the church and those who serve on church committees shall be active members of this church.

Section 1—Church Officers

The Biblical offices in the church are pastors and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under these bylaws of ministerial church staff (if applicable), the moderator and vice-moderator, clerk, treasurer, and trustees. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

The officers of this church shall be:

1. The pastors (both staff and lay pastors alike)
2. The church staff

3. The deacons
4. A moderator and vice-moderator
5. A clerk and a treasurer
6. The trustees

PASTORS/ELDERS/OVERSEERS

1. The terms “elder,” “pastor/shepherd,” and “overseer/bishop” all refer to one and the same office (Titus 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1). Since all pastors occupy the same office, they have equal authority and act as a body (Acts 13:1-3; 15:22-23).
2. Pastors, as under-shepherds of Christ (1 Pet. 5:1-4), must serve as examples, teach sound doctrine, guard against false doctrine, care for the spiritual well-being of the church, govern the affairs of the church, equip the church for ministry, and raise up future leadership.
3. The pastors should be composed of spiritually mature men that are fully committed to Christ and His Church as evidenced by their faithful service and financial support as members of this congregation. Most importantly, these men consistently demonstrate the Christlike character and conduct required of a pastor in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The number of non-staff pastors shall, whenever possible, be greater than the number of those employed by the church. No pastor shall hold the office of deacon during his service as a pastor.
4. While we respect and allow for some level of theological diversity within the church on peripheral doctrines, we recognize the importance of maintaining unity within the church as well and especially among its leadership. To that extent, all current and prospective pastors must demonstrate intellectual agreement with the confession of faith of this church. Any man currently serving as a pastor in the church should inform the rest of the pastors if he departs, theologically, from the doctrinal positions articulated in the church’s confession.
5. The pastors are particularly responsible to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for the offices of pastor or deacon, oversee the work of the deacons, committees or teams, and employees of the church, to plan the corporate worship gatherings of the church, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, equip the membership for the work of the ministry and oversee the process of church discipline. The pastors are also responsible to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation (whether in classes, studies, or from the pulpit), including outside speakers, share our fundamental beliefs and theological convictions.
6. The pastors shall meet, at minimum (*whenever possible*), each month. In addition, special meetings of the pastors may be convened at the discretion of any pastor with reasonable promptness, subject to the adequate notice of such meeting to all pastors. No meeting of the pastors shall be convened without the awareness of the whole pastors. In lieu of a special called meeting, any matter requiring action and the consent of the pastors may be permitted if all pastors members consent in writing to the action, including electronic means.
7. Upon the recommendation of the pastors (which can include recommendations received by other church members), men who appear to demonstrate the character and possess the desire to serve in the office of pastor may engage in an intensive period of discipleship training and assessment including assigned reading, group discussion, theological inquiry, ministry evaluation and readiness to serve. At the completion of this period and upon mutual agreement that it would benefit the church for this man to join the pastors at this time, the aforementioned man will be presented to the membership for their consideration before a vote of the congregation determining whether or not to extend a call to serve as a pastor. The vote shall take place at a members’ meeting that is held at least one month after the recommendation, giving church members ample time for prayer and consideration. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for office should express such concern to the pastors. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the pastors as far in advance as possible. Upon affirmation by an overwhelming majority of at least three-fourths (75%) of the congregation at a members’ meeting, the candidate will be ordained/installed as a pastor with the laying on of hands before the congregation. All men who are called and set apart as pastors shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church.

