

**Bylaws
Olga Baptist Church**

**Revised and Updated
March 21, 2018
{Clarification added September 19, 2021}**

PREAMBLE

We declare and establish these Bylaws to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. These Bylaws will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

ARTICLE I. NAME

This body shall be known as the Olga Baptist Church Incorporated, Located at:
2364 South Olga Drive, Fort Myers, Florida, 33905.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

To be a dynamic spiritual body empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community and throughout the world.

To be a worshiping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership.

To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.

To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man.

To be a church which ministers unselfishly to persons in the community and the world in Jesus' name.

To be a church whose purpose is to be Christ-like in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the lordship of Christ.

ARTICLE III. STATEMENT OF FAITH

Section A. Policy.

The government of this church is vested in the body of baptized believers who compose it and who recognize Christ as the head of the church. The final authority for the operation and management of the affairs of this corporation, spiritual and temporal, shall be vested in the membership of the church, whose authority shall be exercised in the manner set forth in the Bylaws. Members alone shall have the authority to adopt and amend Bylaws, approve budgets, receive members, and govern and conduct the affairs of this church. The church is subject to the control of no other person or groups of persons, but it recognizes and sustains the privileges of mutual consent and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches of like faith and order.

Section B. Doctrine.

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and is basis for any statement of faith. Olga Baptist Church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of “The Baptist Faith and Message “as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000. We unite ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind.

ARTICLE IV. AFFILIATIONS

This church shall be affiliated with the Royal Palm Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of Florida, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE V. COVENANT

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

For the Advancement of this Church

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, holiness, and comfort, to promote its prosperity and spirituality: to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

As Christian Stewards

To contribute cheerfully, regularly and proportionately to the total support of our church, local and worldwide, support of the poor and homeless, and mission efforts to spread the gospel to all people throughout all nations.

Alone and at Home

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions, to educate our children in the Christian faith, to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.

Toward One Another

We further engage 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, always ready for reconciliation, to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our behavior; to avoid tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to use our influence to combat the use of drugs and spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

When We Move

We moreover engage that when we move from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word.

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP

Amendment to Article VI, Membership, Section D. of Olga Baptist Church Bylaws voted on and passed at the February 21, 2018 Business Meeting. Section H and Section I are additions voted on and passed at the March 21, 2018 Business Meeting.

Section A. Qualifications and Conditions

The membership of the church shall be composed of persons who have acknowledged Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, who have received believer's baptism by immersion, (Article X, Section A), who have subscribed to the covenant and Bylaws, and who have been received by a vote of the church. The church may suspend the requirement for baptism by immersion as a condition of membership in cases of physical inability or severe hardship.

Section B. Reception. Persons may be received in any of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith and baptism by immersion.
2. By promise of a letter from another church of like faith and order.
3. By statement of former conversion and baptism by immersion when no letter is obtainable.

Section C. Process

At any regular church service, any person may present himself or herself as a candidate for membership, and upon being accepted by a majority of members present, shall be presented with a new membership packet to include church Bylaws, new member training information, church directory, and any other materials deemed appropriate at the time of offering himself or herself as a candidate for membership and voted on.

Section D. Rights

1. Every active Church member, eighteen (18) years of age or older, can vote on matters raised at business meetings, all callings of staff, and all elections of officers and committee members.
2. Members shall have access to the principal records of the church including minutes of its governing body and principal financial reports. However, consistent with Baptist doctrine and practice, these rights shall not include the right to review or inspect individual donor records, minutes of deacons' meetings dealing with confidential matters, personnel files or minutes of anybody addressing matters of discipline.

Section E. Duties

Members should, first of all, be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian life, abstain from engaging in any sinful behavior that would be contrary to the church's purpose and doctrine; and should attend regularly the services of this church, give regularly for its support and causes, and share in its organized work.

Section F. Termination

Membership in the church shall be terminated in one of the following ways;

1. Death
2. By letter. Member having joined another church of like faith and order and such church requests a letter of membership.
3. By joining another church. Upon receipt of reliable information that a member of this church has joined another church, membership in this church will terminate and the clerk shall remove their name from the roll and so advise the church at its next conference.
4. By request. Upon request of a member, their membership shall be immediately terminated and the clerk advises the church of the action.
5. Exclusion. A person's membership may be terminated by action of this church, or by the procedure set forth in Section G below.

