

CONSTITUTION OF OAK GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH, ASHDOWN, ARKANSAS

Revised by the membership on February 10, June 9, and November 3, 2021

ARTICLE I

The name of this congregation shall be the Oak Grove Baptist Church, Ashdown, Arkansas.

ARTICLE II

ARTICLES OF FAITH—WHAT WE TEACH:

From the time of the Apostles to today, Christians have laid out doctrine (beliefs) in brief, definitive statements. As those who know God, we believe it necessary to set forth in a concise fashion the cornerstone truths that our church teaches as guided by Scripture. Our Doctrinal Statement summarizes essential Christian beliefs, shows unity in Christ, and affirms our belief in the Christian truths which have been held by the church throughout the ages and particularly since the Protestant reformation, including believer's baptism, and congregational polity (government).

Certain theological distinctives which distinguish Oak Grove Baptist Church from other churches who would affirm the basic doctrines and which shape the teaching of the church are noted. We do not expect all members to embrace all aspects of these distinctives, but members should expect that nothing contrary to these distinctives will be taught.

1. The Holy Scriptures

We teach that the Holy Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God, written by human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to choose the exact words that would convey God's intentions,¹ contained no error in the original documents,² and is the only sufficient, certain, and authoritative standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. We teach that it is authored by God, its subject is truth and therefore contains no errors, and salvation is its ultimate end.³ We teach that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us. Therefore, it is, and will always remain, the true center of Christian union, and the final authority in testing all claims about what is true and right.⁴

¹ John 10:35; 14:26; 16:12-15; Acts 1:16; 3:21; 1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:16

² Numbers 23:19; Proverbs 30:5-6; Psalm 12:6; 119:89; Matthew 24:35; John 17:17; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18

³ John 5:38-39; 8:31-32; 20:31; Romans 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 1:10-12

⁴ Isaiah 8:20; Psalm 119:59-60; Matthew 5:18; 22:29,31,32; Acts 17:11; 20:32; 28:23; Romans 2:12; Ephesians 2:20; Philippians 3:16; 1:9-11; 2 Timothy 3:17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 John 4:1,6

2. God

We teach that there is one, and only one living and true God,⁵ an infinite all-knowing Spirit,⁶ the Maker and supreme Ruler of heaven and earth⁷ who is inexpressibly glorious in His holiness,⁸ and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love.⁹ We teach that in the unity of the Godhead there are three eternally existent persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,¹⁰ which are equal in every divine attribute yet they execute distinct but complementary functions in the great work of creation, providence, and redemption.¹¹

⁵ Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 48:12; Jeremiah 10:10; Matthew 16:16; 1 Corinthians 8:4,6; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 3:12; Revelation 7:2

⁶ Exodus 3:14; John 4:24

⁷ Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 83:18, 147:5; 148:13; Isaiah 48:13; Daniel 4:25,34-35; Romans 1:20; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 3:4

⁸ Exodus 15:11; Psalm 103:19; 138:5; Isaiah 6:3; Romans 11:36; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Revelation 4:6-8

⁹ Jeremiah 2:12-13; Matthew 10:37; Mark 12:30; Revelation 4:11; 5:12-14

¹⁰ Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-3; 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:5-6

¹¹ John 5:17; 10:30; 14:11,23; 17:5, 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; 8:6; Ephesians 2:18; Philippians 2:5-6

3. Distinctive || God's Creation of the Universe and Man

We teach that God created from nothing all that now exists in six days, and it was all very good.¹² We teach that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit acted together in the work of creation,¹³ that out of all living things only man was created in God's image and without sin, and that God granted him dominion over all lesser forms of life and over the earth itself.¹⁴ We teach that God, being eternally joyfully self-sufficient and not being moved by any incompleteness, need, or deficiency within Himself,¹⁵ was pleased in creation to display His glory for the everlasting joy of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.¹⁶ We teach that God directly created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side, and that Adam and Eve were the historical parents of all humanity,¹⁷ and therefore there is only one race—the human race—though there are many distinct people groups.¹⁸

¹² Genesis 1:1-2:3; Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Psalm 24:1-2; 33:6, 9; Jeremiah 10:12-13; Acts 17:24; Romans 4:17; Hebrews 11:3

¹³ Genesis 1:1-2, 26-28; Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2

¹⁴ Genesis 1:26-28,31; 9:6; Psalm 8:3-8; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9

¹⁵ Exodus 3:13-14; Job 22:2-3; Psalm 50:9-15; Acts 17:25

¹⁶ Isaiah 35:10; 43:7; Romans 1:20; Revelation 5:9; 7:9-10

¹⁷ Genesis 2:7; 2:21-22; 3:20; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22,45

¹⁸ Genesis 3:20; 10:1-32; 11:1-9; Deuteronomy 32:8; Malachi 2:10; Luke 3:23-38; Acts 17:24-28; 1 Timothy 2:13; Revelation 5:9

4. Providence

We teach that from all eternity God decrees, or permits, everything that occurs.¹⁹ We teach that He is absolutely sovereign over all creatures and events and perpetually upholds all things;²⁰ therefore, nothing is contingent (dependent on the action of humans) or uncertain to Him.²¹ Yet God did this in such a way that He is neither the author nor approver of sin, nor does He violate the will or limit the moral accountability of mankind.²² In God's infinite wisdom and power, all things work together for the good of those who love Him,²³ and for the glory of His name.²⁴

¹⁹ Numbers 23:19; Psalm 115:3; 135:6; Isaiah 45:6-7; 46:9-11; Acts 15:18; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 1:3; 6:17

²⁰ 1 Chronicles 29:11-12; Job 38:4-41; Proverbs 16:4,9; 21:1; Daniel 4:25; Matthew 10:29-31; John 19:11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Romans 9:15-21

²¹ Job 1:21; Proverbs 16:33; Isaiah 14:27; Ezekiel 11:5

²² Genesis 3:6; Psalm 50:21; Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5; 2:16; 1 Peter 1:17

²³ Genesis 50:20; Deuteronomy 8:15-16; Romans 8:28; Hebrews 12:5-11

²⁴ Exodus 9:16; Isaiah 60:21; Ezekiel 28:20-24; Romans 9:22-24; 11:33-36

5. The Fall of Man and Its Effect on Humanity

We teach that Adam, as the representative of all mankind, was created morally upright and perfect,²⁵ but was led astray from God's word and wisdom by the subtlety of Satan's deceit thereby voluntarily and deliberately falling from his original righteousness and communion with God²⁶ and as a consequence every person is now a sinner by nature,²⁷ by choice, and by divine declaration,²⁸ which results in a state of radical depravity, meaning that every dimension of his being is distorted by sin.²⁹ Apart from the grace of God, fallen man is ruled by sin, hostile to God, sees the message of the cross as foolishness,³⁰ and neither desires nor is able to love God, keep His laws, understand the gospel, repent of sin, or trust in Christ³¹ and therefore is justly condemned to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.³² During this life, this corruption of nature remains in those who are regenerated³³ and calls for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith.³⁴

