

# **CONSTITUTION**

## **PREAMBLE**

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the Holy Scriptures, we, the members of Gatlin Baptist Church of Marlow, Oklahoma, do declare and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

## **ARTICLE I: NAME**

This body of believers shall be known as Gatlin Baptist Church, 801 W. Gatlin Road, Marlow, Oklahoma, the same being a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Oklahoma.

## **ARTICLE II: AFFILIATION**

### **SECTION 1.** Headship of Christ.

We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Head of the Church (Eph 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the church through elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture. The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture.

### **SECTION 2.** Mutual Assistance.

The church cooperates with other like-minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may also seek the assistance and counsel of other churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church.

### **SECTION 3.** Formal Affiliation.

When it is desirable to have fellowship, consultation, and cooperation with local churches of like faith and order, this church may join itself to associations of churches. Such affiliations may be entered upon recommendation of the elders and vote of the congregation. Withdrawal from associations may be effected by the same procedure. Delegates to such associations shall be chosen by the elders.

## **ARTICLE III: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by exalting His name, edifying saints, and evangelizing sinners. Therefore we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and the glorious Gospel of His grace through all the world and to the defense of "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:21).

## **ARTICLE IV: ARTICLES OF FAITH**

We do hereby adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. We also declare our agreement with the 1858 Abstract of Principles of the Southern Baptist Seminary. These historic documents are an excellent summary of "the things most surely believed among us." We

see them not as an infallible rule or code of faith, but as assistance to us in doctrinal definition, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. However, the ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order, and morals is the Bible alone, as articulated in the opening article of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith itself.

## **ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION 1.** Requirements for Membership.

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who manifests a life transformed by the power of Christ, who has been baptized upon the profession of his faith, who expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines and aims of this church, and who is willing to submit to its government shall be eligible for membership.

### **SECTION 2.** Types of Membership.

Each member of the church is acknowledged to form a vital part of the body and to have a particular function in the life of that body (I Cor 12:14-27). Practical considerations, however, require that certain distinctions be recognized in the membership of this church.

**Paragraph A.** Regular Members. All who are received into the membership of the church according to the procedures set forth in Section 3 of this Article, who continue in regular attendance at the stated meetings of the church, and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in Article VI, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church.

**Paragraph B.** Associate Members. Regular members, who move away from our area and who cannot find another local church with which they can conscientiously unite, will at their request be retained for a time as associate members of this church. Such persons must maintain regular communication with and support of the church in order to maintain their associate membership. Nevertheless, they shall be urged to diligently seek a church with which they can unite elsewhere. An associate member shall not be allowed to vote in any business meeting of the church. At the discretion of the elders, associate memberships may also be granted to invalids, Christian workers, and others whose relation to the church involves unusual circumstances.

### **SECTION 3.** Procedures in the Reception of New Members.

**Paragraph A.** Application for Membership. A person who desires to become a member of this church may apply to an elder and request an interview. During the interview the elder(s) will seek to determine whether the applicant has a credible profession of faith in Christ, has been scripturally baptized, and intends to give wholehearted support to the ministry of the church and submit to its discipline. If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine his standing in that church and his reasons for leaving. A letter of inquiry concerning the applicant's membership status may be sent to that church before he is accepted as a member of this church. Each applicant shall also be given a copy of this Constitution and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and shall demonstrate substantial agreement.

**Paragraph B.** Congregational Responsibility. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for membership, they shall announce the same to the congregation at a meeting of the church. Time will be allowed for objections or questions to be raised by any member concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine. The elders may postpone the reception of a person into the

membership until proper investigation is made of any objections, which in their judgment are sufficiently serious. If no objection is raised which the elders consider to be valid, the person will be publicly received by vote of the membership.

#### **SECTION 4.** Termination of Membership.

**Paragraph A.** By Physical Death. When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, his name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.

