**CONSTITUTION
of the
GATEWAY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.
Kissimmee, Florida**

PREAMBLE

With due respect for the already established Baptist work in and around the Kissimmee-Saint Cloud area, we believe the time has come when there needs to be a distinctive Baptist testimony in this area for the purpose of drawing together into a real spiritual fellowship those who wish to have and exercise convictions which hold to a more clear cut and separated position for Christian growth and development. Apart from ecclesiastical domination, yet in harmony with those of like precious faith, it is our earnest desire that this church shall be free to give supreme allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ - the Head of the church - and to seek to develop a program under the administration of the Holy Spirit which shall bring glory and honor to the name of Christ so “that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). It shall be our constant aim, not only to preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ at home and abroad, but to minister to the Saints as set forth in Ephesians 4:11-16. We shall seek to maintain a regenerate church membership, constantly emphasizing the need for personal witnessing in word and life, and challenge each member to a life separated from the world. Above all, we pledge ourselves to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the public confession of our faith, having been immersed 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, solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We purpose, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to attend its services regularly, to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to give faithfully of time and talent in its activities; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.

We also purpose to maintain family and private devotions; to train our children according to the Word of God; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossip, backbiting and unrighteous anger; to abstain from all forms of activity which dishonor our Lord Jesus Christ, cause stumbling to a fellow believer or hinder the winning of a soul to Christ; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the cause of Christ, our Savior, and give Him preeminence in all things.

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

We moreover purpose that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church of like faith and order where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word. In the event there is no such church, we will seek, with the Lord’s help, to establish one.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be: GATEWAY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify God through salvation of the lost and edification of believers.

 1. Promotion of spiritual worship. John 4:24; II Timothy 4:1-5

2. Teaching and preaching of the Word of God to all the world. Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Galatians 1:8,9.

3. Administration of the ordinances of the church. Matthew 28:19,20; I Corinthians 11:23,24.

4. Defense of the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints. Hebrews 10:23; Jude 3.

ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF FAITH

Section 1 - The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible as originally written was verbally and plenarily inspired and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore is truth without any admixture of error for its matter. We believe that God preserved the content of the inspired manuscripts through many faithful copies of these original documents, and from the multitude of these documents reliable translations have been, and are being, made in many languages. These translations, when based upon the best of texts and translated literally, are sufficient in every way for faith and practice. II Timothy 3:16,17; II Peter 1:19-21; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; I Peter 1:25.

Section 2 - The True God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite, sovereign Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. Exodus 20:2,3; I Corinthians 8:6; Revelation 4:11.

We believe in the absolute deity of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that He was divine as no other man can be, being very God of very God, existing from all eternity co-equal with the Father and the Spirit; that His humiliation did not consist in laying aside His deity; that as man He was miraculously begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. John 1:1,2; I John 5:20; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:26-28; Philippians 2:5-8.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God’s purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the new birth; that He indwells, seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer. The gift of tongues and healing were “sign-gifts” until the Scriptures were completed. These gifts ceased at that time. John 14:16,17; Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Genesis 1:1-3; John 16:7-11; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5,6; Ephesians 1:13,14; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Luke 24:49; Romans 8:14,16,26,27; Romans 15:19; Hebrews 2:4; I Corinthians 13:8; I Corinthians 12:13-23.

Section 3 - The Devil, or Satan

We believe that Satan is a distinct personality; that he is the god of this age, author of all the powers of darkness and sin, and that he is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire. Matthew 4:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:10.

Section 4 - Creation

We believe the Genesis account of creation as being neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of the direct, immediate creative acts of God without any evolutionary process; that man, spirit, soul and body, was created by a direct work of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all men are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race. Genesis 1 and 2; Colossians 1:16,17; John 1:3.

Section 5 - Fall of Man

We believe that man, in the person of the first Adam, was created in innocence but by voluntary transgression, fell into sin thus plunging the whole race into condemnation and death, so that all mankind is born in sin and shapen in iniquity and become willful sinners with the first expression of personal choice and so are without excuse before God. Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 5:10-19.

Section 6 - Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by the appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His personal obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner’s place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ the Lord bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be suitable, a compassionate and an all sufficient Savior.

We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith. Jonah 2:9; Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24,25; John 3:16; Matthew 18:11; Philippians 2:7,8; Hebrews 2:14-17; Isaiah 53:4-7; I John 4:10; I Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:12-14,22; I Peter 2:24.

Section 7 - Resurrection and Priesthood

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, in His ascension into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest interceding for us. Matthew 28:6,7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; I Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 12:2; Hebrews 7:25; I Timothy 2:5; I John 2:1; Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 5:9,10.

Section 8 - Grace and the New Birth

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sin is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new birth is brought about by our sovereign God; in manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life. John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; I John 5:1; John 3:6,7; Acts 16:30-33; 2 Peter 1:4; John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1,5; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:13; John 3:8.

