

Stuart Heights Baptist Church

# Constitution & Bylaws

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# Stuart Heights Baptist Church Constitution & Bylaws

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## **Preamble**

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the accepted tenets of a missionary Baptist denomination (one that is evangelistic in nature), and for the purpose of preserving the liberties of each individual member and the freedom of action of the body with respect to its relation to other churches of the same faith, we declare and establish this Constitution & Bylaws. A copy of this Constitution & Bylaws will be made available to each person received into the fellowship of this Church. This Constitution & Bylaws shall be reviewed and updated at least biannually.

## **Article I – Name**

This Church shall be known as the Stuart Heights Baptist Church, Inc., Chattanooga, Tennessee, with multiple locations. The business office and mailing address are at 1505 Cloverdale Drive, Hixson, TN 37343.

## **Article II – Purpose**

The purpose of the Church shall be making disciples of Jesus Christ who are growing in their commitment and walk with God (Matthew 28:18-20). As the Church is the bride of Christ (Revelation 19), the means by which this will be done is found in the acrostic WIFE'S.

**Worship** – Maintaining regular public worship (Hebrews 10:25).

**Instruction** – Developing the membership for the strengthening of the body of Christ, the practice of righteous living, and effective service as true disciples (Hebrews 10:24; Romans 12:1-2).

**Fellowship** – Growing the membership through the development of friendships with emphasis on small group activities (Proverbs 18:24a; Acts 2:46).

**Evangelism** – Spreading the gospel throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

**Service** – Utilizing God-given gifts and talents in service to the body of Christ through each member's SHAPE—Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences (I Corinthians 12).

## **Article III – Character**

### **Section 1 – Polity**

The government of this Church shall be vested in the members who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation with Southern Baptist Churches. Insofar as is practical, this Church will cooperate with and support the Hamilton County Baptist Association, the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

### **Section 2 – Doctrine**

This Church receives the Scriptures as authoritative in matters of faith and practice and is in essential accord with belief of Baptist churches as indicated in *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000).

## **Article IV – Articles of Faith: Adapted from *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000)**

### **Section 1 – The Scriptures**

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by divinely inspired men, that it is truth without mixture of error, and that it is the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried (II Timothy 3:15-17).

### **Section 2 – God**

We believe that there is one and only one true and living God. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being (Deuteronomy 6:4; I John 5:7).

### **Section 3 – The Fall of Man**

We believe that man was created in the image of God, but by his free choice, man sinned against God and so all of humanity inherited a nature and an environment inclined toward sin (Genesis 1:27; Romans 5:12).

### **Section 4 – Repentance and Faith**

We believe that repentance and faith are both experienced at salvation. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire person to Him as Lord and Savior (Mark 1:15; Romans 10:9).

### **Section 5 – Salvation**

We believe that salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer (Matthew 1:21; Acts 16:31).

## **Section 6 – Justification**

We believe that justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of the penalty of sin for all who repent and believe in Christ (Romans 5:1-2).

## **Section 7 – Grace in Regeneration**

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:3; II Corinthians 5:17).

## **Section 8 – God's Purpose and Election**

We believe that election is a gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free will of man (Romans 8:28-31).

## **Section 9 – Sanctification**

We believe that sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart for God's purposes and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life (I Thessalonians 5:23-24; James 2).

## **Section 10 – The Perseverance of Saints**

We believe that all true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end (Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 2:1-10).

## **Section 11 – A Gospel Church**

We believe that a New Testament Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel (Acts 2:41-42).

## **Section 12 – Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that baptism is prerequisite to the privileges of Church membership and to the Lord's Supper. We believe that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby believers, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 16:30-33; Matthew 26:26-29).

## **Section 13 – The Lord's Day**

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day and it commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private (Acts 20:7; Exodus 20:8).

## **Section 14 – The Worlds to Come**

We believe that according to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth, the dead will be raised, and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and will dwell forever with the Lord (Acts 1:11; 24:15; Matthew 25:31-46).

## **Article V – Membership**

The membership of this Church shall consist of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been baptized by immersion following their salvation experience and who have taken the Holy Bible as the supreme standard of faith and practice, and who have agreed to be governed by this Constitution & Bylaws.

