

## **Preamble**

For the preservation and security of the Doctrinal Statement and church Covenant, and to the end that this assembly of baptized believers may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the New Testament Order; we therefore band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ and adopt for our government, plan of worship, and service the following Constitution and prescribed Bylaws.

## **Article 1 - Name**

This local church shall be called Thankful Missionary Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida located at 4916 Moncrief Road, Jacksonville, FL 32209.

## **Article 2 - Purpose**

The purpose of this local church is the salvation of the lost souls, the edification of the Christians through the teaching of God's Word, the encouragement of members to do the work of the ministry, the worldwide proclamation of God's saving grace through the shed blood and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary, the promotion of godly worship, the defense of the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3), and cooperation with Christian activities functioning in harmony with God's Holy Word, until Jesus comes for His church.

It is the intent of this church to function freely as a missionary, evangelistic, premillennial independent Baptist church, recognizing no ecclesiastical authority higher than the local assembly. Further, we will operate in true Biblical, Baptist, autonomous fashion. We have taken a stand against all worldly philosophies that seek to destroy true Biblical Baptist Christianity.

## **Article 3 - Doctrinal Statement**

We believe in the Holy Scripture, accepting fully the writings of the Old and New Testaments as the very Word of God, verbally inspired in all parts in its original autographs, our infallible and authoritative rule of faith and practice.

We believe there is one God eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of Christ; His virgin birth; His shed blood for atonement; His bodily resurrection; His ascension into Heaven there to be our Intercessor; His lordship over all creation.

We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, makes believers children of God through the new birth, assures them of Heaven, and by His indwelling enables Christians to live a godly life.

We believe that all men are sinners by nature and choice, sinful and lost, and have within themselves no possible means of salvation without Christ.



We believe in salvation by grace through faith; that salvation is the free gift of God, not by any virtue or works of man, but received only by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and all true believers possess the gift of eternal life, a perfect righteousness, son ship in the family of God, and the divine guarantee that they shall never perish.

We believe in the existence of Satan, the deceiver and god of this present world; that he was defeated and judged at the cross, and therefore his final doom is certain.

We believe in the second coming of Christ; the time being unrevealed but always imminent; that when He comes He will first by resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living remove from the earth His waiting church; then pour out the righteous judgments of God upon the unbelieving world, afterwards descend with His church and establish His glorious and literal kingdom over all the nations for a thousand years.

We believe that the spirits of the saved at death go immediately to be with Christ in Heaven; that at His second coming their works will be judged and rewards determined; that the spirits of the unsaved at death descend immediately into Hell until the final day of judgment, at which time their bodies shall be raised from the grave, judged, and cast into the lake of fire, the place of final and everlasting punishment.

We believe in the priesthood of all believers, that Christ is our Great High Priest and through Him every born-again person has direct access into God's presence without the need of a human priest; that the believer has the right and responsibility personally to study and interpret the Scriptures guided by the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the separation of church and state; that God has ordained both, and has delegated authority to each; the authority of one must not interfere with the other; however, this does not mean that the state is to be non-religious nor does it mean that the church and its members may not be involved in the political processes of this nation.

#### **Article 4 - Church Covenant**

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

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In the case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.



We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joy with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Saviour in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and principles of God's word.

## **Article 5 - Government**

The government of this church, under the Head of Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is vested in the qualified voting members of the church.

By action of the church in electing its officers, the immediate direction of spiritual and temporal affairs of the church shall be committed to said officers and Deacons during the term of office as further provided elsewhere in this Constitution.

Thankful Missionary Baptist Church acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as its only Head and receives the Holy Bible as the only infallible guide in matters of faith, church order and discipline, and is amenable to no Ecclesiastical Body.

