

**CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF  
TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH  
971 SHAWNEE EGYPT ROAD  
SPRINGFIELD, GEORGIA 31329**

**PREAMBLE**

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the privileges of the Southern Baptist Convention, we do declare and establish this constitution. Involving much prayer, study of Scripture, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we, the members of TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH, adopt this constitution as our articles of governance; to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ.

**CONSTITUTION**

**Article I. Name**

This body shall be known as TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH of Springfield, Georgia 31329.

**Article II. Mission Statement**

TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH exists to know Jesus Christ, and make Him known.

**Article III. Objective**

As a loving fellowship composed of regenerate believers in Christ baptized by full immersion, this body exists by the grace of God alone and for the glory of God alone to fulfil its mission statement of better knowing Jesus Christ and making Him known. This fundamental task shall be the ultimate test and purpose of all our activities. These activities shall always include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Public and corporate gathered worship;
- Bible teaching and discipleship;
- Evangelism via preaching, personal acts of verbal witness, and acts of mercy;
- Participation in local, domestic, and international missions;
- Administration of the two Ordinances of Baptism and Holy Communion;
- Fellowship within the body;
- Cooperative work with other like-minded churches, especially including, but not limited to, fellow Southern Baptist congregations;
- Service to other individuals, families, and churches to care for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

In all things, this body shall seek to glorify God by fulfilling the greatest commandments of loving Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind; and our neighbor as our self.

#### **Article IV. Statement of Basic Beliefs**

We affirm that the Holy Bible is the infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God. As such, it is the final authority and standard for our beliefs and practices which all creeds, confessions, and traditions are subject. *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (as included) is an accurate and succinct reflection of these beliefs and practices, and therefore serves as the Doctrinal Statement of this body. We also affirm the two historic Baptist confessions (1644 and 1689) as originally written. All citations of scripture in our governing documents are taken from the Authorized King James Version, Christian Standard Bible, and/or the English Standard Version. Our governing documents do not recognize any other English translations.

#### **Article V. Polity and Relationship**

The government of this body is subject solely to the leadership of Jesus Christ, who purchased us with His blood and is risen today. He is the Lord of His Church. Therefore, our decisions are final and cannot be overruled by any outside authority. TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH retains the right of self-government in all aspects of the life of this church, and is subject to no other ecclesiastical body. However, we are committed to a voluntary, cooperative, and supportive relationship with the Middle Baptist Association, the Georgia Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH functions as a non-profit religious organization per IRS code.

## **Article VI. Church Covenant**

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and upon our profession of our faith through baptism 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.

**WITH GOD AS OUR HELP, WE WILL SEEK TO PROMOTE THE EDIFICATION OF OUR CHURCH** by regularly assembling ourselves together for worship, teaching, prayer, and to observe the Holy Ordinances of Baptism and Communion; by praying for the members of our church family and its leaders; by discovering and using our spiritual gifts, both within and outside the church; and by giving cheerfully and faithfully of our time, talent, and treasure for the building up of this church. We will also faithfully engage in personal and family devotions and raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**WITH GOD AS OUR HELP, WE WILL SEEK TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE** by walking together in Christian love; by bearing one another's burdens, praying for one another, and helping one another; by avoiding anger, factions, gossip, and backbiting; by being slow to take offense, slow to anger, and eager for reconciliation; forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us. We will both willingly offer and receive encouragement and admonition as circumstances require; by participating in, and submitting to, the disciplinary procedures of this church in regard to doctrine and conduct; by obeying our leaders as men who are called by Christ, and who must give an account of their ministry; and by gladly living together in accordance with our Doctrinal Statement, Church Covenant, Constitution, and Bylaws.

**WITH GOD AS OUR HELP, WE WILL SEEK THE ADVANCE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM** by striving to be a city on a hill, the light of the world, and the salt of the earth; by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; by living sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present evil age; by acting with both gentleness and respect; by offering Spirit-led testimony of our faith in Christ to family, friends, and neighbors; by being a friend and supporter of world missions; by promoting the sanctity of life, advocating for the unborn, condemning racism, aiding the poor and oppressed; and living with humility, justice, compassion, holiness, and peace in the world.