Section 9 - Justification

We believe that justification is that judicial act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous upon the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer’s shed blood. Romans 3:24; Romans 4:5; Romans 5:1, 9; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9; Acts 13:39; Isaiah 53:11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Titus 3:5; Romans 8:1.

Section 10 - Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the divine setting apart of the believer unto God accomplished in a threefold manner; first, an eternal act of God, based upon redemption in Christ, establishing the believer in a position of holiness at the moment he trusts the Savior; second, a continuing process in the saint as the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to the life; third, the final accomplishment of this process at the Lord’s return. Hebrews 10:10-14; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; I Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 5:25-27; I Thessalonians 4:3,4; I Thessalonians 5:23, 24; I John 3:2; Jude 24, 25; Revelation 22:11; 2 Corinthians 1:10.

Section 11 - Adoption

We believe that adoption is the gracious act whereby the Father, for the sake of Christ, places new believers into the honored position of mature sons, in contrast with regeneration whereby the believer receives the nature of God and becomes a child of God. The full benefit of the position accorded by adoption as the sons of God awaits the glorification of the believer at the coming of the Lord. Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 4:1-7; I John 3:1,2.

Section 12 - The Security of the Saints

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6; John 10:28,29; Romans 8:35-39; Jude 1.

Section 13 - The Church

We believe in the unity of all true believers in the Church which is the Body of Christ, which was established on the Day of Pentecost, and that all believers, from Pentecost to the Rapture, both Jews and Gentiles, are added to this Church by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that this Church is manifested through the local church which is a congregation of immersed believers associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ governed by His laws; exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; and that its officers are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scripture. We believe the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; that the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; and that on all matters of membership, of polity, of government, of discipline, of benevolence the will of the local church is final. Ephesians 3:1-10; I Corinthians 12:12,13; Acts 2:41,42; I Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22,23; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; I Timothy 3:1-7; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23,24; Acts 15:13-18; Matthew 16:18; Acts 11:15.

Section 14 - Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

We believe that scriptural baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, under the authority of the local church, to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, through whom we died to sin and rose to a new life; that baptism is prerequisite to the privilege of church membership. We believe that the Lord’s Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. We believe that the Biblical order of the ordinances is baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and that participants of the Lord’s Supper should be immersed believers. Acts 8:36,39; John 3:23; Romans 6:3-5; Matthew 3:16; Colossians 2:12; I Corinthians 11:23-28; Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 2:41,43.

Section 15 - Separation

We believe in obedience to the Biblical commands to separate entirely from worldliness unto God. This includes separation from churches or other groups which adhere to unbiblical doctrine. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; I Timothy 6:3-5; Romans 16:17; 2 John 9-11.

Section 16 - Governments

a. Civil Order

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming King of Kings. Romans 13:1-7; 2 Samuel 23:3; Exodus 18:21,22; Acts 23:5; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:29; Acts 4:19,20; Daniel 3:17,18.

b. Church Order

We believe that the government of this local church is vested in the body of believers of which it is composed. In keeping with historic Baptist faith, the government of this church shall be democratic in its operation, remaining independent as it assumes sole responsibility for its actions and decisions. Matthew 18:15-17; Acts 5:3-4,6-7,22.

c. Family Order

We believe that God has ordained marriage and the family as the foundational institution of human society. A family is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. Marriage is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church and to provide for the man and the woman through marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to Biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children, God’s pattern for marriage. This church will not perform, recognize, or allow its facilities to be used in connection with an “union” or “marriage” that does not meet the Biblical definition of marriage, including, but not limited to, polygamist “marriages”, transgender “marriages” and/or same sex “marriages”. Genesis 1:26-29; 2:15-25; Exodus 20:12; Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 5:15-20; 6:20-33; 13:24; 22:6,15: Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:27-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-10; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:14; Hebrews 13:4; and 1 Peter 3:1-8.

d. Christian Living and Character

All people seeking to know God are welcome in our church. We are confident that the Holy Spirit will convict people of sin in their lives, and that those who have made Jesus Christ Lord of their lives will repent of their sins and earnestly try to lead God-pleasing lives. However, if a person refuses to repent and to earnestly try to leave their old sinful lifestyle, the Bible clearly teaches that such a person should be removed from the church so that they do not influence and affect the rest of the people in the church. See: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. Only when the person repents of their sin and is no longer leading or condoning that sinful lifestyle may that individual be considered to rejoin the fellowship of the church. See 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

The Bible very clearly states that homosexuality is a sin. See: Genesis 18:16-19, 29; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; and 1 Timothy 1:10. In accordance with the Biblical principles discussed above, this church welcomes homosexuals who seek to know God. We have faith that the Holy Spirit will convict them that they need to turn away from their sinful lifestyle. However, if they refuse to give up their sinful lifestyle and lead a God-pleasing Christian life, they will have to be asked to leave the church so that they do not influence and affect the rest of the people in the church. Individuals living a homosexual lifestyle cannot be members of this church, or serve as teachers, employees, volunteers, or in any other capacity of responsibility in the church. Only when the person repents of his sin and is no longer leading or condoning a homosexual lifestyle may that individual be considered to rejoin the fellowship of the church.