²⁵ Genesis 1:26-27, 31; 2:16-17; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Acts 17:26-29; Romans 2:14-15

²⁶ Genesis 3:6-24; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14

²⁷ Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; John 3:6; Romans 3:23; 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22,45,49

²⁸ Genesis 6:12; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:9-18; 8:7; James 1:13-15

²⁹ Genesis 6:5; Deuteronomy 29:4; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:18; 1:28-32; 6:16,20; Titus 1:15-16; Revelation 22:11

³⁰ Romans 5:10,12; 8:6-8; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 1:13, 21; 2 Timothy 2:26; Titus 3:3; James 4:4; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 21

³¹ Jeremiah 13:23; Mark 4:10-12; John 6:44, 65; 8:43-47; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 4:17-19

³² Ezekiel 18:19-20; Matthew 20:15; Romans 1:20; 2:1-16; 3:19; Galatians 3:10; 3:22

³³ Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 7:18,23; Galatians 5:16-18; Hebrew 3:12-13; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 1:8

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

6. Christ and the Way of Salvation

We teach that salvation is by grace alone and that the only way of salvation is in the name of Jesus Christ who was sent into the world by the Father to save sinners.³⁵ We teach that Christ was born of a virgin,³⁶ lived a sinless life,³⁷ and died a sacrificial death on the cross where He absorbed our punishment and appeased the wrath of God against us³⁸ through the one time act of shedding His blood to atone for our sins.³⁹ We teach that on the third day he rose victoriously from the dead and is now enthroned in heaven where he continually pleads with the Father on our behalf,⁴⁰ uniting the compassions of his human nature with his divine attributes⁴¹ so that he is qualified in every way to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.⁴²

³⁵ John 3:16,17; 17:2; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:19-22; 5:8; 10:13-15; Galatians 4:4-5

³⁶ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:14

³⁷ Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 4:1-11; Romans 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:14,17; 4:15, 7:26-28

³⁸ Isaiah 53:10; Romans 4:25; 5:9; 8:1,3; Ephesians 2:3-6; Galatians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9

³⁹ Matthew 20:28; John 10:15; 19:30; Acts 20:28; Romans 3:23-25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 5:25; Hebrews 9:11-14

⁴⁰ Matthew 28:5-7; Acts 1:3, 9-11; 2:33; 5:31; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8; Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:8,13; 8:1

⁴¹ John 5:21, 26; Acts 2:29-36; 17:31; Romans 1:4; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 2:9

⁴² Romans 8:34; Hebrews 2:18; 4:14-16; 7:25-26

7. The Freeness of Salvation

We teach that the blessings of salvation are freely offered to all by the gospel,⁴³ that it is the immediate duty of all to accept the gospel with a glad, obedient faith and Godly sorrow,⁴⁴ and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth other than his own inherent depravity (sinfulness) by which he refuses to listen and suppresses the truth in unrighteousness thereby rejecting the gospel⁴⁵ which makes him wholly responsible for his just condemnation.⁴⁶

⁴³ Isaiah 55:1; Romans 10:9,13; Revelation 22:17

⁴⁴ Mark 1:15; Romans 1:15-17; 16:26; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10

⁴⁵ Proverbs 1:24; Matthew 23:37; John 5:39-40; Acts 13:46; Romans 1:18-32; 9:32

⁴⁶ Matthew 11:20-22; John 3:18,19; 2 Thessalonians 1:8

8. Grace in Regeneration

We teach that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again.⁴⁷ This results in the mind being spiritually and savingly enlightened to understand the Word of God which is accomplished in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit⁴⁸ and the divine truth of the Word of God.⁴⁹ This is done in a way that brings about voluntary obedience and faith⁵⁰ which is evidenced by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:26; John 3:3,6-7; Romans 2:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 14:3; 21:27

⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 55:8-9; John 1:13; 3:8; Romans 5:5; 11:33-34

⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:30; James 1:16-18; 1 Peter 1:22-25

⁵⁰ Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 2:13; 1 John 4:7; 5:1

⁵¹ Matthew 3:8-10; 7:20; Romans 8:9; Galatians 5:16-23; Ephesians 4:20-24; 5:9; Colossians 3:9-11; 1 John 5:4,18

9. Faith and Repentance

We teach that faith and repentance are required by Scripture and inseparably linked graces that are granted to us as a gift by the regenerating Spirit of God⁵² that deeply convince us of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ.⁵³ We then turn to God with true repentance, confession of sin, and pleas for mercy⁵⁴ while whole heartedly receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all sufficient Savior.⁵⁵

⁵² Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8; 1 John 5:1

⁵³ John 16:8; Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31

⁵⁴ Psalm 51; Luke 15:18-21; 18:13; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11; James 4:7-10

⁵⁵ Psalm 2:6; Matthew 13:44; Acts 3:22-23; Romans 10:9-11; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 1:8; 4:14; 7:25

10. Justification

We teach that Christ freely justifies (declares free from guilt or blame) those that believe in him⁵⁶ which includes the pardon of sin⁵⁷ and the promise of eternal life without any consideration of works which we have done. Rather it is solely through faith in the shed blood of Christ⁵⁸ by which His perfect righteousness is freely imputed (credited) to us so that God sees us as having the righteousness of Christ.⁵⁹ This brings us into a peaceful and favorable state (right standing) with God, and secures all the benefits of salvation for us.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ John 1:16; Romans 4:23-25; 5:1-2; 8:1,30; Galatians 2:16; 3:24; Ephesians 3:8

⁵⁷ Isaiah 53:11-12; Zechariah 13:1; Matthew 9:6; Acts 10:43; 13:39; Romans 4:6-8; 5:9

⁵⁸ Romans 3:23-24,28; 4:4-5; 5:17-21; 6:23; Philippians 3:7-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 John 2:25

⁵⁹ Romans 3:24-26; 4:23-25; 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 2:12

⁶⁰ Matthew 6:33; Romans 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 1 Timothy 4:8

11. God's Purpose of Grace

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies.⁶¹ This in no way contradicts or negates the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord.⁶²

⁶¹ John 6:37-40; 10:14-16; 15:16; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; 9:10-18; 11:5-6; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 John 4:19

⁶² Ezekiel 18:23,32; 33:11; Matthew 25:31-46; John 3:18-19,36; 5:40; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 1:18-21; 2:4-5; 9:19-23; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17

12. Sanctification

We teach that sanctification is the process by which the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God and becomes more and more like Christ.⁶³ We teach that it is a progressive work that is begun in regeneration,⁶⁴ continued through self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer by the power of God's Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,⁶⁵ but never complete in this life.⁶⁶

⁶³ Romans 8:5; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 1:4; Philippians 2:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 5:23; 1 Peter 1:2

⁶⁴ Proverbs 4:18; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 1:13-14; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-16; Hebrews 6:1; 2 Peter 1:5-8

⁶⁵ Matt. 26:41; Luke 9:23; 11:35; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 4:11-12,30; 6:18; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:29