**FINALLY**, we further covenant that if and when we relocate to another place, we pledge to unite as soon as possible with another church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

We pray that through this, The Triune God is glorified. In the pursuit of this worthy goal, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

## BYLAWS

### Article I. Membership

#### Section 1 – Becoming a Member

To be a member at TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH is to be in covenant with one another. To qualify for covenant membership in this church, a person must have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, give evidence of their regeneration, and have professed their salvation through immersion baptism. Candidates must participate in a pastor's class on doctrine, and shall embrace the teachings and beliefs as set forth in the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (as included in our Doctrinal Statement). Any candidate meeting these qualifications and having been determined qualified by the pastors/elders, shall be presented to the church at any regularly scheduled gathering. A majority vote of the members is then required to receive the candidate into membership. The new member is then expected to relinquish any foreign memberships in other churches in order to remain in good standing with TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH.

#### Section 2 - Termination of Membership

(1) If a member in good standing requests to be released from covenant obligations, such request must be granted and membership terminated. (2) Membership may also be moved via letter by request of another Southern Baptist congregation (not an individual person), at which point the membership is not viewed as "terminated," but "moved" to another church. (3) If membership is granted in a church of another denomination, membership at TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH is immediately relinquished the moment this foreign membership begins. There shall be no dual memberships. (4) Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (excommunication) by decision of the pastors/elders and approval of the church; requiring a majority vote of membership to carry.

#### Section 3 - Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her covenant promises, or unrepentantly 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/elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline, therefore, should only be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

Church discipline includes (in this order based on degree): admonition by the pastors/elders; suspension from Holy Communion; inability to vote in church conferences; deposition from office and/or removal from committees; and as a final resort, excommunication.

The purpose of such discipline should be:

- (1) For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined.  
*Pr. 15:5; 29:15; I Cor. 4:14; Eph. 6:4; I Tim. 3:4–5; Heb. 12:1–11; Ps. 119:115; 141:5; Pr. 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecc. 7:5; Mt. 7:26–27; 18:15–17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; I Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1–5; II Thess. 3:6, 14–15; I Tim. 1:20; Tit. 1:13–14; Jam. 1:22*

(2) For instruction in righteousness and the good of other Christians, by being an example to them.

*Pr. 13:20; Rom. 15:14; I Cor. 5:11; 15:33; Col. 3:16; I Thess. 5:14; I Tim. 5:20; Tit. 1:11; Heb. 10:24–25*

(3) For the purity of the church.

*I Cor. 5:6–7; II Cor. 13:10; Eph. 5:27; II John 10; Jude 24; Rev. 21:2*

(4) For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians.

*Pr. 28:7; Mt. 5:13–16; Jn. 13:35; Acts 5:1–14; Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 3:7; II Pet. 2:2; I Jn. 3:10*

(5) Supremely, for the glory of God by reflecting His Holy character.

*Deut. 5:11; I Kings 11:2; II Chr. 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Neh. 9:2; Isa. 52:11; Ez. 36:20; Matt. 5:16; Jn. 15:8; 18:17, 25; Rom. 2:24; 15:5–6; II Cor. 6:14–7:1; Eph. 1:4; 5:27; I Peter 2:12*

The church may restore membership to any person previously excommunicated upon request of the excommunicated person along with evidence of their repentance and reformation, and majority approval of members by vote at any regularly scheduled gathering.

#### **Section 4 – Inactive Membership**

Unless providentially hindered, members who are absent from Sunday morning worship gatherings for 8 consecutive weeks will be automatically considered as “inactive” and remain thus until full membership can be restored. Full membership may be restored upon corporate apology for forsaking covenant obligations, and subsequent congregational approval by majority vote of the membership at any regularly scheduled gathering. During the time of inactive status, such members may not vote in church conference, serve on standing committees, nor hold office in the church. The pastors/elders will seek to meet with inactive members, encourage their restoration and full participation in the work of the church, and will determine when/if to present them to the congregation for restoration to full membership.