## **Article 6 - The Officers**

### **Section 6.1 - Pastor**

The Pastor shall be chief executive officer in the church, moderator of all church meetings, ex-officio head of all departments of church work and all activities. He shall serve on a permanent basis. The Pastor shall be the only leader of the flock (undershepherd). There can never be two leaders. It shall be the duty of the Pastor to preach the Word and administer ordinances, to take and have charge of all services, and to watch over the spiritual interests of the church. The Pastor is to protect the "flock" from "wolves" that would slip in "sheep's" clothing to devour the "flock."

The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period of time. The salary shall be fixed at the time of the call and may be changed by vote of the church at any regular business meeting. The salary shall be paid in weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly installments. The Pastor shall be given an annual vacation of not less than two (2) weeks with pay.



A pastor's term of office may end upon thirty (30) days of notification on the part of the pastor or of the Church by mutual consent. Termination of the office shall be voted on at a regularly called business meeting, notice of the meeting and its purpose having been read from the pulpit on two (2) successive Sundays. A vote of 4/5 of the members present and qualified to vote shall make a valid termination of said office.

Upon the death, resignation, or dismissal of the Pastor, the church shall seek a candidate who wholeheartedly subscribes to the Constitution and Bylaws of this church. The Deacons and four (4) additional members shall serve as the pulpit committee for the selection of a candidate to present to the congregation for a vote. No candidate shall be presented to the congregation without at least a two-thirds vote from the pulpit committee. The committee must give notice for two consecutive Sundays before a congregational vote may be taken. The vote must be two-thirds majority of votes cast by those who are qualified to vote under the provisions of the Constitution, and provided there be present a quorum (Article 9, Section 6). The Pastor shall be called to an unlimited tenure to be terminated only by his resignation, death, moral or doctrinal departure from the Word of God and this Constitution and Bylaws, or his inability or unwillingness to fulfill his responsibilities as the undershepherd of this flock, at which time the church acts according to above order. (The Pastorship of Thankful Missionary Baptist Church is a calling, not just an election of another officer to fill an office.)

## **Section 6.2 - Deacons**

Deacons shall be elected and ordained upon the basis of qualifications as set forth in the New Testament. The number of Deacons to be elected shall be determined by the need as determined by the Pastor and Deacons upon growth of the church. Their term of service shall be for a period of one year.

Qualified voting members of the church may submit recommendations for Deacons. From these recommendations the Pastor and Deacons will determine the final slate of Deacon candidates to be placed on the ballot.

Any member who feels that a candidate is not suited for the office must apprise the church and confront the candidate with a charge at a special meeting to determine qualifications. One who so confronts must observe two (2) requirements:

1. Specific charges must be brought and stated in writing, presenting evidence that is clear, cogent and convincing, as to its truth.
2. Remembering the words of Jesus, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone".

Persons passing this test will be placed on probation, in which time they will undergo rigorous training and preparation for the task. At the end of this period and upon recommendation to the Church, the candidate or candidates shall be ordained.



Any Deacon who, for a period of three (3) months, fails to perform the duties of his office faithfully automatically vacates the same. The Church may, for good and sufficient cause, remove any Deacon from office.

The Ministry shall choose annually a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a secretary.

Special meetings may be called by the chairman or the secretary, who shall notify other ministry members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

The Deacons shall constitute the Pastor's advisory council and, under his leadership, have the general oversight of the affairs of the church. With the Pastor they shall seek the highest spiritual good of the church. They shall assist in the observance of the Lord's Supper, and in other duties as apply to the New Testament office (Acts 6:1-7, and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 especially).

The Deacons shall visit the members, care for the sick, widows, needy and distressed members of the church, and shall be actively involved in the church's soul winning visitation program.

The Pastor may delegate to the Deacons many matters that would involve the Pastor and take vital time and attention to prayer and study the Pastor needs.

Deacons are to receive and distribute the funds of the church within the duly constituted treasury and budget.

#### Section 6.6- Other Officers and Leaders

The Deacons shall have charge of the temporalities of the church, and make funds available for repair, upkeep, maintenance and conservation of the church property within the limits of church income and budget.