Section 17 - Last Things

a. The Rapture

We believe in the imminent, premillennial return of Christ for His Church, and that at that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air before the seventieth week of Daniel. I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-54; Philippians 3:20, 21; Revelation 3:10.

b. The Tribulation

We believe that the rapture of the church saints will be followed by a seven-year period called the Tribulation or Daniel’s seventieth week. The Church will be in heaven during these years, during which time believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The last three and a half years of the Tribulation is called the Great Tribulation or Jacob’s Trouble, a time of severe judgments upon the whole earth. Daniel 9:27; Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:15-21; Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 16:1-21.

c. The Millennial Kingdom

We believe the Tribulation will be terminated by Christ’s coming in judgment to establish the Millennial Kingdom, during which time He will fulfill the promises to Israel concerning their earthly kingdom.

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God’s eternal covenant people, that she is now dispersed because of her disobedience and rejection of Christ, and that she will be regathered in the land of Palestine as promised in the Abrahamic Covenant and, after the completion of the Church, will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ. Genesis 13:14-17; Romans 11:1-32; Ezekiel 37; Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 20:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34.

d. The Judgment of the Wicked

We believe the Millennial Kingdom will terminate with the release of Satan from the bottomless pit, who will lead an insurrection against the Son of God and will be eternally defeated by God. This will be followed by the Great White Throne Judgment, where all unbelievers will be judged and sentenced eternally to the Lake of Fire. They will not be annihilated, but will be in conscious torment forever. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Mark 9:42-48; Revelation 20:2-3, 7-10.

e. The New Heaven and the New Earth

We believe in the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and which will be the abiding place of the redeemed for all eternity, where Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Revelation 21:1-27; Revelation 22:3; Revelation 19:16.

ARTICLE IV - ASSOCIATIONS

Section 1

This church shall be an independent, autonomous church, subject only to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. It has the right to cooperate and associate with other Biblical groups on a voluntary basis. There shall be no cooperation with any group that permits the presence of apostates or apostasy, or that endorses groups that permit the presence of apostates or apostasy.

Section 2

This church shall fellowship with the following associations:

1. The Sunshine State Fellowship of Regular Baptist Churches.

2. The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches.

The above named associations now hold strong Biblical convictions, and are vigorously opposed to all apostasy and compromise. If these association should waver from their present Biblical stand, this church, in standing true to the Word of God, shall take appropriate action to withdraw from them.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 - Present Membership

All those whose names appear on the rolls of this church are members, but only those on the “Active” list are considered in good and regular standing. Those whose names appear on the “Inactive” list have no right of franchise and may not be granted a letter of “good and regular standing”. Members must have reached their eighteenth birthday in order to have the right of franchise.

Section 2 - Candidate for Church Membership

a. Candidates may become members of the church in one of four ways:

1. By baptism following confession of faith in Christ.

2. By receipt of a letter of good standing from a church of like faith and order, accompanied by personal confession of faith.

3. By confession of faith, having been saved and immersed.

4. By restoration.

b. Anyone professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, giving evidence of a change of heart and declaring himself (or herself) in accord with the principles, practices and doctrines of this church, may become a candidate for church membership. Candidates must make their request for church membership known publicly before the church body.

c. After making his request for church membership known publicly, the candidate shall appear personally before the pastor and deacons who shall pass upon his qualifications and prescribe any restrictions they may deem advisable for the best interests of the church. The deacons will then make a recommendation to the church for its approval or rejection of a candidate. In most cases it is highly recommended that new candidates be required to attend a membership class to be taught by the pastor or someone appointed by him, before receiving the right-hand of fellowship.

d. The names of those recommended by the deacons for church membership may be presented and voted on at a regular church meeting or any regular business meeting.

Section 3 - Dismissal of Members

a. Dismissal shall be by death, letter, or exclusion.

b. Letters of dismissal may be granted any member in good and regular standing. Such letters must be addressed to a particular church of like faith and order as this and sent by the clerk to the pastor or clerk of the church to which he is applying for membership. Such letters shall be valid only for six months from date and the member dismissed shall remain subject to the discipline of this church until notification has been received of the acceptance by the church addressed. No letter shall be granted except to a designated church of like faith and order.

c. A letter of dismissal shall not be granted to a member not in good and regular standing nor to one desiring to unite with a church not of like faith and order; however, a personal letter should be written, giving his standing to date.