Upon ratification, Article 1, Section 4 shall retroactively take effect.

#### **Section 5 – Duties and Privileges of Membership**

In accord with the duties enumerated 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. Those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in all appropriate ministries of the church.

Under Christ this congregation is pastor/elder led, and congregationally governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of every member to attend all conferences and vote on the election of officers, standing committees, annual budget, and decisions regarding membership status and matters of church discipline.

## **Section 6 – Use of Facilities and Grounds**

The use of TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH's facilities and grounds for events are limited to active members who adhere to these aforementioned standards of membership as set forth in our Constitution and By Laws. In the event of a wedding, no couple shall enter into Holy Matrimony unless one of the two involved is an active member in good standing, and has sought the approval of the presiding pastors/elders through pre-marital counseling.

### **Article II. Meetings**

#### **Section 1 – Worship**

Public worship services shall be held each Lord's Day (Sunday). Sunday worship shall be crafted, overseen, and led by the pastors/elders, or by other ministry leaders who are under their direct supervision and appointment. It shall *always* include (though not necessarily be limited to): (1) corporate worship in song; (2) prayer; (3) the public reading of scripture; (4) preaching and teaching. At appropriate times, it shall also include: (1) immersion baptism; (2) Holy Communion. Holy Communion is to be observed no less than once a quarter, and may be observed more frequently or on special occasions at the discretion of the pastors/elders.

Additional services may be held throughout the week as determined by the pastors/elders at his/their discretion, or by vote of the members.

#### **Section 2 – Conference**

Conferences shall proceed according to *Robert's Rules of Order*. A quorum at any meeting shall consist of those members attending, provided it is one that has been properly called. Written minutes of all conference sessions shall be entered into the church record.

The lead pastor/elder shall serve as moderator. In the absence of a lead pastor/elder, another pastor/elder from the elder board may preside. In the absence of any pastors/elders, the chairman of the deacon board shall preside. In the absence of all the above, the clerk shall call the meeting to order and preside for the election of an acting moderator.

Conference is to be held no less than once a quarter, and may be observed more frequently at the discretion of the moderator or by vote of the membership. Regularly scheduled conferences are to be held at a time separate from weekly Lord's Day (Sunday) worship services, and must be announced to the membership one week prior.

At any of the regular Lord's Day (Sunday) worship services, the church may, without special notice, act upon the reception or dismissal of members, but not upon other business. Any other business must go before a regular or specially called conference.

Special called conferences may be called by the moderator. Should any church member have need for a specially called conference, they should relay this request to the moderator. No special called conferences may be held without a minimum of one week notice having been given to the membership. Business that may be discussed and voted upon at special called conferences is limited to what was announced during the initial notice.

A budget and slate of committees shall be approved by the membership at a regularly scheduled conference prior to the start of each new fiscal year. Officers may also be elected and positions filled as needed at conferences throughout the year, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

Voting rights shall be reserved for members 18 years of age or older, who are not inactive (see Article 1, Section 4), and not under church discipline (see Article 1, Section 3). Members must be present to vote. A simple majority vote is required for passing all orders of business presented at conference, excepting issues regarding the calling or dismissal of pastors/elders, deacons, and/or changes or ratifications to the present church covenant, constitution, and by-laws; these require a large-majority vote (three-quarters) to carry.

In every meeting together, members shall act in a spirit of mutual trust, openness, compassion, grace, poise, and loving consideration which is appropriate for the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Article III. Church Officers**

#### **Section 1 – Summary**

The Bible prescribes two offices for the New Testament Church: pastors/elders and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes three administrative positions under this constitution: clerk, treasurer, and sexton. All officers must be active members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities. TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH is under no obligation to receive or recognize officers from other churches as officers in our church; such callings are unique to a particular local congregation. Therefore, all candidates for church office at TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH must undergo the following stated proper calling and affirming procedures.