Section G. Discipline

1. It shall be the basic purpose of the Olga Baptist Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken by the pastor, deacons and other members of the church to counsel and guide any member who has exhibited behavior contrary to the purpose and Bylaws of Olga Baptist church. Redemption rather than punishment should be the guideline that governs the attitude of one member toward another.
2. Should some serious condition exist which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, every reasonable measure will be taken by the pastor and the deacons to resolve the problem in accordance with Matthew Chapter 18. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. But, finding that the welfare of the church will best be served by the exclusion of the member, the church may take this action by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a meeting called for this purpose, and the church may proceed to declare the offender to be no longer in membership of the church.
3. Any member who engages in a sinful behavior without repentance faces disciplinary action from the church. This action may require the congregation being informed of this behavior. Further, should this disciplinary action be necessary against this member, he or she cannot voluntarily withdraw or resign membership after this disciplinary process has begun.
4. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any condition that has made it necessary for the church to exclude him or her, may upon his request be restored to membership by vote of the church upon evidence of his repentance and reformation.

Section H. Classification of Members

Members are either active or inactive. Upon being accepted into the membership, all members are deemed active members for the first twelve (12) months. Thereafter, active members are those members who have attended and been actively involved at the Church in at least two (2) of the last twelve (12) calendar months preceding the date of determination of membership status. All other members shall be deemed covenant. If the member's inactivity is due to health issues, residency in a nursing home or assisted living center, military service, relocation or travel for education or career obligations, or other reasons acceptable in the discretion of the Pastor and Deacons, they may be allowed to remain as active members.

Section I. Inactive Members.

Inactive members shall be allowed to participate in Church activities but they shall not serve on any committee or team and shall have no right to vote at Church business meetings, in any election or other voting matters. Inactive members shall be encouraged to seek restoration to active membership. Upon the inactive member participating sufficiently to meet the qualifications for active membership, the inactive member shall be restored to active membership upon approval of the Pastor and Deacons.

ARTICLE VII. MEETINGS AND SERVICES

Amendment to Article VII, Meetings and Services, Section H. of Olga Baptist Church Bylaws voted on and passed at the March 21, 2018 Business Meeting.

Section A. Worship, Ministry Meetings and Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening for preaching, instruction, evangelism, and for worship. Special meetings and services of the church shall be set according to the needs of the congregation, upon recommendation of the church council. The regularly scheduled meeting may be altered or suspended, as determined by vote of the congregation in a regularly scheduled church business meeting.

Section B. Business Meetings

1. Annually

- a. The August monthly meeting shall include the election of officers, teachers, and committees and such other business as may be appropriate. The election of some officers, teachers, or committees and members may, at the discretion of the church or as set forth in these Bylaws be held at some other regular or called meeting.
- b. The November monthly meeting shall include the presentation and approval of the annual budget.

2. Monthly Meetings.

Regular business meetings shall be held monthly on the 3rd Wednesday night of each month.

{Clarification to this section defining a procedure for “holding open” a regular business meeting if a 15 member quorum is not met. At the September 19, 2021 Business meeting a vote was taken to allow this.}

Section C. Special Services

Revival services and any other church meetings essential to the advancement of the church’s objectives shall be placed on the church calendar.

Section D. Special Business Meetings

The church may conduct called business meetings to consider a matter of special nature and significance. A one-week notice must be given for the specially called business meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The meeting shall be announced from the pulpit at two regularly scheduled worship services as defined in Article VII, Section A, Worship, Ministry Meetings and Services, above. The notice shall include the subject, the date, time and place.

Section E. Quorum

The quorum shall consist of at least 15 members who attend a business meeting as defined in Article VII, Section B and D above.

Section F. Parliamentary Rules

Robert’s Rules of Order, Revised, is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church.

Section G. Moderator

The moderator shall serve as chair of the business sessions of the church. In his absence, or upon his request, the chairman of deacons, or in his absence the vice-chairman. In the absence of all these, the church clerk shall call the meeting to order and preside over the election of an acting moderator for this meeting only.