⁶⁶ Romans 13:11

13. Perseverance of the Saints

We teach that those who are true believers can neither totally nor finally fall from a state of grace.⁶⁷ This persevering attachment to Christ is what distinguishes them from temporary believers.⁶⁸ Though true believers may fall through neglect and temptation, into sin, such that they incur God's displeasure and grieve the Holy Spirit, their graces and comforts become impaired, they hurt and scandalize others and bring temporary judgments on themselves, and disgrace the church,⁶⁹ nevertheless they will renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 1 John 2:27-28; 3:9; 5:18

⁶⁸ Job 17:9; Matthew 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; 13:18; 1 John 2:19

⁶⁹ 2 Samuel 12:14; Isaiah 64:5,9; Psalms 32:3-4; 51:10,12; Matthew 26:70,72,74; Ephesians 4:30

⁷⁰ Luke 22:32,61-62; Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Hebrews 1:14; 13:5; Jude 24-25; 1 John 4:4

14. The Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

We teach that the law of God is the holy, just, good, eternal and perfect rule of righteousness and moral government⁷¹ and that the inability of fallen men to fulfill its precepts described in the Scriptures arises entirely from their love of sin.⁷² The one great end of the gospel, and the means of grace connected with the church, is to deliver fallen men from bondage to sin, and to restore them to willing and cheerful obedience to what the will of God as revealed in the law requires.⁷³

⁷¹ Matthew 5:17; Luke 16:17; Romans 3:31; 7:12

⁷² Jeremiah 13:23; Romans 3:20; 4:15; 8:7-8

⁷³ Psalm 119; Romans 7:7,14-22; 8:2-4; 10:4; Galatians 3:21; 1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 8:10; Jude 20,21

15. Distinctive || Christ's Church and its Officers

We teach that there is one universal Church, composed of all those, in every time and place, who are chosen in Christ and united to Him through faith by the Spirit in one Body, with Christ Himself as the all-supplying, all-sustaining, all-supreme, and all-authoritative Head.⁷⁴ We teach that it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches which consist of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, associated with one another for fellowship,⁷⁵ hearing the Word of God proclaimed,⁷⁶ practicing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper,⁷⁷ governed by His commandments as revealed in His Word,⁷⁸ the building of each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love,⁷⁹ and holding each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical discipline.⁸⁰ Its only scriptural officers are pastors (men called to teach and govern as shepherds, overseers, and elders of the body — three terms that are used interchangeably in the New Testament for the same office) and deacons (those called to serve the church) whose qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.⁸¹ Women are not to fulfill the role of pastor in the local church, but are encouraged to use their gifts in appropriate roles that edify the body of Christ and spread the gospel.⁸²

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; 3:6; 4:15-16; 5:23; Colossians 1:18

⁷⁵ Acts 2:41-42, 47; 8:1; 11:21-23; 1 Corinthians 1:1-8; 4:17; 14:23; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 3 John 9

⁷⁶ Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 4:1-2

⁷⁷ Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:2, 23-26

⁷⁸ Matthew 28:20; John 14:15,21; 15:12; Acts 5:11; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Galatians 6:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 John 4:21; 2 John 6

⁷⁹ Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 5:6; 12:1-31; 14:12,26; 2 Corinthians 2:17; Ephesians 4:1-16

⁸⁰ Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; James 5:19-20

⁸¹ Acts 6:4; 14:23; 15:22; 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17 Titus 1:5-9

⁸² 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12-13

16. Evangelism

We teach that the ministry of evangelism (sharing and proclaiming the message of salvation only possible by grace through faith in Jesus Christ) and discipleship (helping followers of Christ grow up into maturity in Christ) is a responsibility of all followers of Jesus Christ.⁸³ It is a priority in evangelism to unite new believers with local churches.⁸⁴ The ultimate aim of world missions is that God would create, by His Word, worshippers who glorify His name through glad-hearted faith and obedience.⁸⁵

⁸³ Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:9-15; 1 Peter 3:15

⁸⁴ Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; Hebrews 10:19-25

⁸⁵ John 4:23; Romans 1:5; 15:8-11

17. Distinctive || Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We teach that only two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We teach that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water,⁸⁶ into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit⁸⁷ to give a solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer's faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior which results in death to sin and resurrection to a new life.⁸⁸ We teach that it is required prior to being admitted to church membership.⁸⁹ We do not believe in baptismal regeneration, nor do we hold that baptism is necessary for salvation. We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of the death of Christ until he comes⁹⁰ and should always be preceded by solemn self-examination.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Matthew 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; Acts 2:38-42; 8:12, 36-39; 16:32-34; 18:8

⁸⁷ Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:47-48

⁸⁸ Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:18-21

⁸⁹ Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42; 10:48; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27;

⁹⁰ Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:17-32

⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 10:3-32; 11:28-29

18. The Lord's Day

We teach that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath. It is kept holy to the Lord when people have first prepared their hearts appropriately and arranged their everyday affairs in advance so that they may observe a holy rest and fill their day with public and private acts of worship and the duties of necessity and mercy.⁹²

⁹² Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:8; Leviticus 19:30; Psalm 26:8; 118:15,24; Isaiah 56:2-8; 58:13-14; Mark 2:27; Luke 10:42; John 20:19; Acts 2:42-47; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 4:3-11; 10:24-25; Rev. 1:10

19. Separation and Unity

We teach that because of the holiness of God in all His attributes and our responsibility to guard the purity of the Gospel believers are commanded to pursue holiness,⁹³ and separate from false teachers and clearly disobedient brethren.⁹⁴ However, they must also value the eager pursuit of unity with faithful brethren in the body of Christ.⁹⁵ We teach the importance of discipleship,⁹⁶ mutual accountability of all believers to each other,⁹⁷ as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture.⁹⁸

⁹³ Leviticus 20:7; Romans 12:2; Hebrews 12:14; James 1:27; 1 Peter 1:14-16

⁹⁴ Romans 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15

⁹⁵ John 17:20-23; Romans 12:18; Ephesians 4:1-6

⁹⁶ Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2

⁹⁷ Matthew 18:5-14; Galatians 6:1-2

⁹⁸ Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16

20. Distinctive || Family

We teach that God established the institution of marriage in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, whom He created male and female as unique biological persons made to complete each other, and that the pattern of the monogamous union of one genetic male and one genetic female in marriage until death parts them is to be followed.⁹⁹ We teach that God's plan for human sexuality is to be expressed only within the context of marriage.¹⁰⁰ Christians are to marry only other Christians or remain single as God enables them.¹⁰¹ Children are to be seen as gifts from God and are to be raised for God's glory and service. An authority structure exists within the family. The Lord is the Head of the home, the husband is the head of the wife and is to love her as Christ loves the Church, and children are to be obedient to their parents.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Genesis 1:27; 2:21-24; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 7:39

¹⁰⁰ Genesis 1:28; 1 Corinthians 7:2-3; Hebrews 13:4

¹⁰¹ 1 Corinthians 7:8-9,25-28; 2 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁰² Psalm 127:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21