#### **Section 2 – Pastors/Elders**

Biblically, the title “elder” is interchangeable with the titles “pastor” and “overseer”, deriving from the Koine Greek word πρεσβύτερος (presbuteros). These three terms are used by the Bible to describe the three primary functions of this office (*ref. Acts 15:22, 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:6-9; Hebrews 13:17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-3*). TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH may be served by multiple pastors/elders.

Due to the distinction placed by the New Testament on the two offices, no one holding the office of pastor shall simultaneously hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

As an “overseer”, subject to the will of the congregation as set forth in the approved budget, and by working in tandem with the trustees, he shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. Total receipts and disbursements are to be reported to the church at regularly scheduled conferences.

As a “pastor”, in keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1–6 and 1 Peter 5:1–4, he shall devote his time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging/protecting sound doctrine), and shepherding God’s flock. He is expected to equip the membership for the work of the ministry. The pastor shall be responsible for pre-marital counseling, and should be prepared to conduct funerals and provide grief counseling as requested by members.

As an “elder”, he shall administer the ordinances of baptism and Holy Communion, admonish and correct error, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions.

This person must be a man who satisfies the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. They must also affirm the teachings and beliefs set forth in *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (as included in our Doctrinal Statement), and shall affirm the church covenant, constitution, and by-laws as adopted by TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH. They are to be ordained (or licensed) and set apart for ministry.

In the case of multiple pastors/elders, the lead pastor shall serve as chairman of the elder board. It will remain the responsibility of the lead pastor to ensure the pulpit is filled during his absence by selecting a suitable candidate for pulpit supply. Otherwise, all pastors/elders will seek, at all times, to work together in unanimous agreement concerning the direction and work of the church. Issues between themselves will only be brought before the congregation when all pastors/elders are in agreement.

When a vacancy of this office occurs, a selection committee shall seek out an appropriate candidate. The selection committee should bring before the church only one candidate at a time. The selection committee should consist of standing members of the elder board, the chairman of the deacon board, as well as four additional members. These four members shall be active members in good standing, and should be appointed by the congregation. Election of a pastor/elder requires a large-majority vote (three-quarters) of the membership at a specially called conference, announced at least two weeks prior.

Any salaried pastors/elders shall be given the opportunity to accept two revivals a year; these two weeks may be substituted and used for continuing education. Salaried pastors/elders shall also receive two weeks of vacation time per year.

Pastors/elders shall serve until he or the church asks for a termination of services; thirty days’ notice by either being expected. The chairman of the deacon board shall serve as moderator during any portions of a conference dealing with the pastors/elders. A large-majority vote (three-quarters) at a specially called conference announced at least one week prior shall be required to dismiss a pastor/elder. Whenever a pastor/elder’s services are terminated by the church, the church will compensate the pastor not less than one-twelfth of his annual salary.



### Section 3 – Deacons

The office of deacon first appeared in Acts 6:1-6; their purpose was to “wait on tables” and oversee the widow care ministry. “Deacon” derives from the Koine Greek word “διάκονος” (diakonos), which translates “server/waiter”. Throughout the New Testament, deacons served to alleviate the pastors/elders of the daily social needs of the church. TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH may be served by multiple deacons, with a lead deacon serving as “chairman of the deacon board”.

Subject to the will of the congregation as set forth in the approved budget, the deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence. Total receipts and disbursements will be reported to the church at regularly scheduled conferences.

Deacons shall attend to the accommodations for public worship, and care for the temporal needs of members and church families. As servants of the people, they seek to know their concerns, cares, and needs. This is accomplished through organization and method among themselves, and by establishing and maintaining personal fraternal relationships with the congregation. Deacons are to perform home and hospital visits, pray over the sick, and minister to widows and shut-ins.

The deacons shall function as “trustees” to TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH in legal capacity, representing the church’s fiscal and real property, subject to its will.

New deacon candidates may come as a recommendation from the existing deacon board at any time as the need arises, or from the pastors/elders. Deacon candidates must be congregationally affirmed by a large-majority vote (three-quarters) at any specially called conference, announced at least two weeks prior.