8. In accordance with 1 Timothy 5:17, those pastors who lead well and labor at preaching and teaching are worthy of double honor. Therefore, at least one man from among the pastors will, whenever possible, be employed by the church thereby enabling him to give himself more freely to the work at hand. If no man among the pastors are available to give himself fully to the work of shepherding the flock through financial compensation from the church, the pastors will look outside itself to find a pastoral candidate who is qualified to serve as a pastor in the church and who possesses teaching and leadership gifts proportionate to the needs of the congregation. The pastors shall present the candidate before the membership for their consideration providing sufficient notice and opportunity for the members to meet, hear from, and interact with the candidate before a vote of the membership. No candidate from outside the current pastors will be called to serve and installed as a pastor without a three-fourths (75%) affirmative vote of the church's membership.
9. The pastors shall have the primary responsibility for establishing ministry positions and proposing the employment of individuals, whether from among the membership or those outside the church, to assist them in fulfilling their duties. All church employees must be affirmed by a three-fourths (75%) vote of the membership of the church. They must be in earnest agreement with the church's confession, be or become members of the church, and promise to keep the church's covenant.
10. The men composing the pastors are each expected to keep their charge and serve indefinitely unless otherwise disqualified or unable to fulfill the duties corresponding to their calling.
11. Any non-staff (unpaid) pastor may elect to take a sabbatical from his role as a pastor. The sabbatical can be approved by the pastors at any regular or special meeting. The sabbatical shall be for a fixed time which is agreed upon by the pastors, and it shall be announced to the church at members' meeting of the church.
12. A staff (paid) pastor may take a sabbatical if said sabbatical is approved by the rest of the pastors and the deacons, set for a fixed time which is agreed upon by the pastors and deacons, and approved by the vote of church members at a members' meeting.
13. Any charge(s) against a (staff or non-staff) pastors because of moral impropriety or heterodoxy shall be reported to the pastors by no less than two members in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-21. If the pastors believe the charges are of a substantial nature, they will proceed to investigate them in preparation for subsequent action.
14. If the accused pastor is found guilty on one or more charges, the pastors shall determine the consequences and the appropriate communication to the church (1 Timothy 5:20).
15. If the accused pastor is found not guilty of all charges, the pastors will determine what communication, if any, needs to be made to the congregation as well as, pastorally, what action should be taken with those who brought forth accusations.
16. A pastor who has been removed from office by disciplinary action may, depending on the circumstances and only after evidencing the fruit of repentance over time, be considered by the pastors and the congregation for a return to service in the office of pastor, following the selection and affirmation procedures outlined in the bylaws.
17. If it is decided after a formal evaluation process that either a staff or a non-staff pastor is 1) no longer functioning effectively or fruitfully in his role, or 2) is found to no longer qualify for his position because of personal or moral failure, he may be removed from the office of pastor. This change must be recommended by at least half (50%) of the pastors and affirmed by three-fourths (75%) of the membership of the church.

Pulpit Committee—When it is necessary to call a lead pastor, the church shall elect with at least (1) one week's notice, by secret ballot, a (7) seven-member Pulpit Committee following Sunday morning worship. The committee shall have at least (2) pastors (one lay and one staff, when possible), at least (1) one other man and at least (1) one woman.

It shall be the duty of this committee to take the necessary steps to secure a pastor. They shall investigate the merits of each man under consideration in regard to his personal character, education, ministerial record, preaching ability, Christian experience, and his call to the ministry in determining his fitness for said pastorate. When a suitable man is found, the committee shall invite him to come before the church with at least (1) one week's notice to the congregation and hold a service or services.

The pastors of this church must be willing to accept and subscribe to the doctrinal statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message* adopted in 2000, by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Church Covenant, and the Constitution and Bylaws of the Richland Baptist Church, and meet the qualifications as directed in I Timothy 3:1-7.

Calling a Pastor—The call of a lead pastor shall come before the church at a regular or called business meeting with notice of such meeting and its purpose having been announced from the pulpit the Sunday preceding such business meeting or notices mailed to active members at least four (4) days prior to such meeting, or both such methods of notice may be used.

The vote shall be taken no sooner than one (1) week after the prospective pastor's visit. Three-fourths (3/4) of the ballots cast by active members present and qualified to vote shall be required to issue a call. The vote shall be by secret ballot and shall be conducted by the pastors and deacons. The church shall consider only one candidate at one time.

General—The lead pastor shall be called for an indefinite period of time. The salary shall be fixed at the time of the call and may be changed by vote of the church at any regular business meeting, provided that such change has been submitted by the lay pastors and deacons and considered by the finance committee.

Termination of Pastorate—The term of office may be ended upon fourteen (14) days notification on the part of the pastor. The pastor shall notify the church on a Sunday morning, and at that time the church shall vote to accept his resignation.

Only after following the biblical principles as set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, termination of a pastor by the church shall be recommended by a majority of the pastors and deacons and voted on at a regular, or called, business meeting with notice of such meeting and its purpose having been announced from the pulpit the preceding Sunday, or written notices mailed to active members at least four (4) days prior to such meeting. A three-fourths (3/4) majority of the votes cast by secret ballot by active members present and qualified to vote shall be required to terminate the relationship. The church may ask that the pulpit be vacated immediately, but the pastor shall have thirty (30) days to vacate the parsonage (if applicable).

Interim Period without a Lead Pastor—In the case where the church is without a lead pastor, the pastors shall assume the responsibility of selecting a man who will lead the church and make the decisions the lead pastor would normally make. They are also responsible for making sure the pulpit is filled during this time.