#### Section 6.7- Standard for Church Leaders

### Section 6.3 Deaconess

The Ministry of Deaconesses shall assist the Pastor in developing the spiritual life of the women and girls of the church for best possible Christian service. It shall cooperate with the Pastor and the Ministry of Deacons in visiting the members; in the care of the sick, needy, and distressed members of the Church; and in the preparation of the observances of the Ordinances of the Church.

Any Deaconesses who, for a period of three (3) months, fails to perform the duties of her office faithfully automatically vacates the same. The Church may, for good and sufficient cause, remove any Deaconesses from office.

The Ministry shall choose annually a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a secretary.

Special meetings may be called by the chairman or the secretary, who shall notify other ministry members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

#### Section 7.2 - Associate Membership



## **Section 6.4- Trustees**

Trustees shall be selected annually. The Trustees shall not be empowered to execute deeds, deeds of trust, mortgages, liens, promissory notes of other pecuniary obligations, or to transfer, assign, and convey any church property of any part without the specific vote of the Church authorizing such action.

## **Section 6.5- Church Clerk**

A clerk shall be elected annually. The duties of the clerk shall be to keep a correct record of all proceedings of regular and special business meetings of the church, in a book provided for that purpose. He or she shall sign letters of dismissal of members, and keep a correct roll of membership and baptisms; also cooperate in keeping records and papers belonging to the church safe in the church's bank. The clerk shall notify all officers, committee members, and delegates of their election and appointment. The clerk shall assist in preparing denominational reports. The clerk shall deliver immediately to his or her successor all books and records for which he or she has been responsible as clerk.

There shall be one (1) assistant clerk elected annually to serve in the absence of the clerk.

## **Section 6.6- Other Officers and Leaders**

All other officers and leaders shall be appointed with the approval of the pastor.

## **Section 6.7- Standard for Church Leaders**

All church leaders shall be expected to adhere to the Standard for Church Leaders.

## **Article 7 - Membership**

### **Section 7.1 - Qualifications**

In order to qualify for membership at Thankful Missionary Baptist Church, a person must:

1. Have placed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, followed by baptism by immersion, and
2. Subscribe to the church's Doctrinal Statement, Covenant, and Constitution and Bylaws.

Having met these qualifications and upon recommendation from pastoral staff or Deacons, a person may be presented to the congregation for church membership. A person must receive a majority vote from eligible voters present and voting in order to be received as a member.

### **Section 7.2 - Associate Membership**



An associate membership roll shall be maintained by this church for those who desire the fellowship of this church who yet desire to maintain active membership in a like body of believers outside this city. An associate member shall not be entitled to hold any office or vote in church matters.

The qualifications and process for associate membership are identical to those for regular members (See Article 7, Section 1).

### **Section 7.3 - Dismissal of Members**

A member's name may be dropped from the roll of the church for the following reasons:

- (a) Transfer of membership to another church of like faith and practice.
- (b) Death of a member.
- (c) As a result of becoming inactive according to Article 7, sec. 4.
- (d) As a result of church discipline according to Article 7, sec. 5.
- (e) At the individual's request for personal reasons.

### **Section 7.4 - Inactive Members**

The Pastor and Deacons may place on the inactive membership list any member who absents himself from the services of this church for an entire quarter (three consecutive months).

Inactive members forfeit all voting rights as long as they remain on the inactive list.

Inactive members desiring to be reinstated on the active membership roll may do so upon recommendation by the Pastor and Deacons. At this time voting rights will be reestablished.

The Pastor and Deacons may remove from the membership of Thankful Missionary Baptist Church any individual whose name remains on the inactive list for a period of six months.

### **Section 7.5 - Church Discipline**

It is the duty of the church to exercise discipline of any member who persists in sin and disobedience (Mt. 18:15-20; II Thes. 3:6, 14). The sinning member is to be excluded from the Lord's Table and removed from the membership roll (I Cor. 5:11-13). The purpose of this action is to maintain the purity and testimony of the local assembly and for the restoration of the disciplined member to proper fellowship with Christ and the local church (I Cor. 5:5-7).