**Paragraph B.** By Transfer. When it is so requested, the church, at the recommendation of the elders, may grant to a departing member in good standing a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The church may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church, which is in their judgment disloyal to “the faith, which was once for all delivered unto the saints,” or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

**Paragraph C.** By Exclusion. If a member is habitually absent from the stated meetings of the church without showing just cause, or if due to relocation ceases to maintain contact with the church, he shall be excluded from the membership by action of the church following the recommendation of the elders of the church. Any member who requests to be removed from the roll shall be excluded from the membership. If an excluded member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth in Section 3 of this Article will again be followed.

**Paragraph D.** By Excommunication. According to the teaching of Holy Scripture a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding false and heretical doctrine, who blatantly and persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church and is unwilling to settle differences on scriptural grounds (Mt 18:15-18; I Cor 5). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Article VI, Section 2 of this Constitution.

#### **SECTION 5.** Conduct Required of Members.

**Paragraph A.** Attendance at Stated Meetings. All regular members are expected to attend the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered (by illness, accident, unusual working conditions, and other such extenuating circumstances). The stated meetings of the church are all the services and bible studies on the Lord's Day, the mid-week service, the business meetings of the congregation, and any other special meetings or services which the elders or congregation may occasionally deem necessary to call.

**Paragraph B.** Means of Grace. The church expects its members to make use of the various other means of grace that are available to them, such as the regular daily reading of the Bible, regular private and family prayer, and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord's Day.

**Paragraph C.** Tithing and Financial Support. Since it is clearly taught in Scripture that Christians should financially support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church (Mal 3:8-10; I Cor 16:1,2; II Cor 8,9), all the members are expected to conform to this rule of Scripture. The tithe (10% of one's income before taxes) is not imposed on the people of God as a tax, but is strongly urged upon each member as an expression of worship and the biblical norm for basic giving, to which should be added gifts and special offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of one's heart (II Cor 8:1-5; Ex 36:2-7).

**Paragraph D.** Family Life. The church expects its members to obey the teachings of the Scriptures in respect to family life and government. As the God-appointed head of the family, the husband must rule over the household with gentleness and love, but also with wisdom and firmness (Eph 5:25ff; I Tim 3:4,5). The wife must be in subjection to her husband in all things according to the rule of Scripture (Eph 5:22-24; I Pt 3:1). The husband with the wife must “nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:1-4), by setting a godly example before them, by instructing them consistently in the Scriptures, and by wise and firm discipline, including the prudent use of corporal punishment (Eph 6:4) when it is needed (Prov 13:24; 22:15; Heb 12:7).

**Paragraph E.** Relationships and Ministries. Inasmuch as the church is represented in Scripture as a body having many members, each of the members having its particular function and yet having a concern for the health and protection of the whole (I Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:4, 11-16), this church expects that each of its members will strive for the good of the entire body and serve under the authority of this church and in accordance with their gifting and the opportunities given them. The members must actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another so that they may better be able to pray for one another; love, comfort, and encourage one another; and help one another materially as necessity may require. They must refrain from speaking ill of one another and must keep in strict confidence all matters of private concern to the church and not discuss them with persons outside of this fellowship (Heb 12:15; Eph 4:29-30).

**Paragraph F.** Evangelism. It is the duty of every Christian individually and as a member of a local church to labor for the extension of the kingdom of God both at home and to the ends of the earth. Therefore, every member of this church is expected prayerfully to recognize and to seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of his lips (Mt 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; I Pt 3:15; Col 4:5,6).

**Paragraph G.** Christian Liberty. Each member of the church is required to render in his daily life loyal obedience to all the moral precepts established in the Word of God (Rom 8:3,4). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:

**1.** Fear of God. As the servant of Christ, all actions must be moved by a motive of love to God, and all objects must be used for His glory. The term “liberty” is often used as a cloak of malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (I Cor 10:31; I Tim 4:4,5; I Pt 2:15,16).

**2.** Love of the Brethren. Though no man may dictate the Christian's conscience, the welfare of fellow-saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling (Gal 5:13; I Cor 8:9; 10:23).