Section 4 - Discipline of Members

a. During the last quarter of each year the pastor and deacons shall review the membership roll. The matter of discipline of members shall be in the hands of the deacons, assisted by the pastor, and their action by a three-fourths vote shall be final, except in cases of expulsion. Approval shall be by a majority vote of the church after recommendation from the board of deacons. No member shall be expelled until every effort has been made, including, if physically possible, personal visits to reclaim him (or her) for Christ and the church.

b. Members failing to support the church by their interest and participation for a period of six months without a legitimate excuse (such “support” and “excuse” to be defined by the deacons), may be placed on the “inactive” list thereby depriving them of their right of franchise. Names continuing on the “inactive” list for more than six months may be removed from the church membership roll subject to paragraph a. of this Section, having been visited by two people if possible, if physically able, and notified by the church clerk.

Section 5 - Obligation of Members

a. The Church Covenant sets forth the obligations assumed by every member of this church. Frequent reading of the Covenant is recommended to every member.

b. Loyalty to Christ and to the local church requires that every member shall attend regularly the services of worship; shall maintain honorable business relations with all men; shall make regular contributions as the Lord has prospered him (I Corinthians 16:2), toward the expenses and missionary interests of the church. Furthermore, it shall be the duty of members to honor and esteem their pastor; to pray for him fervently and daily, in love, manifesting a tender regard for his welfare and reputation.

c. Any member desiring a meeting with the deacons and pastor shall be granted that privilege upon written request which includes a summary of the purpose of the meeting.

d. No person on the “inactive” membership list shall be entitled to vote, hold office or teach.

ARTICLE VI - ORDINANCES

Section 1 - Baptism

Those professing faith in Christ shall, upon authorization of the church, be immersed in water by the pastor or someone else appointed by the church. Only those shall be baptized who are being received into the church membership. Immersion, as a believer, shall be a prerequisite to church membership.

Section 2 - The Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper shall normally be served to the assembled church by the pastor, or some other person authorized by the church, on the first Sunday of each month, or at such other time as may be decided by pastor and deacons. Since it is the Lord’s Table, none that are His shall be barred, but the pastor shall frequently state the scriptural order, which places baptism as a prerequisite to the Lord’s Supper, and shall explain the meaning of the ordinances. The elements shall be unleavened bread and grape juice. The Lord’s Supper shall not be served outside of a church meeting.

ARTICLE VII - OFFICERS

Section 1 – Titles

 The elected officers of the church shall be Senior Pastor, Assistant Pastor, and Deacons.

Philippians 1:1.

Section 2 – Senior Pastor

a. When calling a pastor, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The prospective pastor will visit, coming as a supply pastor and if approved by a majority of those present and voting, at a meeting called for this purpose, will come back for a second meeting with the church, bringing his wife with him. It should be understood that the prospect will preach a minimum of four times during these two visits.

2. If he has served in other churches, his ministry there should be explored with a bonafide attempt to determine that he meets the qualifications set forth for a pastor in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

3. He shall be required to state in writing his acceptance of and adherence to the Articles of Faith, Constitution and Covenant of the church. Any differences which he holds concerning these documents should be submitted to the pulpit committee in writing.

4. He shall also state in writing any differences which he holds relating to groups and associations with which this church is in fellowship.

5. The pulpit committee shall present only one man at a time for consideration and vote by the church.

b. A call to the pastor shall be extended at a meeting of the church called for that purpose and announced from the pulpit for two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting. A three-fourths majority of those present and voting shall be necessary for a call. Voting shall be by ballot. A written call and agreement shall be presented to the prospective pastor, giving details of church-pastoral relationship, including salary, housing and car allowances, insurance, vacations, etc., after these matters have been discussed with the pastor and approved mutually.

c. He shall continue in office until he resigns or is dismissed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a special meeting called for that purpose. The pastor shall give the church notice in writing not to exceed sixty days and not less than thirty days of his intention to discontinue as pastor. The church may, by a two-thirds majority vote, declare the pulpit vacant, provided a notice of not less than sixty days is given the pastor occupying the pulpit to vacate same.

d. If the conduct of the pastor justifies immediate termination of his ministry, such as proven guilt of immorality or inexcusable dishonesty in his business affairs, the church shall declare the pulpit vacant and pay him two weeks salary beyond that date.

e. The pastor shall have three weeks annual vacation, which shall not exceed three Sundays, with pay, the time to be agreed upon by the pastor and deacons. At the end of two years of his ministry, the annual vacation will be increased to four weeks, not to exceed four Sundays. The pastor shall be free to conduct meetings outside the church as the Lord leads, but not more than three Sundays per year excluding vacation time, except with the consent of the board of deacons. At such times the pastor and the deacons will obtain a speaker for the Sunday services. Remuneration to be determined by the deacons.

f. The pastor’s salary shall be reviewed and determined at least once a year, giving consideration to the rising costs of living.