The **ministerial staff** shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for such offices. A job description shall be written when the need for a staff member is determined. Those staff members of whom the church requires evidence of a personal call of God to minister shall be recommended to the church by the pastors and Personnel Committee and called by church action. At the time of resignation, not less than a two-week notice shall be given to the church. The church may vote to vacate such positions upon recommendation of the pastors and Personnel Committee, such termination being immediate, and the compensation conditions being the same as for the pastors, except that the amount shall relate to the individual's compensation.

Non-ministerial staff shall be composed of those persons, other than the pastors, employed by the church. Job descriptions for each position setting forth responsibilities, benefits, terms and conditions of employment, manner of calling or hiring, and termination shall be drafted by the Personnel Committee and approved by the church. The lead pastor shall be the supervisor of all staff.

Deacons, in accordance with the teachings of the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-7), are to be servants of the church. The deacons shall elect their officers and be organized to assist the pastors and for the consideration of problems related to the ministry. They are to serve with the pastors by:

1. Leading the church in the achievement of its mission

2. Proclaiming the gospel to believers and unbelievers
3. Assisting the pastors in worship activities (including, but not limited to turning on lights, heating or cooling the facility, unlocking doors, and preparing for observance of the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism), visitation, ministry to the church family, and other ministries that enhance the mission of the church
4. Overseeing the distribution of the church's Benevolent Fund to those in need (*This fund shall be audited annually by the Audit Committee.*)

Qualifications of Deacons—The qualifications of the deacons shall be those set forth in the New Testament in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.

Election of Deacons—An election shall be held to fill vacancies that result from a deacon not wishing to continue in active service, death of a deacon, or from church growth. The deacon body shall receive names from any active member of the church and/or select names to be placed on a deacons' candidate list. A man must be an active member of the church for a period of not less than one (1) year before being eligible for election as a deacon. The deacons shall interview candidates as to their qualifications and willingness to serve, and candidates are to be tested according to 1 Timothy 3:10. After they have successfully completed deacon training, they will be presented to the membership for at least four weeks prior to the business meeting in which they will be voted on. During this period members will be invited to affirm or express concerns about the qualifications of the candidates. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for deacon ministry should express such concern to the pastors and deacons as far in advance as possible before the relevant members' meeting. Otherwise, candidates will be affirmed and subsequently ordained and installed upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths (75%) of the members present at the Members' Meeting.

An ordained, inactive deacon may be chosen by the deacons at a regular meeting of the deacons to fill a vacancy and shall be voted into service at the next regular business meeting.

Number of Deacons—Whenever possible, there shall be at least (1) one deacon for every (12) twelve to (15) fifteen church families.

Ordination Procedure—Since deacons are to serve the church, the service will emphasize that a member of the congregation has been selected by the majority to serve the whole. The church's deacons and their spouses shall lead in the commissioning service. Other members of the church and guests shall be invited to participate.

Length of Term—Every three years, deacons will either be reaffirmed by the congregation to continue, or they have the option to rotate off the board of deacons and/or to take a sabbatical with the approval of the deacon board and pastors. Those who wish to resign their position as a deacon, whether at the end of his term or before the end of his term, will share this desire with the pastors and deacons, so advanced notice can be given to the church in order to elect a replacement.

Termination of a Deacon—Only after following the biblical principles as set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, the removal of a deacon from service shall be passed by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote by secret ballot of those active members present and qualified to vote at a specially called business meeting.

Moderator shall preside over all church business meetings, except when the matter before the church relates directly to the moderator. The length of term shall be two years unless extended by the reaffirmation/re-election of the church.

Vice-Moderator shall preside at business meetings in the absence of the moderator or when the matter before the church relates directly to the moderator. The length of term shall be two years unless extended by the reaffirmation/re-election of the church.

Clerk shall keep accurate minutes of the business meetings, keep other necessary records, and conduct all necessary correspondence for the church in connection with this office. All books and records pertaining to this office shall be turned over immediately to the clerk's successor. Duplicate copies of all transactions shall be maintained at a separate location. The clerk and church secretary shall serve as custodians of a copy of all original reports, correspondence, church business meeting minutes, and any other permanent church records, which shall be kept in a locked safe at the church. It shall be necessary for (1) one custodian and a church member to be present to unlock and view information therein. In the absence of the moderator and vice-moderator, the clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator shall be elected. The length of term shall be two years unless extended by the reaffirmation/re-election of the church.