Deacons shall be men who satisfy the requirements set forth in I Timothy 3:8–13. All deacons shall affirm the teachings and beliefs as set forth in *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (as included in our Doctrinal Statement), and shall affirm the church covenant, constitution, and by-laws as adopted by TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH. Deacons shall be ordained into the diaconate and set apart for ministry.

Termination of a deacon’s term may occur as a result of his own request, or as an action of the church in a regularly scheduled or specially called conference announced at least one week prior. Termination by the church requires a large-majority vote (three quarters) of those present and voting.

#### **Section 4 – Clerk**

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special called conferences for permanent reference. The clerk shall preserve and maintain an accurate roll of the membership, with dates of admission, death, and baptism. The clerk shall be responsible for preparation, completion, and submission of the Annual Church Profile to the association. Further, the clerk shall render reports as requested by the pastors/elders, the deacons, or the membership. All church records, past, present, and future are (and shall remain) church property.

A clerk shall be elected annually from among the membership. Before the beginning of each new fiscal year, it shall be the annual duty of the nominating committee to nominate a clerk to present to the membership for approval. A clerk must be an active member (see Article 1, Section 4), who is not under church discipline (see Article 1, Section 3). A clerk may serve an indefinite number of terms, so long as the church continues to annually reaffirm the appointment.

In the immediate absence or incapacity of the clerk, the moderator shall appoint a temporary clerk from among the membership until the church is able to properly go through the election process for a permanent replacement. In this way, no conference shall proceed without a member acting as clerk.

#### **Section 5 – Treasurer**

It shall be the duty of the treasurer to maintain the financial records of the church. The treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in the proper banks, financial institutions, or depositories. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at each regularly scheduled conference; this responsibility to report may be delegated to another member with the approval of the moderator.

The treasurer shall render financial records (except those of individual contributions) to the Financial Committee and/or the pastors/elders upon request. All financial records, past, present, and future are (and shall remain) church property.

A treasurer shall be elected annually from among the membership. Before the beginning of each new fiscal year, it shall be the annual duty of the nominating committee to nominate a treasurer to present to the membership for approval. The treasurer must be an active member (see Article 1, Section 4), who is not under church discipline (see Article 1, Section 3). A clerk may serve an indefinite number of terms, so long as the church continues to annually reaffirm the appointment. A pastor/elder, or any paid staff of TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH, is disqualified from serving as treasurer.

## **Section 6 – Sexton(s)**

It shall be the duty of the church sexton to maintain all cemetery needs.

A sexton(s) shall be elected annually from among the membership. Before the beginning of each new fiscal year, it shall be the annual duty of the nominating committee to nominate a sexton(s) to present to the membership for approval. A sexton must be an active member (see Article 1, Section 4), who is not under church discipline (see Article 1, Section 3). A sexton may serve an indefinite number of terms, so long as the church continues to annually reaffirm the appointment. TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH may have multiple sextons as the need necessitates and the church sees fit.

## **Article IV. Committees**

### **Section 1 – Summary**

Members of standing committees shall be nominated annually by the nominating committee before the start of each fiscal year, and presented to the membership for approval. Members of standing committees must be active members (see Article 1, Section 4), and not under church discipline (see Article 1, Section 3). Pastors/elders are to serve ex-officio on all committees. TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH recognizes four standing committees under this constitution: Nominating, Finance, Building & Grounds, and Activities.

The pastors/elders shall have authority to appoint other special committees.

### **Section 2 – Nominating**

The nominating committee shall be comprised of three individuals whose purpose is to seek candidates for offices and standing committees. They shall present their findings to the church for membership approval prior to the start of each new fiscal year, or as vacancies arise.

The nominating committee cannot self-nominate, but must be directly elected by the church at a regularly scheduled conference halfway through the fiscal year. The pastors/elders should make recommendations in this process, presenting these recommendations to the church for approval.

### **Section 3 – Finance**

The finance committee shall be comprised of six individuals whose purpose is to work in joint capacity with the pastors/elders in order to prepare and submit an annual budget for church approval. They shall present their findings annually to the membership for approval prior to the start of each new fiscal year.