### **Section 1 – Manner in Which Members Are Received**

- A. Upon public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, baptism by immersion, and for those eighteen and over, completion of Growth Track 1.
- B. By letter and previous baptism by immersion from some other church of like faith and order, and for those eighteen and over, completion of Growth Track 1.
- C. By statement of faith and previous baptism by immersion from some other church of like faith and order, and for those eighteen and over, completion of Growth Track 1.
- D. A letter will be sent from the church office informing the applicant of the necessity to complete Growth Track 1 before full membership is granted.

### **Section 2 – Removal of Members from Church Roll**

- A. By letter: A letter of transfer may be granted to any member in good standing. Such letter must be addressed and sent to a Church of like faith and order as this Church.
- B. By being received into the fellowship of another Church: The membership in this Church of any person being received into the fellowship with another Church shall cease automatically.
- C. By erasure: Members may request that their membership be dropped. This will be granted by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a regular business meeting.
- D. By exclusion: A member who has not attended for six months without notification, upon investigation and recommendation of the Church Officers and Senior Staff shall be removed from the membership by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting. This does not apply to those who are aged, infirmed, sick, disabled, away at college, in the Armed Forces, or on the mission field.

- E. By death.

Any member who has been removed from the membership may be, upon request, reinstated in good standing by returning to the Church in regular attendance and a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting. Upon reinstatement, a letter shall be sent from the Church to the member regarding the result of the business meeting action.

### **Section 3 – Church Discipline and Restoration**

- A. A Church member who becomes an offense to the Church and its good name by immoral or unchristian conduct and continues in the same after due admonition of the Church Officers and Senior Staff in accordance with the reconciliation principles found in Matthew 18:15-17, may upon recommendation be excluded from the membership of the Church by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting, provided notice of the contemplated action has been announced at a regular Sunday worship service and in writing to the offending member two weeks prior to the action. All requests for termination of membership, or action leading thereto, shall first be considered by the Church Officers and Senior Staff who shall make recommendations to the Church.
- B. Any member who has been Church disciplined for any offense may be, upon evidence of his or her repentance and reformation, restored by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting.

### **Section 4 – Duties of Members**

Each member is encouraged to faithfully support the whole work of the Church in the following ways:

- A. By daily prayer, studying the Bible, and living a Christian life (I Thessalonians 5:17; II Timothy 2:15; III John 4).
- B. By regularly attending scheduled Church services and meetings (Hebrews 10:25).
- C. By cheerfully supporting the Church financially by the regular giving of tithes and offerings as the Lord prospers (II Corinthians 9:7; I Corinthians 16:2; Malachi 3:8; Leviticus 27:30).
- D. By working and serving in the Church with the talents and abilities as given by the Lord (I Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:12).
- E. By respecting their Church Officers and Staff, praying for, and assisting those in carrying out the program of the Church (I Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17).
- F. By endeavoring to preserve the unity of the Church and, if at any time they find themselves opposed to the fundamental doctrines and policies of this Church, by peaceably withdrawing from its membership. This does not preclude expression of differences or promotion of changes by gentle and Christian persuasion (Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:3).

## **Section 5 – Rights and Standing of Members**

All members striving to conform Section 4 shall be considered in "good standing" in the Church, and shall be entitled to all rights and privileges of the Church and of voice and vote in the business meetings of the Church.

## **Section 6 – All Members**

A Growth Track is offered to help prospective members, new members, and seasoned members grow in God's purpose for their lives. All members are encouraged to complete each Growth Track session sequentially. Growth Track 1 helps members understand salvation, the structure and the strategy of this Church. Growth Track 2 helps members to discover the four habits all Christians need to grow in God's grace. Growth Track 3 helps members learn to use their SHAPE to minister to others in need. Growth Track 4 helps members be equipped to serve in this Church. Members are provided opportunities for service and encouraged to be involved in an area of interest.

## **Article VI – Business Meetings**

### **Section 1 – Regular Business Meeting**

Regular business meetings will be held at least once per quarter. Regular business meeting dates, times, and locations will be determined by the Church Officers and Senior Staff, with input from standing committees. Regular business meeting dates, times, and locations will be communicated to the Church each Sunday morning at least three Sunday mornings prior to each regular business meeting.