g. The pastor shall have charge of the spiritual welfare of the church; he shall preach the gospel, teach the Word and have charge of the services of the church; he shall administer the ordinances and perform the usual duties of a Baptist minister.

h. The pastor shall secure speakers and programs for the church in conjunction with the approval of the board of deacons.

i. The pastor shall moderate the business sessions of the church. In his absence, the chairman of the deacons shall call the meeting to order and act as moderator. If the pastor is to be under discussion in a business session another moderator shall be elected, and the pastor and his family shall withdraw from the meeting.

j. The pastor shall be an ex officio member of all boards and committees. He shall also be member of this church.

k. Salaries for necessary church staff shall be determined by the church, and qualified individuals are to be hired or dismissed by the pastor and deacons. These shall work under the direction and supervision of the pastor.

## Section 3 – Assistant Pastor

a. When calling an assistant pastor, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The prospective assistant pastor will visit, utilizing his ministry gifts, and if approved by a majority of those present and voting, at a meeting called for this purpose, will come back for a second meeting with the church, bringing his wife with him. It should be understood that the prospect will publicly utilize his ministry gifts during at least four different services during these two visits.

2. If he has served in other churches, his ministry there should be explored with a bona fide attempt to determine that he meets the qualifications set forth for a pastor in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

3. He shall be required to state in writing his acceptance of and adherence to the Articles of Faith, Constitution and Covenant of the church. Any differences which he holds concerning these documents should be submitted to the pulpit committee in writing.

4. He shall also state in writing any differences which he holds relating to groups and associations with which this church is in fellowship.

5. The pulpit committee shall present only one man at a time for consideration and vote by the church.

b. A call to the assistant pastor shall be extended at a meeting of the church called for that purpose and announced from the pulpit for two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting. A three-fourths majority of those present and voting shall be necessary for a call. Voting shall be by ballot. A written call and agreement shall be presented to the prospective candidate, giving details of church-pastoral relationship, including salary, housing allowances, car allowances, insurance, vacations, etc., after these matters have been discussed with the candidate and approved mutually.

c. He shall continue in office until he resigns or is dismissed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a special meeting called for that purpose. The assistant pastor shall give the church notice in writing not to exceed sixty days and not less than thirty days of his intention to discontinue as an assistant pastor. The church may, by a two-thirds majority vote, declare the position vacant, provided a notice of not less than sixty days is given the assistant pastor occupying the position to vacate same.

d. If the conduct of the assistant pastor justifies immediate termination of his ministry, such as proven guilt of immorality or inexcusable dishonesty in his business affairs, the church shall declare the position vacant and pay him two weeks salary beyond that date.

e. The assistant pastor’s salary shall be reviewed and determined at least once a year, giving consideration to the rising costs of living.

f. The role of an assistant pastor shall be to aid the senior pastor in the work of evangelism, discipleship, and caring for the flock. His primary ministry responsibilities will be determined by the senior pastor and the deacons and clearly communicated to the congregation prior to the calling of an assistant pastor.

g. An assistant pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees. He shall also be a member of this church.

h. An assistant pastor will work under the supervision of the senior pastor. As with the senior pastor, the deacons will seek to aid an assistant pastor in promoting the spiritual welfare of the church, and to be his counselors and helpers.

i. Whereas the church will only have one senior pastor, the church may call as many assistant pastors as they deem are necessary.

Section 4 - Deacons

1. The responsibilities of deacons are as follows:
2. First and foremost, deacons need to recognize they serve Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd of the church. They are servants to the church, set apart to serve the people of God, so the pastor may devote himself to prayer and ministry of the Word.
3. Deacons shall actively share the vision and philosophy of Gateway Baptist Church.
4. Deacons shall constitute the pulpit committee.
5. They shall, with the pastor, prepare a budget to accomplish the purpose and mission of Gateway Baptist Church. They shall make such recommendations to the church body at regular business meetings.
6. They shall assist the pastor and help him promote the spiritual welfare of the church. They shall provide watch-care over the flock, and assist the pastor in preparing candidates for membership.
7. They shall assist in the preparation of the Lord’s Supper.
8. Deacons shall hold regular monthly meetings with carefully prepared minutes which will be saved for permanent record.
9. They shall establish and administer the deacon’s fund which shall be for the purpose of aiding church members and friends of the church who are in special need.
10. Deacons shall be selected and affirmed from the voting membership of Gateway Baptist Church. The selection and affirmation process is as follows:
11. The congregation will receive a list of men, provided by the pastor and deacons, who are willing and qualified to serve as deacon no less than four weeks before the annual meeting.
12. The candidates will model godly character as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-12, Galatians 5:22-26. They will have a zeal for prayer, holiness, evangelism and all the concerns of God. They will also have a zeal to accomplish the mission of Matthew 28:18-20, and accomplish the values and mission of Gateway Baptist Church.
13. Candidates for the office of deacon will be men at least eighteen years of age and who have been members of Gateway Baptist Church for at least one year.
14. Affirmation of deacons will be made by a majority ballot of members attending the annual meeting.
15. Deacons shall serve for a three year term.
16. Deacons may serve two consecutive three year terms. They shall be ineligible to serve for one year after serving two consecutive terms. Under special circumstances, the serving deacons may decide to temporarily waive this requirement.
17. When a vacancy occurs, the vacancy may be filled at the next annual meeting. Adjustments to term length and rotation of deacons will be determined by the serving deacons.
18. The deacons shall appoint a chairman and secretary from their number.