21. Distinctive || Sanctity of Life

We teach that human life is sacred from conception to its natural end, and that we must have concern for the physical and spiritual needs of those around us.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Psalm 139:13; Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 12:20-21; Galatians 6:10

22. Civil Government

We teach that God has ordained civil authorities to be under Him and over the people, for His own glory and the public good.¹⁰⁴ Christians should make requests and prayers for those in authority and submit in the Lord to all things they lawfully require,¹⁰⁵ except when they oppose the will of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁰⁶ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 16:18; Exodus 18:23; 2 Samuel 23:3; Romans 13:1-7

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 22:21; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14

¹⁰⁶ Daniel 3:15-18; 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29; Matthew 14:4, 9-13

¹⁰⁷ Psalm 2:1-12; 72:11; Matthew 23:10; Revelation 19:16

23. The Righteous and the Wicked

We teach that there is a radical and essential difference between those made righteous in Christ and those who remain wicked and disobedient.¹⁰⁸ We teach that only those who through faith are justified (given right standing with God) in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem,¹⁰⁹ while all who remain unrepentant and do not believe are wicked in his sight, and under the curse and wrath of God.¹¹⁰ We teach that a persons state, righteous or wicked, and therefore their eternal destination, with God or separated from him eternally in Hell, is fixed at death and will remain fixed for all eternity.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Genesis 18:23; Psalm 10:4; Proverbs 10:24; 11:31; 12:26; Ecclesiastes 3:17; Isaiah 5:20; 55:6-7; Malachi 3:18; Matthew 7:13-14; 13:1-50; 25:1-46; Acts 10:34-35; Romans 6:16

¹⁰⁹ Luke 9:23-26; Romans 1:17; 6:18,22; 7:6; 1 Corinthians 11:32; 1 Peter 4:17-18; 1 John 2:29; 3:7

¹¹⁰ Isaiah 57:21; Matthew 13:30,41-42,49-50; 25:41; John 3:36; Galatians 3:10; 1 John 5:19

¹¹¹ Proverbs 14:32; Luke 12:4-5; 16:25; John 8:21-24; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 22:11

24. Last Things

We teach the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ,¹¹² the bodily resurrection of the dead,¹¹³ the establishment of His kingdom,¹¹⁴ the final separation of Satan with his hosts and all the wicked, who are outside of Christ, from the benevolent presence of God to everlasting conscious misery which will eternally demonstrate His justice, and the everlasting joy of the righteous serving God and giving Him unending praise and glory which will eternally demonstrate His mercy.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Matthew 24:30-31; 28:20; Mark 13:24-27; 14:61-62; Luke 24:39-43; Acts 1:9-11; 3:21; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 2:28; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16

¹¹³ Job 19:25-26; Isaiah 26:19; John 6:40; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:12-58

¹¹⁴ Luke 22:28-30; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:4-6

¹¹⁵ Psalm 16:11; Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 3:12; 13:37-43,49-50; 19:29; 25:23,31-46; Mark 9:43-48; John 4:36; 5:28-29; 11:25-26; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:2-16; 3:5-6; 6:23; 9:22-23; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:10-11; Philippians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Hebrews 1:10-12; 6:1-2; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:3-13; 1 John 4:17; Jude 4,7; Revelation 14:11; 20:11-15; 22:11

25. The Glory of God

We teach that Christians must live for God's glory alone¹¹⁶ through their awareness and enjoyment of His Person,¹¹⁷ submission to His authority¹¹⁸ and reliance upon His goodness.¹¹⁹ In truth, all things that have or will transpire, serve to glorify God as their highest purpose.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Peter 4:11

¹¹⁷ Psalm 23:4; 46:1; 139:7-10; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 16:17; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6

¹¹⁸ 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Micah 6:8; John 15:14-17; Hebrews 12:28-29

¹¹⁹ Psalm 18:1-3; Isaiah 41:10; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Matthew 6:25-32; Luke 11:11-13; Philippians 4:6-7

¹²⁰ Psalm 46:10; 86:9; Malachi 1:11; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:20-21

Formulated with reference to [The Baptist Faith and Message 2000](#), the [New Hampshire Confession of Faith \(1853\)](#), and the [1689 Baptist Confession for the 21st Century modernized by Stan Reeves](#)

ARTICLE III

CHURCH COVENANT:

What It Means to Be a Christian and a Member of Oak Grove Baptist Church (OGBC)

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation. As members of OGBC we covenant (mutually commit) with one another to affirm, believe, and live in accordance with the following core truths which affirm OGBC's belief in the Christian truths which have been held by the church throughout the ages and particularly since the Protestant reformation.

God Is Sovereign Creator: The Bible says we were created by the one true God (Yahweh) to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything. Therefore, He also owns and rules everything.¹²¹ That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

¹²¹ John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 103:19

God Is Holy: God is absolutely and perfectly holy; therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil.¹²² God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

¹²² Isaiah 6:3; James 1:13

Mankind Is Sinful: According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: “There is no man who does not sin,” 1 Kings 8:46. That doesn’t mean we’re incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we’re utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own.¹²³

¹²³ Romans 3:10-12

Sin Demands a Penalty: God’s holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death.¹²⁴ That’s why simply changing our patterns of behavior can’t solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences.

¹²⁴ Ezekiel 18:4

Jesus Is Lord and Savior: Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Even though God’s justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for His church. Christ’s death satisfied the demands of God’s justice and Christ’s perfect life satisfied the demands of God’s holiness, thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:26

The Character of Saving Faith: True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin and pursue Christ and obedience to Him.¹²⁶ It isn’t enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God,¹²⁷ but they don’t love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Luke 13:3,5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:3; 1 John 2:3

¹²⁷ James 2:19

¹²⁸ Ephesians 2:10

Having agreed with these truths we, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, covenant (mutually commit to) the following with one another:

Salvation and Baptism: That by grace through faith we have received Jesus Christ as the Lord, Savior, and, supreme Treasure of our lives, and upon public profession of our faith we were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Doctrinal Unity and Fellowship: We will welcome, and test biblically, instruction from the Scriptures by the pastor(s) and other teachers of the church which accords with *Article II, Articles of Faith—What We Teach* (AOF), seeking to grow toward biblical unity in the truth. We will not be divisive to or teach anything contrary to Scripture or the AOF, and will submit to church leadership and be diligent to preserve unity and peace.

Stewardship: We will consistently contribute, as a good steward of God’s blessings, such time, talent, and resources, in the measure that God prospers us, so that the ministry of local and worldwide spread of the gospel may continue.

Responsibilities: We will maintain family and personal devotions, educate our children in the Christian faith, and seek the salvation of our family and friends. We will diligently exercise self-control such that our lifestyle exhibits both true Christian love and personal holiness. We will seek God's help in abstaining from all substances, and practices which bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.