Section H. Voting

All items of business, unless otherwise provided for herein, shall be approved or disapproved by a majority vote of those members present & voting by the “usual method” (voice, “yaes & nays” or show of hands). Vote by the aforementioned “usual method” would specifically exclude voting by proxy or absentee ballot. However, when it is required or determined by the moderator (or meeting chair) that a vote will require a secret ballot, then a vote by paper proxy or absentee ballot will be applicable to active members who are either homebound, in assisted living or hospitalized. A minimum of two weeks prior to the business meeting the Pastor or a Deacon shall make contact with these active members to ascertain their preference for receiving & returning their ballot. Ballots delivered by U.S. Mail or through a visit by the Pastor or a Deacon will be excepted.

EXCEPTION: Upon request from an active member who cannot be present for whatever reason, and if feasible, using U.S. Mail, the church will send paper proxy or ballot to active member via First Class. Active member is responsible for return of the ballot. In either case, paper proxy or ballot must be on church property by the start of business meeting.

Section I. Minutes

The minutes of all regular and special business meetings shall be recorded by the church clerk, made permanent record, and filed in church office. They shall be made available to members on request, for inspection.

ARTICLE VIII. CHURCH OFFICERS

Amendment to Article VIII, Church Officers, Section G. of Olga Baptist Church Bylaws voted on and passed at the March 21, 2018 Business Meeting.

Section A. Church Officers

The officers of this church shall be the pastor, ministerial staff, the deacons, a moderator, a clerk, a treasurer, and trustees.

Section B. Pastor

1. **Duties.** The pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organization, and the church staff to perform their tasks. The pastor shall be administrative head of the church and shall be an ex-officio member of all organizations, departments and committees. The pastor, shall supervise all staff members of the church. The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such, he works with the deacons and church staff to:
 - a. Lead the church in the achievement of its mission.
 - b. Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
 - c. Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.
2. **Call and Election.**
 - a. A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. There shall be a pastor search committee elected by the church to seek out a suitable pastor. The committee's recommendations will constitute a nomination. The committee shall consist of the Chairman of the Deacons, Sunday School Director, a finance committee member, and two members at large to be elected by the membership. Any church member may provide the name of a candidate for pastor to the committee.
 - b. The search committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one (1) candidate at a time.
 - c. The election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose of which at least two week's notice has been given.
 - d. The election shall be by secret ballot, at a Sunday morning worship service. An affirmative vote of a minimum of three-fourths of those members present and voting being necessary for a selection. Members must be present to vote.
 - e. The pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request.
3. **Termination.**
 - a. The pastor may relinquish the office of pastor by giving at least two week's notice to the church at the time of resignation.
 - b. The church may remove the pastor from office by declaring the office to be vacant. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least two week's public notice has been given. The meeting may be called upon the recommendation of a majority of the nominating committee and the deacons; or by written petition signed by not less than one-fourth of the resident church members.
 - c. The pastor, if he is the elected moderator, shall not moderate this meeting.
 - d. The vote to declare the office vacant shall be by secret ballot.
 - e. A majority vote of members voting is necessary to declare the office vacant.

4. Compensation. Except in instances of gross misconduct by the pastor so excluded from office, the church will compensate the pastor with not less than one-twelfth of his annual compensation. The termination shall be immediate and the compensation shall be rendered in not more than thirty days.

Section C. Ministerial Staff.

The ministerial staff shall be called as the church determines the need for such offices. A job description shall be written at time of need and a search is started.

Section D. Deacons.

1. Number. There shall be one deacon elected for every 10 to 12 church families.
2. Qualifications. A deacon's qualification shall be those set forth in I Timothy, Chapter 3, Verses 8-13. The candidate for deacon must be a member of this church for at least one year. A new church member who is an ordained deacon from another church of like faith and order may be elected deacon in this church provided he meets the requirement of one year membership.
3. Presentation. Candidates for the position of deacon shall be presented by the existing deacons.
4. Duties. In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice in the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. Their task is to serve with the pastor and staff in performing the pastoral ministries tasks of:
 - a. Leading the church in the achievement of its mission.
 - b. Proclaiming the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
 - c. Caring for church's members and other persons in the community.
 - d. Promote and maintain peace and harmony in the church.

Section E. Moderator.