### **Section 2 – Special Business Meetings**

Special business meetings may be called with approval of the Church Officers and Senior Staff. A special business meeting's date, time, location, and purpose will be communicated to the Church each Sunday morning at least two Sunday mornings prior to a special business meeting. Exceptions may be made with approval of the Church Officers and Senior Staff when a valid emergency exists.

### **Section 3 – Parliamentary Procedure**

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these Constitution & Bylaws and any special rules of order this Church may adopt.

### **Section 4 – Quorum**

A minimum of twenty-five members shall constitute a quorum.

### **Section 5 – Moderator**

The Moderator shall be the Senior Pastor. In the absence of the Senior Pastor, the Senior Executive Pastor shall preside as Moderator. In the Absence of the Senior Pastor and the Senior Executive Pastor, the Clerk shall call the Church to order and a Moderator shall be elected.

## **Article VII – Standing Committees**

The following are standing committees: Budget and Finance, Counting, Nominating, and Personnel.

### **Section 1 – Structure of Committees**

- A. Committee members shall be Church members in good standing and be recommended by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting.
- B. Committees shall have no fewer than five members with at least one member rotating off each year after three years of service. There should be at least one member from each campus on each committee.
- C. When new committees are formed, the Nominating Committee shall designate one, two, and three year terms for each member.
- D. Each committee shall have a chairperson nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Church by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting.
- E. New committees may be designated or existing committees dissolved as the administration of Church activities demand.

### **Section 2 – Duties of Committees**

- A. Duties of each committee shall be in writing and kept on file in the Church office.
- B. The Nominating Committee shall write duty descriptions that shall be presented to the Church for approval by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting.
- C. Upon election, each new committee member shall receive a copy of their duty description.
- D. A copy of committee duties shall be available to any Church member upon request.

### **Section 3 – Committee Policies**

Each committee is responsible for maintaining and administering policies pertaining to the committee's function, as needed. All committee policies shall be approved by the Senior Staff prior to implementation. A copy of a committee's policies shall be made available to any member upon request.

## **Article VIII – Church Officers and Staff**

The Church Officers include the Trustees, Treasurer, Clerk, Financial Secretary, and deacons. The Senior Staff includes but is not limited to the Senior Pastor, Senior Executive Pastor, Associate Pastor, Worship Leader, Youth Minister, and Minister of Children. Non-Senior Staff include but are not limited to the Associate Worship Leader, church secretaries, paid ministry leaders, janitorial staff, and other paid staff.

## Section 1 – General Guidelines

- A. All Church Officers and Staff, excluding interims, shall be Church members and remain in good standing with the Church.
- B. The Church Officers and Senior Staff shall insure that the vision for the Church is clearly established and communicated.
- C. All Church Officers (except for deacons and trustees which are elected for three-year terms) shall be elected for a one-year term without limitation on the number of terms that may be served.
- D. The election and dismissal of the Senior Staff positions shall be held during a designated Sunday morning. The Church shall receive a two-week notice of these elections and dismissals. These will be final decisions with no discussion. A three-fourths majority vote by the members present and voting is necessary for the election or dismissal of any Senior Staff position.
- E. Senior Staff positions shall be employed in the following manner:
  - 1. The Senior Staff shall request the creation of any additional staff positions as line items during the annual church budgeting process. Upon approval of the annual church budget, the Personnel Committee shall search out a suitable candidate.
  - 2. Prior to the accepting of candidates, the Personnel Committee shall have a written description of the duties the candidate is to assume and an agreement with respect to employment terms that have been arrived at in consultation with the Budget and Finance Committee.
  - 3. The Senior Staff shall have the first option of submitting names and/or recommendations to the Personnel Committee for processing. This shall be done one name and/or recommendation at a time.
  - 4. Should the Personnel Committee not find a qualified candidate to fill the position within six months, the Personnel Committee would nominate a Search Committee to locate a qualified candidate. This Search Committee shall be presented to the Church for approval by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting.
  - 5. Once a candidate is selected, the Personnel Committee shall meet with the candidate to review the terms of employment. The candidate must agree to the terms of employment before presentation to the Church.
  - 6. The Personnel Committee will recommend the candidate to the Church.
  - 7. In the case of Worship Leader or Interim Worship Leader, the choir and orchestra members may be asked to evaluate the abilities of the prospect and make recommendations to the Personnel Committee.
- F. Policies and procedures to implement Article VIII shall be established and set forth by the Personnel Committee.