 Section 5 - Officers

a. The appointed officers of the church consist of treasurer, clerk, financial secretary, Sunday School superintendent, head usher, trustee and any other officer deemed necessary for the progress of the functioning of the church. These officers are appointed by the deacons, following the annual election and must be ratified by the congregation at a called business meeting.

b. All officers shall normally assume their duties immediately following their election or appointment at the annual meeting. Retiring officers shall hold office until the terms of newly appointed officers begin.

c. Any officer unable or unwilling to fulfill the duties of his office shall resign. If any officer refuses to subscribe to the Articles of Faith, the Constitution and the Church Covenant, his resignation shall be requested by the deacons. If it is not received within a reasonable time, the office shall be declared vacant by vote of the church.

d. All officers shall be spiritually mature, of unquestioned Christian character, loyal to the Word of God, dedicated and devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the spiritual and material welfare of this church. They shall also be faithful in attendance and participation, both in regular services and business meetings of the church. Their moral conduct shall be beyond reproach and free of carnal indulgences, such as the use of intoxicating beverages, tobacco in all forms, narcotic drugs and other worldly practices. They shall not be members of any type of secret organization. In the light of I Timothy 3, the home and family relationships must be considered, as well as individual qualifications. The candidate for office must give an unequivocal affirmation of his allegiance to the Articles of Faith.

ARTICLE VIII - OFFICE DESCRIPTION

Section 1 - Church Clerk

a. The church clerk shall have charge of the official correspondence and shall keep a record of all business meetings of the church, entering the minutes of the meetings in a book. The clerk shall keep in a bound book a record of all the membership, of baptisms and of the reception and dismissal of members. The clerk shall perform such other duties as properly belonging to the office, making monthly and annual reports to the church. The clerk shall keep a list of the names to appear on the “inactive” list as received from the board of deacons.

b. The church clerk shall provide the financial secretary and the treasurer with a transcript of the minutes of each church business meeting promptly in which authority is granted for the disbursement or transfer of funds.

c. The church clerk shall certify annually to the bank, names of officers who are authorized to have access to the safety deposit boxes and to sign the checks for disbursement of funds.

d. Upon his retirement or removal from office, he shall deliver to his successor, or the chairman of the board of deacons, all records, files, and/or other papers belonging to the church, and shall present the same with all contents complete to the date of surrender of such documents.

Section 2 - Financial Secretary

a. It shall be the duty of the financial secretary, together with one or more trustees, to count and record in a permanent record all monies received in the offerings of the church.

b. The financial secretary shall be responsible for depositing all funds in the bank, including monies received from organizations within the church or from individuals.

c. The financial secretary shall provide the treasurer and pastor with a record of all monies received and deposited, specifying the distribution into various funds, as indicated by the donors or by special offerings. We encourage gifts designated through the church be given to approved agencies sanctioned by the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. Any exceptions should be approved by the pastor and deacons.

d. The chairman of the trustees shall assume the duties of the financial secretary in the absence of the latter, except that he may not assume the duties of the treasurer as outlined in Section 3 simultaneously.

Section 3 – Treasurer

a. The treasurer shall be responsible for the recording of all financial transactions in permanent records and shall make monthly and annual reports to the church.

b. The treasurer shall pay the bills of the church after they have been approved by the trustees. He shall write, sign, record and mail all checks. The chairman of the trustees shall assume the responsibility of signing checks in the treasurer’s absence, except that he shall not perform the duties of the financial secretary as outlined in Section 2 simultaneously.

Section 4 - Sunday School Superintendent

a. The superintendent shall have general supervision over the Sunday School, teachers, and officers. He shall carry out the program established by the board of deacons and shall report annually to the church.

b. The board of deacons, in consultation with the pastor and Sunday School Superintendent, shall appoint all teachers and officers for the Sunday School.

Section 5 - Head Usher

a. The head usher is responsible for the selection of ushers to work with him at all services.