Fellowship Loyalty: We will faithfully assemble with this body of believers for weekly services, striving to maintain unity, and doing all we can to stimulate love and good deeds in others as we seek to exercise our spiritual gifts in faithful service. We will commit to praying for the ministry here in this church, our brothers and sisters in Christ, the pastors(s) and deacons, and for the lost who need the Savior. That when we leave this church for righteous reasons, we will, if possible, unite with a like-minded church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant.

Accountability: We will be accountable to our brothers and sisters in Christ to adhere to this covenant and to likewise hold them accountable for the same, using all diligence to address concerns biblically and discretely. We will confess our sin to God and to fellow believers, repent and seek help to put our sin to death.

Church Discipline: We will follow the biblical procedures of church discipline where sin is evident in another, with the hope of bringing about repentance and restoration, and submit ourselves to discipline if the need should ever arise.

Scriptural Authority: We will submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues.

This covenant will be read and affirmed upon admission of a new member(s).

We will use this covenant to evaluate our commitment to the body of OGBC on an ongoing basis and affirm our continuing conviction and purpose to adhere to it. We will notify the pastor(s) if at any time we can no longer commit to this covenant, or have concerns regarding OGBC.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP:

Section 1. Qualifications

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must profess saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, give evidence of regeneration, and have been baptized in obedience to Christ's command following his or her regeneration (See ARTICLE II, Section 17, above, for details on valid believer's baptism by immersion). Each member must wholeheartedly believe in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible, agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in ARTICLE II, Articles of Faith—What We Teach, above, and to keep the commitments expressed in ARTICLE III, Church Covenant, above.

Section 2. Requests for Membership

Membership may be requested in the following ways:

- A. Baptism: Requests for membership by baptism may be received at any time.
- B. Statement: Requests for membership may be received upon statement affirming his or her faith, baptism in accordance with ARTICLE II, SECTION 17, above, and church membership.
- C. Letter: Requests for membership from persons coming from a Baptist Church of like Faith and Order may be received upon presentation or receipt of a letter affirming that they are a member in good standing.
- D. Restoration: Any person who has been dismissed due to church discipline (ARTICLE IV, Section 6, D, below) may be restored to membership upon request, demonstration of repentance and/or reparation, and approval by the church.

Section 3. Pastoral Review of Prospective Members

The pastor(s) shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership by reviewing relevant evidence and/or interviewing the prospective member. A brief testimony which demonstrates an understanding of the gospel may be requested, when deemed appropriate. Any questions or disagreement with the Church Covenant or Constitution must be indicated when requesting membership. If any discrepancies are identified and not resolved during the interview and the prospective member still wishes to be presented to the church for membership, the pastor(s) will make the results of their review known when they are presented to the congregation so that they can make an informed vote regarding the prospective members acceptance or denial.

Section 4. Presentation for Membership

The pastor(s) will announce the prospective members desire to join our congregation during a regular meeting of the church on Sunday morning. Prospective members will be denied membership or received into fellowship in accordance with the following requirements:

- A. Denial of Membership. If, upon review of the facts relating to a prospective member, the church determines that the prospective member does not confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the prospective member practices a lifestyle that exemplifies a blatant disregard for Scripture and is unwilling to repent and amend their lifestyle to be in keeping with Scripture, or that the prospective member holds beliefs incompatible with the Church Covenant or Constitution, membership shall be denied.
- B. Reception of Members. Prospective members may be received into the congregation if, upon review of the facts relating to a prospective member it is determined that the requirements of ARTICLE IV, SECTION 1, above have been met. Once they have been presented to the congregation action shall be taken at the next scheduled business meeting. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present will be required for acceptance into membership. Once received into fellowship prospective members will relinquish membership in other churches.

Section 5. Responsibilities of Membership

The responsibilities of membership are summarized in ARTICLE III, Church Covenant. Each member is expected to abide by these and participate in and contribute to the ministry of the church. Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend business meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such matters as may be submitted to a vote. Only those who are members of this congregation shall serve in the ministries of the church, although non-members may serve on an as needed basis with the approval of the pastor(s). Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and/or professional consultation.

Section 6. Church Discipline

The purpose of church discipline is to affect a return to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs (Galatians 6:1) in order to maintain purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:4-6), and to deter sin (1 Timothy 5:19-20). Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and in doing so opposes the welfare of the church and/or renders their profession of faith doubtful, shall be dealt with, according to Matthew 18:15-18, as follows:

- A. It is the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration in a manner that exhibits love for God and neighbor—promoting holiness to the Lord and unity. It is essential that this be done in a spirit of obedience to Christ.
- B. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members (preferably a pastor) as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
- C. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the pastor(s), who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church encouraging the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member.
- D. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the pastor(s) and the church, he or she shall be dismissed from the church pursuant to the Scriptures and treated as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:17, 1 Timothy 1:20). The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the pastor(s) in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the third stage of church discipline (ARTICLE IV, Section 6, C above) or to the fourth stage of church discipline (ARTICLE IV, Section 6, D above) when one or more of the following have occurred:

1. Where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public, i.e., openly and to the offense of the whole Church (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).
2. Where the disciplined party has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine not in keeping with Scripture and ARTICLE II, Articles of Faith—What We Teach, above, and chosen to disregard the direction and reproof of the pastor(s) (Romans 16:17).
3. Where the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from factious and divisive conduct and has chosen to disregard that warning (Titus 3:10-11).

It is to be clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.

Section 7. Membership status

Active members are those who regularly attend the stated meetings of the church, regularly contribute to the church through their time, talents, and financial support, and maintain vital contact with the pastor(s) during periods when they may be away. Only active members shall retain the right of voting in church business meetings and qualify for a letter of transfer of membership.

If vital contact is not maintained members will be carried on an inactive role for a period of no more than one year. During this time, every effort shall be made by the pastor(s) to re-establish the member's fellowship with the church. If the delinquent member shows no interest ARTICLE IV, Section 8, D below will be followed to exclude such members from the church roll.

A historical list of former members will be maintained for reference purposes only as the idea of a permanent inactive roll defies what it truly means to be a church member.

Section 8. Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated in one of the following ways:

- A. By physical death.
- B. By transfer: When requested, the church may grant to a departing member who is on the "active members" roll and in good standing a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church of like faith. The church may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to the gospel (Jude 3). No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of our church body.
- C. By self-professed apostasy. If a member professes to no longer believe in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible they will be excluded upon vote of the congregation.
- D. By exclusion: If a member regularly absents himself from the stated meetings of the church without a valid reason, or if due to relocation he or she ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he or she shall be excluded from the church roll. A list of members that have not maintained vital contact with the church will be presented at the first business meeting of the physical year and classified as an "inactive member." If there has still been no contact by the first business meeting of the next physical year a vote will be taken to exclude said members from the church roll. If an excluded member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth in ARTICLE IV, Section 2 above will again be followed.
- E. By Erasure: If a member joins a church of a different faith his or her name shall be removed from the church roll.
- F. By dismissal as a final step of church discipline: The procedures set forth in ARTICLE IV, Section 6, D above shall only be applied in strict accordance with the Scriptures and upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason collectively agreed upon by the church body.