The chairman of the finance committee is exempt from the standard nominating process, as the chairman of the finance committee shall always be the treasurer of the church.

## **Section 4 – Building and Grounds**

The building and grounds committee shall be comprised of four individuals whose purpose is to inspect and recommend corrective and/or preventive actions, additions, etc., to the facilities on our campus. They shall also be responsible for all upkeep and grounds work, excepting the cemetery.

## **Section 5 – Activities**

The activities committee shall be comprised of an indefinite amount of individuals whose purpose is to host church fellowships and special events. They function as the “church hostess”. This includes (but is not limited to) the responsibilities of setting up meal lists for revivals and other fellowships, cleaning up post-event, and other related responsibilities as the need arises.

## **Article V. Sunday School**

### **Section 1**

Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, youth directors, VBS directors, and the Sunday School director/secretary are to be nominated annually by the nominating committee for membership approval. These individuals should be active members (see Article 1, Section 4), and not under church discipline (see Article 1, Section 3).

Sunday School teachers may, at their discretion, invite special guest presenters or substitute teachers to teach on their behalf.

Any teachers (rather a “guest” or dually elected Sunday School teacher, youth director, nursery worker, etc.) shall serve under the direct authority and oversight of the pastors/elders whose primary responsibility is the administration of the Word and the protecting of sound doctrine. Therefore, the pastors/elders reserve the authority to remove Sunday School teachers for teaching errant doctrine, and to block special speakers from teaching and/or presenting.

## **Article VI. Representation at Denominational Meetings**

### **Section 1**

Messengers may be sent to represent TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH at any meetings of the Middle Baptist Association, the Georgia Baptist State Convention, and/or the Southern Baptist Convention. The number of messengers allotted is set by the denomination, and may vary annually. The lead pastor/elder shall be, by virtue of his office, messenger to these denominational meetings. Any additional messengers are to be nominated annually by the nominating committee for membership approval. All messengers should be active members (see Article 1, Section 4), and not under church discipline (see Article 1, Section 3). The church shall cover all expenses associated with this privilege.

## **Article VII. Organizations**

### **Section 1**

Any group desiring to represent TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH as an organization or use the name TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH (in full or part) must have prior approval of the church membership by majority vote at a regularly scheduled or specially called conference. All ministries, programs, and organizations representing the church shall thenceforth operate under the oversight of the pastors/elders and shall report regularly to the congregation at each regularly scheduled conference.

## **Article VIII. Disputations and Arbitration**

### **Section 1**

TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH seeks to live under the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ, who is the head of His Holy Church. Our doctrinal statement, church covenant, constitution, and by-laws are intended to be accurate embodiments of the Church prescribed in Scripture. However, in our life together as a church family, situations will inevitably arise in which some person (or group of persons) must issue an authoritative decision as to the proper interpretation of Scripture and/or our governing documents. In the New Testament, that group of persons is found to be the πρεσβύτερος (pastors/elders/overseers), and it is thus in our church. It is understood, however, that in accordance with the provisions of this constitution, members may challenge the pastors/elders' interpretation(s) with a view to amending our governing documents accordingly. Nevertheless, until those documents are so amended, the decision of the pastors/elders shall stand regarding any arbitration as to the interpretation of Scripture and the policy of this church. Be it noted: authority to arbitrate and interpret does not equate to authority to change or subvert. The authority to alter the governing documents of this church are stated below in Article IX, Section 1.

## **Article IX. Amendments**

### **Section 1**

The covenant, constitution, and by-laws of TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH may be amended by vote of the church at any regularly scheduled conference; the specific amendment having been presented in writing at the previous regularly scheduled conference. Any changes to the covenant, constitution, and/or by-laws of TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH shall require a large majority vote (three-quarters) of church members present and voting to carry.

## **Article X. Adoption**

### **Section 1**

Upon ratification on \_\_\_\_\_ by the members of TURKEY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH, this covenant, constitution, and by-laws take immediate effect. It supersedes any other covenant, constitution, or by-laws previously adopted by this church.