### Section 6 – Trustees

a. The term of office shall be three years and be so arranged that approximately one-third of the board shall be appointed annually. A trustee having served two consecutive three-year terms shall be eligible for re-appointment after an interval of at least one year. The number of trustees shall be determined by the deacons, with a minimum of five. When any vacancy occurs on the board, the unexpired term shall be filled at the next annual meeting.

b. Agree to the provisions of the “Act of Incorporation”, and the laws of the State of Florida, the board of trustees shall represent the church as its agents.

c. They shall appoint a chairman and secretary from their number, keep minutes of their meetings in permanent record, and report annually to the church.

d. They shall not have authority to sell, lease, give away or dispose of church property in excess of $1000.00 in value; nor to mortgage or encumber the church with debt exceeding the above amount, except as the church shall order by a corporate act. They shall be responsible for the care and upkeep of the physical properties of the church. All projects involving the expenditure of more than $1000.00 are to be submitted to the church for approval, except in routine matters.

ARTICLE IX - COMMITTEES

Section 1 - The Auditing Committee

a. This committee shall consist of at least two members elected at the annual election, or the church may vote to authorize the audit by a professional auditing firm rather than by a committee.

b. It shall audit all accounts of the church and its organizations quarterly, and certify same, reporting each quarter and at the annual meeting.

Section 2 - The Missionary Committee

a. This committee shall consist of the pastor, the chairman of the deacons, president of the missionary organization, and two other members of the church to be appointed by the pastor and the deacons.

b. It shall recommend the missionary projects to be supported by the church and auxiliary organizations. Suggestions from such organizations may be submitted to the committee for consideration and recommendation.

c. It shall draft an annual missionary budget to be submitted to the Budget Committee for its action at least three weeks before the annual meeting of the church.

d. It shall maintain contact with missionaries supported by the church, and encourage prayer for, and church-wide interest in these and other missionaries.

Section 3 - The Music Committee

a. This committee shall consist of a Music Director (appointed by the deacons) who shall be its chairman, the pastor, and three appointed members. The appointed members shall be selected by the Music Director and Pastor, be approved by the deacons, and shall serve a one year term of office.

b. It shall be the duty of this committee to plan and approve all music and see it is of acceptable quality and nature and to prepare the special music schedules for all regular and special services. This committee shall appoint the church organist and pianist, and the assistants needed for the church. All appointments made by this committee shall be for a one year period.

Section 4 - The Pulpit Committee

a. Whenever it shall become necessary for the church to call a pastor, the Board of Deacons shall comprise the pulpit committee.

All committees shall report annually, in writing, to the church unless otherwise instructed.

ARTICLE X - MEETINGS

Section 1 - Public Worship

a. Public worship services shall be held regularly, morning and evening, on the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day. These services shall not normally be given over to anything but prayer and preaching and teaching the Word, with an appropriate musical ministry. Any other special presentation shall be subject to approval by the pastor and the deacons. Neither shall they be merged into union services with other denominations.

b. At least once each week there shall be a meeting for prayer and Bible study.

Section 2 - Business Meetings

a. The official church year shall begin the first day of March and close the last day of February.

b. The annual meeting shall be held on the third Wednesday in March, following a period of prayer. In case of any omission in the holding of elections, the meeting shall be called and held on the earliest date thereafter.

c. The quarterly business meetings shall be held on the second Wednesday after the first Sunday. Financial reports shall be presented at this time.

d. The day for business meetings may be changed at the discretion of the church.

e. Special meetings may be called by the pastor, the board of deacons or any ten unrelated families who are members of the church and request such of the clerk providing the particular object, or objects of the meeting are clearly stated in the notice, and no other business shall be transacted in such a meeting. The notice for the calling of a special meeting must be given on a minimum of two (2) Sunday morning services prior to the meeting.

f. A quorum shall consist of thirty percent of the voting membership.

g. Only members eighteen years of age and above shall be eligible to vote.

h. The ordinary rules of deliberative assemblies shall be observed in the transaction of business, as set forth in Roberts Rules of Order Revised, Henry M. Roberts, or Parliamentary Law, F.M. Gregg.

ARTICLE XI - CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1 - Sunday School

a. The purpose of the Sunday School is to win each scholar to the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and to instruct him in the Word and in Christian living, including church attendance and membership.

b. All officers and regular teachers of the Sunday School shall be appointed annually and shall be members of this church in good standing. Anyone whose conduct or teaching is considered injurious to the class, Sunday School, or church shall, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, be referred to the board of deacons for necessary action.

c. In extenuating circumstances, substitute (non-member) teachers may be appointed for a period not to exceed three months.

d. All teachers and officers must be approved by the board of deacons, in consultation with the pastor and Sunday School Superintendent. Approval of all literature shall be the responsibility of the pastor, superintendent and board of deacons, strongly recommending Regular Baptist Press material when available.

Section 2 - Bible Training Programs

a. The purpose of the Bible Training Program is to train Christian young people and adults for Christian service.

b. All officers of the Junior High age and above shall be members of the church.

c. All counselors must first be approved by the board of deacons. All literature must be approved by the same.