Notice of any changes to the church roll will be presented at the next business meeting after such action is taken.

ARTICLE V

CHURCH POLICY:

Section 1. This church shall be and remain a congregationalist body shepherded and overseen by its elders.

Section 2. So far as may be consistent with the interpretation of the Word of God as delineated in ARTICLE II, ARTICLES OF FAITH—WHAT WE TEACH, above, this church may cooperate with and have representation in the causes sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and the Little River Baptist Association.

ARTICLE VI

AMENDMENTS:

The Constitution of this church may be amended at any business meeting by a two-thirds majority of the members voting, provided that both the text of such an amendment and the basis for its consideration have been provided to all members at a business meeting at least thirty days in advance of any meeting at which such a proposal will be considered or voted upon, and that it is announced at the morning service on the Lord's Day next preceding the business meeting at which it will be considered.

ARTICLE VII

MEETINGS:

Section 1. Meetings

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as determined by the elders. The church shall normally observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper weekly, or as determined by the elders.

Section 2. Business Meetings

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There shall be a regular business meeting at least once per quarter. An elder or deacon designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all business meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

A budget shall be approved by the membership at a business meeting within three months before the start of the calendar year. Congregational approval shall proceed, without amendment, as a single vote on the budget in its entirety. Prior to this approval, and subject to the elders' recommendation, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

At any regular or special business meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

Special business meetings may be called as specified in ARTICLE VI, AMENDMENTS, above, as deemed necessary by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of five percent of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

ARTICLE VIII

OFFICERS:

Section 1. Summary

The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. All officers must be members of this church of good repute, regular in attendance, and actively involved in the life of the church, prior to assuming their responsibilities. Church leaders are to be assisted, obeyed, and respected as they carry out their duties (Hebrews 13:17).

Section 2. Elders

According to the New Testament concept of eldership, elders lead the church, teach and preach the Word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine, visit the sick, pray, and judge doctrinal issues. The elders are responsible to provide spiritual leadership and shepherd the church body in all matters (Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). This will be an elders primary work.

The elders shall, ideally, be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:19-25, 2 Timothy 2:24-35, Titus 1:5-9, and Acts 6:3-6 and a maximum as determined and recommended by the elder body. There shall always be a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23, Philippians 1:1). However, the number of elders must be limited by the number of qualified men that the Lord raises up, and the ability of the elder body to maintain intimate, deep and growing relationships between its members. It is imperative that the elders model accountability, care, and every other aspect of authentic biblical community. Great care should be taken that the "number" of elders does not threaten the intimacy or the integrity of relationships within the elder body. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions of ARTICLE XI, ELECTIONS, below. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. Every three years the church shall reconfirm (or express the withdrawal of) its confidence in each of its elders at a member's meeting. An elder may, however, resign his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties required.

It is recognized that the task of eldership is significant and is accomplished while continuing to care for family and work responsibilities; therefore, we understand that individual elders may need to take leave of some of the responsibilities of eldership for periods of time. Such sabbatical times will be arranged through mutual consent of the elders, subject to congregational approval.

A process of mutual accountability among the elders safeguards against the continuation in office of an elder who has rendered himself unqualified for future participation.

An elder may be terminated by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Timothy 5:17-21, and ARTICLE IV, Section 6 Church Discipline, above. Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any business meeting of the church, in accordance with ARTICLE VII, MEETINGS, Section 2, Paragraph 6, above.

The elders shall take particular responsibility to mentor potential future elders, examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. Further, the elders should seek to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, affirm our fundamental gospel convictions and do not teach our church anything contrary to ARTICLE II, ARTICLES OF FAITH—WHAT WE TEACH, above.

The elders may establish committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities as needed. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder and Staff Elder(s).

Each year the elders, after consultation with the deacons, and the membership, shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a regular or specially-called business meeting and called up for a vote at the following business meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without notifying the elders. The elders will submit such requests to the congregation for approval as necessary.

The elders shall elect a chairman of elders meetings.

Section 3. The Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder

The Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder shall be “first among equals” within the elder body. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in ARTICLE VIII, Section 2 Elders, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation of elders as set out in ARTICLE VIII, Section 2 Elders, above. His call shall be defined as per ARTICLE XI, ELECTIONS, Section 3, below.

He shall be responsible for the primary preaching and teaching ministries of the church (1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11-12) and the general oversight of the church. He shall normally preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution.

The Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder shall have primary responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

In the absence or incapacity of the Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4. Staff Elder(s)

The church may call additional pastoral staff elder(s) whose relationship to the Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder is that of associate.

He shall perform the duties of an elder described in ARTICLE VIII, Section 2 Elders, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the particular area of service.

His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation of elders as set out in ARTICLE VIII, Section 2 Elders, above. His call shall be defined as per ARTICLE XI, ELECTIONS, Section 4, below.

He shall assist the Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of elder, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.

In the absence or incapacity of the Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the staff elder(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

Section 5. Deacons

The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The church shall recognize, in accordance with ARTICLE XI, ELECTIONS, below, men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6, these members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. A deacon shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority, but shall support the elders' ministry of the Word, work to maintain the unity of the church, and care for the physical needs of the church. A deacon may opt to become inactive at any time without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties required or needs to take leave of his responsibilities for a period of time.

A process of mutual accountability among the deacons safeguards against the continuation in office of a deacon who has rendered himself unqualified for future participation.

A deacon may be dismissed from office. Any two members with reason to believe that a deacon should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Timothy 5:17-21, and ARTICLE IV, Section 6, Church Discipline, above. Any of the deacons may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any business meeting of the church, in accordance with ARTICLE VII, MEETINGS, Section 2 Business Meetings, Paragraph 6, above.

Deacons shall care for the temporal (physical) needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, including the ordinances, mentor future potential deacons, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.

The deacons, with oversight from the elders shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence in accordance with the APPENDIX II, BENEVOLENCE PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT, below, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

At least two deacons, or their designees, will ensure that the offerings are counted and recorded after the service.

The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The deacons of this church shall be classified as (a) Active and (b) Honorary.

- a. The active deacons shall include those elected by the church in accordance with ARTICLE XI, ELECTIONS, below. The active deacons shall elect a chairman annually who shall preside at all meetings of the deacons.
- b. Honorary deacons shall consist of all recognized ordained deacons who are not serving as active deacons as provided for above.

The trustees of this church shall consist of the active deacons, with the oversight of the elders, who shall constitute the legal agent of the church. The trustees shall hold in trust the property of the church and shall execute all deeds, debentures, mortgages, liens, transfers, leases, and all other legal documents for and on behalf of the church, but shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or encumber any property of the church without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. The trustees shall provide for insurance coverage on the property of the church.