Treasurer shall be custodian of all funds contributed to the church and all its auxiliaries for general and special purposes with the exception of the Benevolent Fund, which shall be under the control of the deacons. The Finance Committee shall promptly and regularly deposit all receipts in a bank account or accounts approved by the church and all disbursements shall be made by check. The treasurer shall make monthly reports to the church of all receipts and disbursements and the exact balance on hand in the bank. The treasurer shall provide all financial records at the close of the financial year for audit by the Audit Committee. All books and records pertaining to this office shall be turned over immediately to the treasurer's successor. The length of term shall be two years unless extended by the reaffirmation/re-election of the church.

Trustees are legal officers for the church and also serve as one of the standing committees. For more information, see standing committees below.

The officers of the **church corporation** shall be: president, vice-president, treasurer, and clerk. The officers shall be elected annually and serve as follows: chairman of deacons as president, chairman of trustees as vice president, church clerk as secretary and church treasurer as treasurer of the corporation.

The corporation's officers shall see to the filing of the annual reports necessary to maintain the corporation as a legal entity. They shall in no way usurp the power of the active members to control the operation of the church.

Section 2—Committees and Ministries

The lead pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and ministries, and whenever possible, at least one other pastor (lay or staff) shall also serve on each committee, either as a typical member or as an ex-officio member. A chairperson shall be named by each committee's or ministry's members to head said committee/ministry unless otherwise stated. All volunteers, who serve as committee members and ministry leaders, shall be elected annually by the church from candidates recommended by the Nominating Committee or from floor nominations at the June business meeting. Vacancies occurring during the church year shall be filled in like manner. However, only motions from the floor will be accepted for filling positions on the Nominating Committee. Any person serving on a committee or in a ministry who misses (3) three committee/ministry meetings during the fiscal year, without giving an excuse, can be removed from that committee or ministry. Also, members who do not maintain an active role in the life of the church can be removed from any committee, as long as the proper church discipline steps according to Article I, Section 6 are followed. No committee/ministry planning meetings shall be held during regular services.

Standing Committees are as follows and shall consist of the following number of members:

1. Trustees—(6) six members
2. Finance Committee—(6) six members
3. Personnel Committee—(5) five members
4. Nominating Committee—(3) three members

The term of office shall be (3) three years with a rotation order so that one-third (1/3) of the members rotate off each year. A member rotating off shall not serve on that committee again until one year has passed; however, a person filling a vacancy for less than one year may also fill the position for the next full term. No person shall serve on more than one Standing Committee at a time.

Trustees shall monitor the custody of church property. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action. The trustees shall affix their signatures to all legal documents involving the sale, mortgaging, purchase, or rental of church property or other legal documents where the signatures of the trustees are required. Emergency repairs may be taken care of by the trustees as needs arise.

Trustees are responsible for maintaining all church properties for ready use and recommending policies regarding use of church properties. They shall obtain and oversee all church insurance policies, both property and liability, and recommend employment of construction and repair personnel. (No church property is to be removed from the premises without signing out the items through the church office where a written record of borrowed property shall be kept with dates of removal and return.)

Finance Committee members must be active, supporting members of the church for a minimum of one (1) year and have shown support of the church and all its ministries through tithing (recommended as giving a minimum of ten percent (10%) of one's gross income regularly through this local church). They must support the idea of a budget.

It shall be the duty of this committee to prepare and present an annual budget to the church prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. They shall be responsible for counting and depositing all money that comes into the church and keeping the church advised of its financial position in a monthly report. They shall have supervision over the raising of funds to meet the budget and dispersing funds within the budget and shall be responsible for the promotion of stewardship among church members. The treasurer shall serve as an ex-officio member.

The expenditure of money for items not in the budget in excess of seventy-five dollars (\$75) must be referred to the Finance Committee for a recommendation before the request can be submitted to the church for approval.

A quorum of two-thirds (2/3) of the Finance Committee members is required to act on any financial matter pertaining to the church.

Personnel Committee shall be responsible for writing job descriptions for all staff positions, excluding the pastors. They shall obtain resumes and be responsible for interviewing candidates to fill positions as directed by the church and for background investigations of selected candidates prior to recommendation to the church for approval. The **supervising** pastors shall submit written, annual staff job evaluations to the committee who shall review and make salary recommendations to the Finance Committee.