Should it become necessary to exclude a member from the membership of the church, the procedure as given in Matt. 18:15-17 will be carried out by the Pastor and Deacons, and the actual exclusion will be a matter of church business at a special meeting called for that purpose.

The attitude of the church toward any person excluded from its membership shall be one of love and prayerful compassion (II Thes. 3:15). Forgiveness and restoration shall be speedily granted to a disciplined member who shows true repentance and evidence of a godly life (II Cor. 2:7).



## **Article 8 - Ordinances**

We believe, according to Scripture, that Jesus Christ commanded the observance of two ordinances before He ascended unto His Father in Heaven; namely Baptism (Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:23-30).

### **Section 8.1 - Baptism**

We believe that all truly born-again believers are to follow the Bible example of the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17). As we believe that He was immersed, so we conclude that we are to be immersed after this example. Although salvation is not contingent upon baptism (Eph. 2:8,9), we believe that every born-again believer will gladly follow the Lord in Scriptural baptism as soon after conversion as possible as a public confession of the salvation experience: a complete break with all known sin and the world, and a sincere intent to reckon oneself dead unto sin and alive unto God (Rom. 6:3-5). This ordinance openly signifies that the believer is truly crucified with Christ and buried with Him, being dead to sin and resurrected with Him by the power of God to newness of life through Him (Acts 2:38-41).

### **Section 8.2 - Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is a commemorative ordinance to be observed by the church in memory of the Savior (I Cor. 11:24). "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19).

Only baptized believers have a right to partake of the Supper (Acts 2:41,42).

The fellowship of this table will be observed normally once a month or at other times as deemed wise by the Pastor and Deacons.

A careful examination of the heart should have been made by each believer, for the unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper brings damnation (judgment) upon himself (I Cor. 11:28-30).

## **Article 9 - Business Meetings**

### **Section 9.1 - Rules of Order**

- 1. The Pastor, or in his absence, the chairman of the Deacons, shall act as moderator of all business meetings of the church, or he shall appoint another member of the Deacons to act as moderator.
- 2. It shall be the duty of the moderator to keep order.
- 3. The meeting shall be opened and closed with prayer.
- 4. The order of the business shall be:
  - (1) Reading of the minutes of previous meeting if called for by the moderator.
  - (2) Reports of committees.
  - (3) Unfinished business.
  - (4) New business.



- 5. A motion before the church must be disposed of before another motion can be entertained, unless the motion is to amend, postpone, adjourn, or call for the previous motion.
- 6. Every member who speaks shall rise and first address the moderator.
- 7. The church in conference shall entertain no proposition for discussion which has not been presented for the consideration of the Deacons.
- 8. On any point of order a member may appeal from the moderator to the church, whose decision shall be final.
- 9. All motions shall be carried by the vote of the majority of voting members present, unless stated otherwise in the by-laws.

## **Section 9.2 - Business Meetings and Elections**

Special business meetings may be called at any time by the Pastor or Deacons; no meetings are to be called without the knowledge of the Pastor.

The purpose of business meetings shall be announced at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. Unannounced meetings may be called provided an effort is made to notify the voting membership of such a meeting. If such an emergency meeting should be called, a quorum of the qualified voting membership must be present in order to conduct business. (See Art. 9, Sec. 6)

The annual election of officers shall be during the annual business meeting, normally held on the Tuesday following the first Sunday in December.

At the annual business meeting, the Pastor and Deacons shall present for approval of the congregation a budget for the next financial year.

The Pastor and Deacons shall serve as a nominating committee for all general elections.

All matters pertaining to the purchase, sale, or mortgaging of property shall be voted on by the congregation.

## **Section 9.3 - Qualifications of Voters**

All members 18 years of age and older and having been active in the fellowship with the members of Thankful Missionary Baptist Church for the past 90 days before election time may vote. No one will be allowed to vote by proxy.