- G. All Senior Staff are duly appointed as messengers to represent Stuart Heights Baptist Church to the Hamilton County Baptist Association, Tennessee Baptist Association, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Section 2 – Trustees**

Three Trustees will hold in trust the property of the Church. Each year, one of the three shall be elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a regular business meeting to serve for three consecutive years. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific approval by ballot vote of three-fourths of the members present and voting on a designated Sunday morning.

Approval authority for major expenditures not listed in a Church-approved annual budget (expenditures that would exceed 0.5% of the annual budget), are obtained by the following authorization matrix:

Total Expenditure Cost	Trustees and Budget & Finance Committee (majority vote)	Business Meeting (majority vote)	Church (3/4 majority vote)
> 0.5% of the annual budget	X		
> 1.0% of the annual budget	X	X	
> 2.5% of the annual budget	X	X	X

Note: For all church-wide votes, a minimum of two week’s notice shall be given to the church.

**Section 3 – Treasurer**

The Church shall elect by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a regular business meeting a Treasurer who shall become a voting member of the Budget and Finance Committee. The Treasurer shall be assisted by the Budget and Finance Committee and the Financial Secretary in:

- A. Receiving and depositing of all monies paid or given to the Church
- B. Paying of all authorized expenses
- C. Rendering to the Church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements for the preceding month
- D. Keeping of financial records/reports current

An audit or financial review will be conducted annually by an auditing committee or accountant, or when a new Treasurer is elected. The Church financial accounts shall be reconciled monthly and a review shall be done by a member of the Budget and Finance Committee.

## Section 4 – Clerk

The Church shall elect by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a regular business meeting a Clerk of the Church who shall keep in suitable form for reference and preservation all records of the business meetings. Specific duties shall include:

- A. Recording the minutes of business meetings and all communications and official reports
- B. Relaying to the Church the names and dates of members that are received, dismissed, baptized, or deceased
- C. Relaying to the office staff the names of those who are to be issued letters of transference of membership, or letters of dismissal, which have been voted upon, and agreed to, by the Church during a regular business meeting

## Section 5 – Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall be subject to supervision by the Budget and Finance Committee with respect to the financial duties.

- A. The Financial Secretary shall receive empty collection envelopes and post records of offerings received.
- B. Annual statements shall be prepared and forwarded to all contributing members.
- C. The Financial Secretary shall have the authority to pay the expenses to maintain the day-to-day business operations of the Church.

## Section 6 – Deacons

- A. A deacon must be a member of the Church in good standing for one year and embrace *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000). He must meet the qualifications as outlined in I Timothy 3:8-13.
- B. If a vacancy occurs, the Church may elect an ordained deacon to fill the unexpired term or postpone election until the beginning of the next Church year. Recommendations for replacements shall be made to the Church by the deacons currently serving. Partial terms of office will not apply to the term of service rule.
- C. Nominations for deacons shall come from the Church.
  - 1. At least four weeks prior to the election, the Nominating Committee will have deacon qualifications and basic responsibilities published in the bulletin. Also published will be names of retiring deacons, deacons currently serving, and a form the Church membership may use to submit the names of men they feel are qualified. Recommendations must be received two weeks prior to the date the election is to be held.

2. The Senior Staff and deacons currently serving will review the names submitted and shall investigate the candidates to determine their qualifications and willingness to serve. A listing of those found to be both qualified and willing to serve will be presented to the Church as nominees.
  3. Election shall be by ballot. If there are more candidates than positions to be filled, the candidates receiving the most votes shall be declared “elected.”
  4. Those elected who have not been ordained shall be ordained no later than the last Sunday in August.
- D. Duties of the deacons shall be in the form of servants of the Church and they shall seek to know and minister to the physical, moral, and spiritual needs of the Church.
1. They shall be zealous to guard the unity and spirit within the Church.
  2. They shall serve to aid the Ministerial Staff in their ministry to the Church. They shall serve as a council of advisors and shall conference with the Staff as requested by the Staff.
  3. They shall fulfill the Deacon Family Ministry.
- E. Active deacons shall meet as needed (typically once a month).