Nominating Committee, in consultation with the church ministry personnel and leadership, shall coordinate the staffing of church leadership positions that are filled by volunteers (except for members of the Nominating Committee). They shall solicit from the active church membership volunteers to fill any position or vacancy, which may occur by seeking those persons desiring to serve with prayerful consideration and Christian discernment. Then they shall recommend such persons for election by the church.

Church Committees and Ministries may be established as deemed necessary by the church to provide ministry opportunities and as an outreach into the community. The job description of such committees/ministries shall be set by the church and shall be under church direction with all leaders being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church. None maintain a separate bank account or keep funds for expenses without church approval. These may be but are not limited to the following committees:

Audiovisual/Equipment Committee	Audit Committee
Child Abuse Prevention Committee	Children's Ministry
Church History Committee	Constitution Committee
Decorating Committee	Early Childhood
Food Pantry Ministry	Funeral Committee
Hostess Committee	Library Committee
Men's Ministry	Missions
Music Ministry	Prayer Ministry
Remembrance Committee	Senior Adult
Special Events	Sunday School/Family Groups
Usher Committee	Women's Ministry
Youth Ministry	

Ad-Hoc Committees may be formed as needed to complete a task by the church or a committee. This committee will remain in force until its designated task has been accomplished.

ARTICLE III—CHURCH ORDINANCES

Section 1—Baptism

This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

1. Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
2. The pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism. The deacons shall assist in the preparation for, and the observance of, baptism.

3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
4. A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastors and/or staff or deacons. If negative interest is ascertained on the part of the candidate, he or she shall be deleted from those awaiting baptism.

Section 2—The Lord's Supper

The church shall regularly observe, as scheduled by the pastors and deacons, the Lord's Supper during worship services. The pastors and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper, the deacons being responsible for the physical preparations.

ARTICLE IV—MEETINGS

Section 1—The church shall have regular bi-monthly business meetings (members' meetings) every odd-numbered month and one meeting in the month of June. By default, these meetings will take place on the second Sunday after the morning worship service, except for the month of May, when the meeting will take place on the third Sunday. However, upon agreement by the pastors and a majority of the deacons, the regular bi-monthly business meeting may be moved to another day of the month or canceled for special circumstances.

Section 2—Special called business meetings may be called by the pastors, the chairman of deacons, or the written request of ten (10) active members of the church delivered to the church clerk. Notice of any special called business meeting with the purpose for the meeting stated in the notice shall be announced during the Sunday morning worship service at least seven (7) days prior to such meeting.

Section 3—The annual budget and ministry leaders for the new church year shall be approved by church vote at the June business meeting.

Section 4—A quorum for a regular or special business meeting shall consist of twenty-five (25%) percent of the average monthly Sunday School/Family Groups attendance of active members for the previous month.

Section 5—All church meetings should be marked by genuine love, honor, humility, and mutual submission, which is fitting and required of those who are members of Christ's body.

ARTICLE V—BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The church corporation shall have seven (7) directors. The pastors, deacons and trustees shall annually elect from among their members two (2) pastors, two (2) deacons and two (2) trustees to serve along with the moderator as directors of the church's corporation.

The Board of Directors shall have general supervision of the affairs of the church between its business meetings, shall be subject to the orders of the church, and shall report all actions taken by the Board to the church for ratification. None of its acts shall conflict with the provisions in the *Constitution and Bylaws of the Richland Baptist Church* or any action taken by the church.

The Board of Directors shall meet at such time as agreed upon or by call of the president or upon written request of (3) three board members.

ARTICLE VI—POLICY MANUAL

The pastors and deacons shall create and maintain a policy manual for policies pertaining to staff, personnel, building usage, property and procedures. The policies in the policy manual shall not be inconsistent with or contradict the church constitution or bylaws.

ARTICLE VII—DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the church (see, e.g., Matthew 18: 15–20, I Corinthians 6: 1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles (such as mediation or arbitration), without reliance on the secular courts. However, processes such as these are not a substitute for any disciplinary process set forth in this constitution, and shall in no way affect the authority of the church to investigate reports of misconduct, conduct hearings, administer discipline of members or contact the necessary authorities in criminal matters.

ARTICLE VIII—INDEMNIFICATION

SECTION 1—MANDATORY INDEMNIFICATION: If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the pastors determines that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and

(c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

SECTION 2—PERMISSIVE INDEMNIFICATION: At the discretion of the pastors, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

ARTICLE IX—AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS

These bylaws can be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of active members at a regular business meeting, provided the proposed amendment has been moved and seconded at a prior business meeting. Such changes shall be directed through the Constitution Committee.