**3.** Compassion for Sinners. Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and the behavior chosen must be that which is most likely to win some (I Cor 9:19-22).

**4.** Watchfulness over the Soul. Though free in conscience to use all of God's creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to persevere (I Cor 9:23-27; Jms 4:17; Rom 13:14; 14:22,23).

**Paragraph H.** Submission to Oversight. All who come into the membership of this church are required to recognize and submit to the scriptural authority deposited in the offices of this church (I Thes 5:12,13; Heb 13:7,17).

## ARTICLE VI: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### SECTION 1. Formative Discipline.

Every disciple (follower) of Christ must be under discipline (His instruction and correction), which is administered to each one through the church, according to I Cor 12:12-17; Rom 12:3-21; and other passages. Mutual submission to one another and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (Eph 5:21; I Pt 5:5) will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when failure in the application of this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

### SECTION 2. Corrective Discipline.

**Paragraph A.** General Statement. Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. In all such cases reasonable efforts must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Gal 6:1; Jms 5:19,20). The principles given to us in Mt 18:15,16 and I Cor 5:1-13 must be carefully followed in all cases of corporate discipline. Corrective discipline always has for its aims the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

#### **Paragraph B.** Suspension.

**1.** Any conduct on the part of a member, which disturbs the peace of the church or damages its testimony, may require that the offending brother or sister be suspended from participating in certain activities of the church in accord with the gravity of the offense. This action by the elders shall be announced to the congregation and shall remain in force until the suspended member gives evidence of true repentance and change of conduct. When a suspended member can be restored to full fellowship, the elders shall also announce this to the congregation. While a member is under such discipline, the congregation shall treat him according to the directions given in II Thes 3:6-15. Although such a person is considered to be walking disorderly, he must still be regarded as a member and not cut off from the church.

**2.** If a member has sinned publicly but shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the church, it may still be necessary to suspend him for a time from some of the privileges of membership lest reproach be brought upon the church, lest others be emboldened to sin, and lest the offender himself fail to test his own soul and realize the gravity of his offense. Those who humbly submit to the imposed discipline shall afterwards be wholly forgiven and publicly received back into full fellowship of the church.

**3.** In the case where a person is accused or suspected of gross sin and absents himself from the congregation, refusing to meet with the officers of the church, the elders shall announce to the congregation that the person is suspended from the membership, and such suspension shall continue until further review.

**Paragraph C.** Excommunication. Excommunication is the strongest statement of church discipline and is the final act of corrective discipline. It shall be enacted scripturally as an act of the church toward a member who teaches or insists on holding false or heretical doctrine; who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession; or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church (Tit 3:10,11; Rom 16:17,18). Excommunication must be enacted in the following cases:

**1.** Some types of conduct must be categorized as “immoral” (I Cor 5:9-11; 6:9,10; Gal 5:16ff) and a member who is unrepentant in such conduct must be cut off from the fellowship of the church (I Cor 5:3-5; Mt 18:17). The officers of the church shall first make earnest efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation, but if these efforts fail, the elders shall report the situation to the church and ask that each member write, call, or visit the offending member and beg them to repent. If public repentance is not effected, the elders shall, at a duly called business meeting, recommend that the offender be excommunicated. This must be done, according to Scripture by action of the entire church (Mt 18:17; I Cor 5:4). To be valid, an act of excommunication must have the approval of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting.

**2.** Likewise, some wrong opinions regarding the doctrines of Scripture are so serious that they must be categorized as “heretical” (Gal 1:6-9; I Tim 4:1), and a member who persists in propagating or holding any such opinion, in spite of earnest and patient admonition is treated in the same manner as an immoral person.

**3.** Suspended members who, after review by the officers of the church, have persisted in their sinful behavior shall, by recommendation of the elders, be dealt with as in accord with item 1 of this paragraph.

**Paragraph D.** Restoration. It is the duty of the church to forgive and restore to membership those persons who give satisfactory evidence of repentance (II Cor 2:6-8). The status of those that have been excommunicated or suspended may be reviewed by the officers of the church to judge whether the aims of discipline have been accomplished. Upon recommendation of the elders, the congregation shall have the right to restore a suspended member by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a duly called business meeting. Excommunicated members who are repentant shall be eligible for membership under the provisions of Article V.