ARTICLE IX

ADMINISTRATION:

Section 1. Summary

Our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of treasurer and clerk. All persons in administrative positions must be members of this church of good repute, regular in attendance, and actively involved in the life of the church, prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2. Treasurer

The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder, deacon, or paid church staff member, shall be a member in good standing. The treasurer shall support the elders in providing oversight of the financial and accounting activities of the church, and shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each business meeting. This responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also see that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to ensure that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church.

The treasurer shall render to the elders, whenever they may require it, an account of all activities as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a renewable term of two years.

Section 3. Clerk

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special business meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the elders or the church.

The clerk, who shall be a member in good standing, shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a renewable term of two years.

In the absence or incapacity of the clerk, the moderator shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

ARTICLE X

OTHER POSITIONS OF SERVICE:

The number of other positions of service, both paid or unpaid, shall be prayerfully considered by the elders. The elders may propose positions as needed. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. Responsibilities/job descriptions shall be proposed by the elders for congregational approval and filed with the church clerk. Persons holding positions of service are responsible to serve under the general oversight of the elders or their designee.

ARTICLE XI

ELECTIONS:

Section 1. Principles

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;

Nominations should proceed with the support of the elders;

All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;

The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2. Selection of Officers and Other Personnel

The election of officers and other personnel shall be held at a business meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, clerk, treasurer, or other positions of service shall be presented by the elders at the previous business meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least two weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office or position should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church business meeting.

The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving a two-thirds majority of all votes cast for the office of elder at a regularly-scheduled business meeting. For all other offices and positions, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices or positions upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

Section 3. Calling of the Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to ARTICLE II, ARTICLES OF FAITH—WHAT WE TEACH and ARTICLE III, CHURCH COVENANT, above. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as Primary Preaching and Teaching Elder (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a business meeting.

Section 4. Calling of Staff Elder(s)

In the calling of any man to the position of pastoral staff elder, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess his gifts in the particular area of service to which he is being called and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to ARTICLE II, ARTICLES OF FAITH—WHAT WE TEACH and ARTICLE III, CHURCH COVENANT, above. Notice of the nomination of a man to be called as staff elder (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of him and his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a business meeting.

ARTICLE XII

STATEMENT OF BELIEF ON MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY:

Section A.

1. We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male and female. We believe God decides this gender identity in His wisdom for our good and His glory and this gender is revealed biologically while still in the womb and maintained for all our natural life. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen 1:26-27) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.
2. We believe "marriage" is a biblical institution established by God and has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, in a covenantally committed relationship for a lifetime as described in the scriptures. (Gen 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.
3. We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and the use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10)

Section B.

1. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the Oak Grove Baptist Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Oak Grove membership and the community in which we live, it is imperative that all persons employed by this body in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22)
2. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11)
3. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with the Scriptures nor the doctrines of this church.

Section C.

1. The churches facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of believers. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. Although the facilities are not generally open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.
2. But facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the church's constitution. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed inconsistent with, the

church's faith or moral teachings. The deacons, in consultation with the elders, are the final decision-makers concerning use of church facilities.

3. This restricted use policy is necessary for two important reasons.
 - a. First, the church may not in good conscience materially cooperate in activities or beliefs that are contrary to its faith. Allowing its facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity, and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice. (2Cor 6:14; 1 Thess 5:22)
 - b. Second, it is very important that the church present a consistent message to the community, and that the church staff and members conscientiously maintain that message as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Allowing facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the church's faith would have a severe, negative impact on the message that the church strives to promote. It could also cause confusion and scandal to church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the church agrees with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using its facilities.
4. Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may church facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church's faith. This policy applies to all church facilities, properties, and belongings, because the church sees all its property and belongings as holy and set apart to worship God and be used for His glory. (Col 3:17).

APPENDIX I

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES:

1. All activities in the fellowship hall must be coordinated through the deacons and placed on the church calendar.
2. Use of the building:
 - a. The church building will be available for church members for weddings or funerals or other activities such as voting, showers, family reunions, etc, if there is no conflict with the church calendar. The church building will be available for non church members upon approval, provided the proposed event is in keeping with our beliefs as outlined in ARTICLE XII, STATEMENT OF BELIEF ON MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY, above.
 - b. The user is responsible for returning the building and grounds to original condition. If the original condition is not attained, they will be charged a fee.
 - c. The following rules will be observed:
 - i. All furniture returned to proper places.
 - ii. All trash and debris removed and swept.
 - iii. Kitchen and restrooms cleaned and in order.
 - iv. No alcoholic beverages allowed.
3. The Sanctuary and Education building will be made secure by the deacon of the week after each service. This will include turning off all lights, air conditioners, etc.

BUS USE

1. Church activities only
2. Users must remove trash and sweep if necessary
3. Driver must be church member in good standing
4. Driver must be on list approved by deacons and recorded with insurance company.

APPENDIX II

BENEVOLENCE PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT:

Scriptural Mandate: 1 John 3:16-18 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

It is evident in the life of the early church that Christians accepted the responsibility and privilege of caring for one another financially. They managed their finances in such a way that it was written, "there was not a needy one among them" (Acts 4:34). Although our economic and cultural situation is vastly different than what we read about in the New Testament, we still believe this basic principle of financially caring for one another within the church should continue. The following outline defines how we, as the local body of Christ, called Oak Grove Baptist Church, Ashdown, AR (OGBC) are seeking to carry out this principle in the life of His church.

I. Defining our philosophy toward poverty

- A. It is an accepted fact worldwide that America is one of the richest nations on earth. In many countries our poor would be considered wealthy. The impact of this affluence in America has in some ways re-defined the true meaning of the word 'poverty'. When we misdiagnose the causes of one's poverty or treat their symptoms rather than their underlying problems, we can do considerable harm to materially poor people in the very process of trying to help them. As a church in America we recognize the following truths:
 - 1. Paul says in 1 Tim. 6:8, "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."
 - 2. The average American would probably not be content with the simplistic financial life of the early church.
 - 3. Many things that Americans view as necessities would be considered to the early Christians, and indeed to most of modern civilization, as luxuries.
- B. Root cause of poverty from a Biblical Perspective: God is inherently a relational being. From all eternity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in perfect relationship with one another. As beings made in the image of this triune God, humans are wired for relationship as well. We believe God has established at least four foundational relationships for human beings to flourish on this earth: relationship *with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation*. We believe the fall (original sin) has damaged all four of these relationships for all of us. We believe the following forces are at work that undermine these relationships:
 - 1. Individual Behaviors
i.e.: an individual with an addiction may struggle to hold down a job.
 - 2. Abusive or Exploitative People
i.e.: physical/emotional abuse can undermine our self-image (relation to self) and make it difficult to work (relation to creation).
 - 3. Oppressive Systems (economic, political, social, or religious)
i.e.: a recession can create widespread unemployment. Or partiality based, among other things, on ethnic traits (see James 2, Acts 10:34-35) may wreak havoc in a way not easily seen.
 - 4. Demonic Forces at war with God and human beings as image-bearers.
- C. We believe that through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ in salvation and sanctification there is set forth a process in a believer whereby these relationships can begin to function in the way God designed: we can experience deep communion with a loving God; we understand our inherent dignity and worth as image-bearers; we live in positive, giving relationships with others; and we actively steward God's creation, both caring for it and being able to work and to support ourselves as a result of that work. When these relationships are working properly, the results of Christ's work rise up and bring healing to all aspects of our lives; families are nurturing, communities are flourishing, work is meaningful, and we are bringing glory to God in all that we do. (1 Cor. 10:31) Therefore, we recognize that it is possible to be materially impoverished and at the same time

rich in Christ and His restorative work. “[A]s sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything...” 2 Cor. 6:10.