## **Section 9.4 - Vacancies**

Vacancies of elected officers will be filled for the remainder of that officer's term by appointment by the Pastor in counsel with the Deacons.

## **Section 9.5 - Amendments**



These Bylaws may be amended in any regular or called business meeting of the church by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast, provided a quorum is present (see Art. 9, Sec. 6) and provided it does not infringe upon the doctrinal principles, the "stand," the covenant; the independency of this church as stated in this Constitution; and provided notice of such amendment, stating the proposed change, shall have been given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays.

## **Section 9.6 - Quorum**

A quorum is necessary only:

- 1) To call a Pastor. For this purpose a quorum is two-thirds of the qualified voters of the church membership (Art. 6, Sec. 1).
- 2) For an unannounced business meeting. For this purpose a quorum is a majority of the qualified voters of the church membership (Art. 9, Sec. 2).
- 3) For amendments to this Constitution. For this purpose a quorum is two-thirds of the qualified voters of the church membership (Art. 9, Sec. 5).

## **Article 10 - Financial Policy**

### **Section 10.1 - Tithes and Offerings**

Tithes and offerings shall be recognized as our plan of finance. All members shall be encouraged to give at least a tenth of their income to the church. We believe this is taught in the Word of God.

### **Section 10.2- Financial Secretary**

The financial secretary shall be a member of the church in good standing. The financial secretary shall be elected at the annual meeting to serve one (1) year. It shall be the financial secretary's duties to furnish each member of the Church envelopes for contribution to Church funds; to keep a record of pledges made; to collect all monies contributed; to keep a correct account thereof between Church and its members.

The financial secretary shall send out personal statements to all members once a year, listing their gifts if requested.

The financial secretary shall report to the Church the names of those members who have failed to make any contributions of record toward Church expenses or funds.

The financial secretary shall keep accurate records of the receipts and disbursement of all auxiliaries, groups and ministries.

The financial secretary shall be bonded. The financial secretary may also serve as treasurer.



### **Section 10.3- Church Treasurer and Treasury**

The treasurer shall be a member of the church in good standing. The treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting to serve one (1) year. The treasurer shall have custody of the funds of the church and all deposits made in the name of the church, and all checks drawn by the treasurer shall be in the name of the church. All funds received shall be deposited on the next business day of receiving said funds.

The Treasurer shall keep separate accounts of all funds raised or contributed for particular purposes. No funds shall be disbursed by the treasurer except for the purpose for which they were raised or contributed.

The Treasurer shall have custody of the securities, investments, title papers, and other valuable documents of the church. A record of such shall be included in the official records of the church.

The Treasurer shall supervise the payment of all accounts consistent with the budget of the church or special vote of the church.

The Treasurer shall sign all checks for disbursement. If cash is paid on any occasion a receipt is required for the record.

The Treasurer shall keep a permanent record of all gifts and tithes for all that use the envelope system that desire a record for income tax purposes. All contribution records shall be confidential.

The Treasurer shall keep an accurate record of receipts and disbursements and report the financial statement to the church monthly and annually or as deemed wise by the Deacons. The Treasurer's books must be available for audit or inspection at any time the Deacons may deem necessary.

There shall be only one treasury in the church. The treasurer must be bonded. All monies received and disbursed in the name of Thankful Missionary Baptist Church will go through the church treasury.

Any non-budgeted expenditure exceeding 0.1% of the prior year General Fund offerings must be specifically approved by the Deacons. Any non-budgeted expenditure exceeding 0.4% of the prior year General Fund offerings must be specifically approved by the congregation at a properly called business meeting. The above amounts shall be calculated by the church Treasurer and announced to the congregation by April 20<sup>th</sup> of each year.

No member is to make purchases in the name of the church except upon proper authorization, within the limits of the church budget, by the Deacons or as it may be further decided upon by the church.

The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year (January 1 to December 31).