The church shall elect annually a moderator as its presiding officer over all regularly scheduled business meetings and special business meetings.

Section F. Church Clerk.

The church shall elect annually a clerk as its clerical officer. The clerk shall keep in suitable files a record of all church actions. The clerk shall keep a register of the names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal or death, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church. All church records are church property and should be filed in the church office. The clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

Section G. Treasurer.

The church shall elect annually a church treasurer as its financial officer. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to verify the deposits of the counting committee, to preserve and to pay out monies, upon receipt of bills or vouchers for church expenses. The treasurer will also purchase needed supplies for the kitchen and the office. The treasurer shall update the financial information in the church computer weekly for review by Church Finance or Audit committees.

It shall be the duty of the treasurer to render to the church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements of the preceding month. The treasurer's report and records shall be overseen by the finance committee and audited annually by the Audit committee. The Audit committee can request information or audit at any given time by notifying the Finance committee or Treasurer.

Upon rendering the annual account at the end of each fiscal year and its acceptance and approval by the church, the records shall be delivered by the treasurer to the financial secretary who shall keep and preserve the account as a part of the permanent records of the church.

Section H. Trustees.

1. The church shall elect three or more trustees to serve as legal officers for the church. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote of the church authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property. When the signatures of the trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal documents related to church-approved matters. Trustees will be nominated and elected by the church every year.
2. **Corporate Duties.** Function as board of directors. The currently serving trustees shall, meeting and acting together, constitute the board of directors of Olga Baptist Church Incorporated. Such board of directors shall change as by and in the same procedure as for the terms of trustees so that the board of directors shall perpetually be the same as the trustees. In their capacity as directors, they shall have the duties and responsibilities attendant to directors, subject however to the limitations set forth in the Bylaws. The directors shall not have power, except as expressly authorized by the congregation, to purchase or sell or encumber any real or personal property, to install or remove officers or staff, to amend the Bylaws or charter, or to bind the corporation to any contract. Consistent with our spiritual principles, Baptist polity and long-term practice, the congregation as a whole retains the authority to govern the affairs, spiritual and temporal, of the church.

ARTICLE IX. CHURCH COMMITTEES

The committees of this church shall be a nominating committee, a personnel committee, a buildings and grounds committee, a finance committee, a missions committee, counting committee and such other regular and special committees as the church shall authorize. Additional regular committees may be added by the amendment procedures prescribed within these Bylaws. All church committee members shall be recommended by the church nominating committee and elected by the church unless otherwise specified within these bylaws.

1. **Nominating Committee.** The nominating committee coordinates the staffing of all church leadership positions filled by volunteer workers, unless otherwise specified herein. Persons considered for any such position shall first be approved by the nominating committee before they are approached for recruitment. The nominating committee shall determine by a background check of the person volunteering to determine if there is reason he or she should not be considered. Once it has been determined that this volunteer meets standards required, the committee shall present to the church for election these volunteers.
2. **Personnel Committee.** The personnel committee assists the church in matters related to staffing administrative personnel, including those called by church action. Their work includes areas as staff needs, securing the staff needs, benefits, other compensation, policies, job description and personnel services. A thorough background check shall be conducted on any person being considered. This will include references, prior employment, character and criminal activity.
3. **Buildings and Grounds Committee.** The buildings and grounds committee assists the church in matters related to properties administration. Its work includes such areas as maintaining all church properties for ready use, recommending policies regarding use of properties, consulting with the personnel committee and the church staff regarding the needs for and the securing of maintenance personnel, and regarding the assignment of supervisory responsibility to appropriate personnel.

4. **Finance Committee.** The finance committee develops and recommends an overall finance development plan and a unified church budget. It advises and recommends the administration of the gifts of church members and others, using sound principles of financial management. It works with the treasurer in the preparation and presentation to the church of required reports regarding the financial affairs.
5. **Missions Committee.** The missions committee seeks to discover possibilities for local missions projects, shares findings with church program organizations, and serves the church in establishing and conducting such missions projects as may be assigned to it.
6. **Counting Committee.** The duties of the counting committee are to count, to record and to deposit in the overnight deposit at the bank the offering received each week. There will be two committee members counting each Sunday. The committee will consist of church members elected by the church annually. The chairman of the committee shall prepare a schedule denoting when each team will be responsible for their week.