## **ARTICLE VII: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

### **SECTION 1.** General Statement.

There are two ordinances of special significance, which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or the bread and the cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of “special grace”, but are “special means of grace” and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

### **SECTION 2.** Baptism.

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for water baptism, and all such persons should be baptized (Acts 2:38). Believing that baptism is the God-ordained door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall receive into membership of the church only those who have been baptized by immersion under the authority of a New Testament church and “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).

### **SECTION 3.** The Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a most holy ordinance and should be observed regularly and with solemnity and dignity. Only baptized believers who, after careful self-examination, are in right fellowship with the Lord and this church shall partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:27-31). The bread and the

cup of the supper are and remain symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The elders shall determine the time and frequency of its observance (I Cor 11:26).

## **ARTICLE VIII: OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH**

### **SECTION 1.** General Statement.

Jesus Christ alone is Head of the church (Col 1:18), and He governs His church through office-bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Officers are of two kinds: elders and deacons (Phil 1:1; I Tim 3:3-13). It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ has imparted the necessary gifts of office-bearing, and after formally recognizing them by vote, to set them apart by united prayer, and then to submit to their authority.

### **SECTION 2.** Elders.

**Paragraph A.** Number, Source, and Calling. Whereas in new or small congregations only one man may have the gifts and calling requisite to his being recognized as an elder, the Scriptures indicate that when opportunity permits there should be a plurality of elders in the church (Acts 20:17; Phil 1:1). These are also called “bishops” (meaning “overseers”) because they are charged with the oversight of the assembly (Acts 20:28; I Pt 5:2). They are the “pastors and teachers” given to the church “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11,12).

**Paragraph B.** Teaching Elder or Pastor. In view of the fact that the responsibilities of this office are numerous and grave, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote his full time to the work of the ministry and the oversight of the church. Such elders are usually referred to as “pastors”, not to the exclusion of the others, but because they “labor in the word and in teaching” (I Tim 5:17). The church is responsible to give adequate financial support to such men (I Cor 9:9-11; I Tim 5:17,18), and it is free to invite men from outside the local congregation to come into its midst and serve in this capacity. Any man thus called to this office from outside the church must join the church as a member and must conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Articles of Faith and the Constitution of this church.

**Paragraph C.** Roles and Responsibilities. Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline, and the oversight of the souls of the church's members “as they that shall give an account” to God (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17; I Pt 5:2,3). While every elder should be “apt to teach”, the teaching elder(s) or pastor(s) will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more engaged in pastoring (that is, private teaching and admonishing) and governing. The primary “teaching elder” or “senior pastor” shall serve as chairman of the board of elders and shall lead the elders as one “preferred among equals.” Gifted men who are not recognized as elders may engage in public preaching and teaching, provided they are godly in character and walk, but the exercise of their gift must be under the direction and control of the elders.

**Paragraph D.** Oversight of Elders. The elders shall have oversight of the church as those of one mind and of one accord. Therefore, the recommendations and decisions of the board of elders must be unanimous. When there is disagreement over an issue, the elder(s) in the minority opinion must present scriptural evidence to support said disagreement. If the dissenting view cannot be substantiated scripturally, the dissenting elder(s) shall remove his objection and submit to the majority view. If substantiation is made, the majority shall repent and join the minority view. While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each elder as an individual is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the members of the church.

**Paragraph E.** Number and Term of Elders. The church should endeavor to discover and then formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and graces to oversee the church, but only such men. Thus when men have been ordained to this office, the church will have the confidence that it has recognized the overseers whom the Holy Spirit has set over it (Acts 20:28). It is evident, therefore, that neither the number of elders or the length of their term of office can be fixed by the church.