## Section 7 – Senior Pastor

- A. The Senior Pastor shall be a regularly ordained Baptist minister. He shall embrace *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) and meet the qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- B. The Senior Pastor shall be charged with the general oversight of the Church, its services, and its spiritual welfare. He shall preach the Gospel, declare the whole counsel of God, administer the ordinances, and preside at business meetings of the Church, except those concerning himself, his family or his tenure of office. He shall be a voting member of all committees of the Church and its organizations. He shall also be diligent to present Christ and the Church to the whole community for the purpose of salvation, Christian enlistment, and Christian concern. He shall have supervisory responsibility for the administrative functions necessary for the orderly operation of the Church.
- C. In the event of a vacancy, the Church Officers and Senior Staff shall agree on a five member Pulpit Committee that shall be recommended to the Church for appointment.
- D. The Pulpit Committee shall seek out a suitable prospective Senior Pastor. Included in the recommendation to the Church and in consultation with the Budget and Finance Committee, shall be details of the agreement with the prospect, including salary, fringe benefits, vacation, sick leave, procurement of pulpit supply, etc. Details of the agreement shall be in writing.

- E. Only one man at a time shall be brought to the Church for consideration. Election shall be by ballot and an affirmative vote of three-fourths of members present and voting on a designated Sunday morning shall be necessary for acceptance.
- F. If the Senior Pastor decides to resign his position, he shall give a thirty day notice. Likewise, the Church shall give a thirty-day notice to the Senior Pastor prior to termination. The Personnel Committee shall define the details of termination and present such to the Church on a designated Sunday morning for approval by three-fourths vote of the members present and voting.

### **Section 8 – Interim Pastor**

- A. An Interim Pastor shall be called upon a vacancy of the Senior Pastor.
- B. An Interim Pastor shall be a regularly ordained Baptist minister. He shall embrace *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) and meet the qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- C. The Church Officers and Senior Staff shall be a committee to seek out a suitable Interim Pastor. Only one man shall be before the Church for election at a time. Election shall be by ballot and an affirmative vote of three-fourths of members present and voting on a designated Sunday morning shall be necessary for acceptance. Included in the recommendation to the Church shall be details of the agreement with the prospective Interim Pastor including salary and a general job description.

### **Section 9 – Senior Executive Pastor**

The Senior Executive Pastor shall be charged with executive oversight and administration of all ministry leaders and Staff with the exception of the Senior Pastor.

### **Section 10 – Worship Leader**

The Worship Leader shall be charged with the responsibility to provide worship music for all Church services. He or she shall direct or oversee congregational singing and choir practices and will consult with the Ministerial Staff in the selection of suitable music and appropriate musical programs for all special occasions. The Worship Leader shall make long-range plans for the music programs of the Church.

### **Section 11 – Youth Minister**

The Youth Minister shall be charged with planning and maintaining a comprehensive program for youth (grades 6-12) that will promote Christian development, service, and recreation. Program planning shall be for at least a six-month period and must receive approval of the Senior Pastor.

### **Section 12 – Minister of Children**

The Minister of Children shall be charged with planning and maintaining a comprehensive program for children (newborn-grade 5) that will promote Christian development, service, and recreation. Program planning shall be for at least a six-month period and must receive approval of the Senior Pastor.

### **Section 13 – Associate Pastor**

The Associate Pastor shall lead in the development, implementation, and maintenance of the Small Group Ministry of the church; teach/preach regularly at varying worship services, Stuart Heights University classes, etc., and provide pastoral services (including weddings, funerals, counseling, visitation, etc.) as needed.

### **Article IX – Special Offerings**

Special offerings may not be solicited by any Church member or any outside organization, until approval of the Budget and Finance Committee is secured and they have recommended such to the Church. This does not apply to class funds and ministry funds maintained for purchase of flowers, socials, and other inner related benevolence, or to regular annual offerings such as Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon, etc.

### **Article X – Amendments & Revisions**

This Constitution & Bylaws may be amended and/or revised by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular or called business meeting provided the amendment and/or revisions have been presented to the Church in writing at least two weeks in advance. Once amendments and/or revisions have been approved, a copy will be made available to each member.