ARTICLE X. CHURCH ORDINANCES

Section A. Baptism

The church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

1. Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
2. Baptism shall be administered by the pastor. In the event the Pulpit is vacant, the Chairman of Deacons or his designee will perform the baptism.
3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship.
4. A person professing Christ and failing to be baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastor and/or staff and deacons. In the event the person does not proceed with baptism, the pastor shall advise the church clerk and the church and their name shall be removed as a candidate for membership.

Section B. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby through breaking of the bread and drinking the fruit of the vine, commemorates the death of Jesus and anticipates his second coming.

1. The Lord's Supper shall be observed by the church during each new quarter of the year and on other appropriate occasions.
2. The pastor and deacons shall be responsible for the administration of the Lord's Supper.
3. The deacons shall be responsible for the physical preparation of the Lord's Supper.

ARTICLE XI. CHURCH FINANCES

Section A. Budget

The finance committee shall prepare and submit to the church for approval a complete budget, indicating by items the amount needed for the coming year.

Section B. Accounting Procedures

All record of funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer, or financial secretary, to be properly recorded on the books of the church. A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the finance committee.

{Clarification to this section defining a procedure for a payment policy for repairs and services was approved at the July 21, 2021 Business meeting: A vote must be taken for any repairs or services that will cost over \$500. At least two estimates, when available, must be presented for any cost expected to exceed \$500. In case of emergency, or when time is of the essence, any amount not exceeding \$2000 can be approved by staff to include Pastor, Deacon, and Treasurer }

ARTICLE XII. CHURCH COUNCIL

Section A. Duties

The church council shall serve the church by leading in planning, coordinating, conducting and evaluating the ministries and programs of the church and organizations. All matters agreed upon by the council which call for action not already approved shall be referred to the church for approval or disapproval.

Section B. Members

Members of the church council shall be the pastor, ministerial staff, chairman of deacons, Sunday school director, music director and such other committee chairpersons necessary to provide planning and direction of programs and services to accomplish the mission of the church.

ARTICLE XIII. CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

Section A. General

All organizations shall be under church control, and all church-elected officers shall be members of the church. All organizations shall report to the church at the monthly meeting. The officers, workers and teachers of church ministries and programs shall be recommended by the church nominating committee for election by the church.

Section B. Sunday School

There shall be a Sunday School, divided into departments and classes for all ages and conducted under the direction of the Sunday School Director for the study of God's Word. The tasks are to teach the Bible, reach persons for Christ and for church membership, perform Christian ministry, provide and interpret information regarding work of the church and denomination.

Section E. Church Training

There shall be a Church Training program to orient new church members, train church members to perform the work of the church, train church leaders, teach Christian theology, Christian ethics, Christian history, and church policy and organization, and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

Section F. Church Music Program

There shall be a Church Music Program under direction of the Music Director or Music Minister. Such officers and organizations shall be included as needed. The music tasks shall be to teach music, train persons to lead and sing music, provide music in the church and community, provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

Section G. Future Organizations

As the church progresses and grows, there will be a need for more organizations that are normally associated with a Southern Baptist Church. These may be added to the Bylaws as the need arises.

ARTICLE XIV. STAFF

Section A. Establishment of Staff Positions

The church may establish such staff, professional, and support positions as are deemed appropriate. For all such positions, other than the pastor, the church through the personnel committee shall establish qualifications, a means of selection, duties and responsibilities, means of performance review and accountability, as well as appropriate employment policies. The church shall annually establish the salary for such positions. Vocational staff members other than the pastor shall be recommended by the personnel committee in consultation with the pastor and employed by church action.

Section B. Supervision

All staff shall be under the general supervision of the pastor and personnel committee.

ARTICLE XV. AMENDMENTS

Changes in the Bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed changes and amendments shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting. Changes and amendments to the Bylaws shall have a concurrence of a majority of the members present and voting.

ARTICLE XVI. CHURCH APPROVAL

These Bylaws presented at church conference on the 17th day of December 2015 and approved by vote of quorum of church members present at Church Conference on the 21st day of December 2015.

Signed: _____

Ann Bayliss
Church Clerk