II. Prioritizing and evaluating our giving.

- A. OGBC does not assume that every request for benevolence represents true need. In many cases the will of God is not for the church to give benevolence, but rather to lead the individual into correcting wrong financial decisions, spending habits, and priorities.
 - 1. We don't believe that the Bible teaches the church is called to alleviate poverty or to protect people from the consequences of their actions. Neither do we believe the church is responsible to pay off personal indebtedness.
- B. OGBC considers it a priority to give assistance to our members first, who we have a relationship with, rather than giving to those we don't have a relationship with. Since we believe the root causes of poverty lie in broken relationships, we desire to walk beside those whom we give benevolent assistance.
 - 1. We believe we are called to be ambassadors of Christ's reconciliation, proclaiming and demonstrating what ultimately only He can do (2 Cor. 5:18-20). While we believe we are called to be participants in His work (acting it out), we recognize that we are not the authors (causers) of that work. We cannot change broken people, nor can we change a broken world. But we believe that Christ is in the process of changing both, and He gives us the incredible privilege of being instruments He uses to accomplish His mission. We act outwardly in obedience; He causes and creates real change.
- C. While we do believe it is important to screen all requests for benevolence, the church wants to help those who are in true need. We begin with those of the household of faith yet we recognize there are many outside our church in relationship with a church member. These are considered next in priority, as funds are available.
 - 1. We believe poverty alleviation is the process of restoring broken people in a broken world to the hope and dignity God intends for human beings as His image-bearers. And people who are broken – the people who need this restoration – are both the materially impoverished and those who are seeking to help them as they walk in relationship to each other and with God. We believe the restoration of broken people involves the journey of salvation and sanctification that all people – both materially rich and poor – need to experience over the entire course of their lives.

III. Qualifications for receiving benevolence funds

- A. Must either be a member of the church or faithfully taking the steps towards membership (e.g. attending worship, participation in a small Group, Sunday School, etc.), unless otherwise approved by the deacons, or their designee(s) (see no. 2 below).
 - 1. This qualifying distinction is not to promote a biased spirit, but rather to identify the obvious. Our church does not have unlimited financial resources, and must give first consideration to those whom we walk in a relationship with or those allotted to our charge by God.
 - 2. When a non-attender of OGBC contacts the church office during the week looking for financial assistance, or when a church member, in good standing, brings a request for a non-attender with whom they walk in a relationship – a meeting will be set up between this person requesting the benevolent funds, the deacons, or their designee(s), and the church member (as appropriate). It will be made clear that this meeting does not ensure that the church will give assistance. In the instance that we give financial assistance to non-attenders they must be willing to abide by C & D below.
- B. Must be either giving or willing to begin voluntarily giving to the church. These gifts can be of your time, talents, and income.

1. We believe in the biblical principle of generous, sacrificial giving to the Lord within the local church where God has placed you. We believe 2 Cor. 8 & 9 is the NT standard for giving.
 - a) It is a voluntary act as one has decided in his/her heart – 9:7
 - b) It is to be generous – 8:2
 - c) It is to be evidence of our commitment to Christ and His kingdom work of restoring broken relationships – 8:5
 - d) It is in essence to be sacrificial – the very nature of our Christianity and a reflection of our faith. 8:2-4
 2. We believe as individuals in response to the blessing of God, understood as our adoption through propitiation, we are to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for ourselves as a good foundation for the future, so that we may take hold of that which is truly life. (1 Tim 6:18 & 19)
 3. We believe that those receiving benevolence from the church should continue to give generously to the Lord (Acts 2 & 4) regardless of their position of need out of a thankful heart to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. Must be willing to submit a personal budget or spending practices to the deacons, or their designee(s), who are involved upon request. It may also be appropriate to place one or more of the following conditions upon receipt of the benevolence funds:
1. Sell unnecessary possessions
 2. Participate in a money management course
 3. Participate in ongoing financial counseling
- D. Must AGREE to the following -
1. Before OGBC gives assistance to anyone in need, one must fill out a Benevolence Request Form and submit it to the deacons, or their designee(s), for review. Should this individual or family be a non-attender and receive a benevolent gift, they must agree to allow OGBC to share all the information obtained on the Benevolence Request Form with other area churches and/or community centers in Ashdown.
 2. Recognize that as a general rule we do not give cash to those who need assistance. The Church's preference is to pay directly to whoever is owed money (i.e. land lord, utility company, gas station, grocery store, etc...).
 3. Recognize that we rarely give assistance unless we are able to talk the decision over among the deacons, or their designee(s). In other words we rarely give money away "right now".

Questions to ask those in need of assistance

- Ask why they are in need of benevolence? This is very important.
 - 1) No fault of their own (family tragedy, personal tragedy, etc.)
 - 2) No savings
 - 3) Mismanagement
 - 4) Greed/covetousness resulting in debt
- Ask them what needs to change in their lives or budget in order to be financially sound.
- Have they sought to lower their overhead, sell off belongings or approach parents/family for assistance first?
- In truly dire situations (food, clothing, housing) we may be willing to help even if it is the result of irresponsible actions.
- Make sure they know that the church does not exist to liquidate personal debt.
- Ask if they have a budget. If so, how detailed a budget? Do they use it?
- Make sure they know they must fill out a “Benevolence Request Form” before we can consider giving them assistance.
- Ask them if they are interested in getting input into their financial situation. Ask if you can review their budget.
 - 1) Are they saving?
 - 2) Is it realistic?
 - 3) Is it thorough?
 - 4) Does it take into account unexpected expenses?
 - 5) Are they actually tithing?
 - 6) Are they working? Why or why not?
 - 7) Are they enslaved to drugs, alcohol, or gambling?
 - 8) Are they spending impulsively on unnecessary indulgences? (eating out all the time, entertainment, clothes, lottery tickets, etc...)

Benevolence Request Form

Person(s) in need: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Amount requested: _____ For what purpose?: _____

Status of applicant (i.e. single parent, unemployed): _____

Specific details pertaining to how and why this need developed: _____

What other resources are available to this person(s)?: _____

Have they been faithfully tithing the past six months?: _____

Do they have a budget they are faithfully using?: _____

Have they received benevolence previously?: _____ How much?: _____

BENEVOLENCE APPROVAL

Approved amount: _____

Check to be made out to: _____

Signature of Deacon, or designee: _____

Signature of Elder: _____