Section 3 - Other Organizations

a. There shall be other organizations as considered advantageous, but none of these shall be started without the consent of the board of deacons. No subsidiary organization of the church shall engage in any practice or hold any policy contrary to the general position of the church itself. All officers and regular teachers shall be members of the church.

b. All such organizations are self-governing but are subject finally to the control of the church in accordance with its Constitution and church-voted policies.

ARTICLE XII – MISSIONS

 It shall be the policy of this church to support only missions engaged principally in evangelization and establishment of Baptist churches (schools, hospitals and similar ministries must be kept subordinate to the primary objectives). They shall be known to be in hearty agreement with our Confession of Faith, both in doctrine and practice. They shall be Baptist in both name and practice, and normally shall be missions approved by the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. Christian schools and social agencies, such as homes for the aged, children’s homes, etc. shall be considered an appropriate part of the missionary program.

 Any exceptions to the above must have the approval of the Missionary Committee, the Board of Deacons, and the Pastor.

ARTICLE XIII - GENERAL

Section 1 - Use of the church property and name

a. Use of the property for other than regularly scheduled meetings shall first be approved by the board of deacons and the pastor.

b. All gatherings off the church property held in the name of the church shall be subject to the approval of the pastor and the board of deacons.

c. No pastor, pulpit orator or representatives of any society or organization will be permitted to preach in the church who fails to confess clearly the fundamentals of the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). Any visiting speaker must have the approval of the Pastor and the board of deacons.

Section 2 - Monetary Principles

a. The systematic giving of money for the support of the work of the Lord is worship as well as duty. It must be kept on the plane of voluntary, freewill offerings, untarnished by any hope of material gain. All members are expected to give regular systematic financial support to the church according to the leading of the Holy Spirit and teachings of the Word of God. No monies shall be raised for the support of the church and its various activities by any but the Biblical plan of tithes, offerings and gifts. Any other method of fund raising shall be approved by the board of deacons and the pastor

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b. A statement of each donor’s account shall be given to him at the end of each year by the financial secretary. Numbered envelopes will be provided to enable proper records to be kept.

Section 3 - Legal Provisions

a. This church shall have the right to own, buy, or sell tangible properties both real and personal, in its own name and through properly elected officers, when authorized by a vote of the church.

1. No profit shall ever accrue to the benefit of any individuals from assets, holdings or

 other transactions in which this corporation may become involved.

c. In the event of the dissolution of this corporation, all of its debts shall be fully satisfied. None of its assets of holdings shall be divided among the members or other individuals, but shall be irrevocably designated by corporate vote prior to dissolution to such other non-profit religious corporations as are in agreement with the letter and spirit of the Articles of Faith, adopted by this church, and in conformity with the requirements of the United States Internal Revenue Service Code of 1954 (Section 501 C-3).

Section 4 – Conferences

a. Attendance at the annual G.A.R.B.C. Conference shall not be considered part of the pastor’s vacation. His attendance at such shall be encouraged, and the church, when possible, shall make allowance to cover travel and living expenses while there.

b. It should also be expected of the pastor to attend the Conferences held by the Sunshine State Fellowship of Regular Baptist Churches.

Section 5 - Watchcare Membership

 This church shall allow watchcare membership for students, or others who may be temporarily residing in the area, in which they will have all the privileges of membership except voting and holding elective offices.

ARTICLE XIV - AMENDMENTS AND BYLAWS

a. This Constitution may be amended, altered or revised at a specially called business meeting for that purpose by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting, provided such proposed changes shall have been submitted in writing not later than the meeting preceding.

b. The church may adopt from time to time such by-laws in amplification hereof as may be necessary or desirable, and shall provide therein for amendment of the same.

ARTICLE XV - NEW TESTAMENT DISTINCTIVES OF A BAPTIST CHURCH

a. The authority of the Scriptures for faith and practice.

 (We are to organize and operate our church according to the Word of God and not by traditions or man-made creeds) 2 Timothy 3:16,17

b. The soul liberty of the believer.

 (Each believer is directly accountable to God and is subject to the Word of God. No man can force his beliefs on another person or church without being contrary to God’s Word, except in matters wherein that person’s actions affect the local church, and then he is under the discipline of the local church) Acts 5:29; Romans 14:5

c. The priesthood of the believer.

 (Each believer as a priest can draw near to God in full assurance of faith in our tasks for God, prayer, in worship, and in confession of sins) 1 Peter 2:5

d. A regenerate, baptized church membership.

 (The Word of God clearly indicates that only regenerate, immersed believers should be received into the local church) Acts 2:41; Acts 8:36-38

e. The sovereignty of the local church.

 (Each church is independent and governed by people) Acts 2:42

f. The separation of church and state.

 (God’s Word gives no indication of one having authority over the other, but each one’s duties or authority is given separately) Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 13:1

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