**Paragraph F.** Qualifications. The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly in I Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

### **SECTION 3.** Deacons.

**Paragraph A.** Responsibilities. Deacons are responsible to help administer the Lord's Supper, to serve the practical and spiritual needs of the membership, to guard the unity of the Spirit within the church in the bond of peace, to protect the purity of the church, and to direct benevolent concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to the matters of spiritual oversight (Acts 6:3,4). They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and subjection to the elders. If for any reason there are no elders actively holding office in the church, the deacons led by their chairman shall, in the interim, fill the roll of elders.

**Paragraph B.** Number of Deacons. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall choose as many as are needed for the work to be done from among the men who give evidence of having the scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:3).

**Paragraph C.** Qualifications. The qualifications for a man chosen to fulfill the office of deacon are particularly set forth in Acts 6:3 and I Tim 3:8-13.

### **SECTION 4.** Appointment of Officers.

**Paragraph A.** Guidance on Appointments. The local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is responsible to appoint men to the offices of elder and deacon. Each individual involved should have an inward conviction that the Lord is calling him to the particular office, and the church should recognize that call as it observes in the individual evidence of the gifts and graces which Scripture requires for the particular office. This is a matter of such gravity that it should be accompanied by much prayerful waiting on God for guidance, a careful perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture, and an objective evaluation of each man nominated to a particular office. These activities are the responsibility of each individual member of the church as well as of the church as a whole.

**Paragraph B.** Nominations. Nominations of officers may be made as follows:

**1.** The elders or deacons may at any time during the year nominate for congregational consideration a candidate or candidates for their respective offices at a duly called business meeting. In no case may a man be presented as a candidate for either office without his knowledge and prior consent.

**2.** At least once each year, in conjunction with the required announcements prior to the Annual Business Meeting, the congregation will submit written ballots to determine the mind of God's people as to whom they regard as qualifying for office. On this ballot each regular member may write the name of any male member and the office for which he believes that member to be qualified. Those thus recognized by 25% or more of the regular members present shall then be considered for that office by its existing officers.

**3.** Prior to presenting the candidate(s) to the congregation, the officers will meet with the man and his family to confirm his willingness to undergo congregational examination and his readiness to serve in church office. He may, without prejudice, decline the nomination. If the man consents and is found qualified, he will be presented to the congregation as a candidate for office.

**Paragraph C.** Discussion of Qualifications and Voting. When the time comes to consider a nomination during a business meeting of the church, the candidate for office and any members of his immediate family who are present shall be requested to leave the room while his qualifications are openly discussed by the entire congregation in the fear of God and the light of Scripture. After that a written ballot shall be taken. It is hoped that the vote of the congregation will in such matters always be unanimous, but if unanimity is not realized, no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the recognition of an officer.

**Paragraph D.** Public Installation. Following the recognition of an officer by vote of the congregation, he shall be publicly installed in his office at a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of the hands of the elders (I Tim 4:14; II Tim 1:6).

**Paragraph E.** Discipline of Officers. Officers of the church are subject to the same rules of discipline as other members of the church. Officers shall hold office as long as they are faithful to their calling and have the confidence of the congregation. They are free to resign their office with two weeks notice if for any reason they are no longer able to discharge the duties of it. The church may express the withdrawal of its confidence in any of its officers at a duly called business meeting. Recommendation for withdrawal of confidence shall be made by either the elders or deacons, or by petition of 25% of the regular membership. It shall require a two-thirds majority vote by secret ballot for passage. A withdrawal of confidence shall immediately relieve the officer in question from office, but will leave his membership status unaffected. If he is a paid officer, he is no longer entitled to ongoing financial support from the church. Arrangements for his financial settlement shall be the responsibility of the church under the direction of its elders and personnel ministry.

## **ARTICLE IX: CHURCH STAFF**

The church staff shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for such offices. A job description shall be written and a pay plan formulated under the direction of the elders. Those staff members of whom the church requires evidence of a personal call of God (“ministerial staff”) shall be recommended to the church by the elders and called by a three-fourths affirmative vote of the members present and voting. Those staff members of whom the church does not require a personal call of God (“non-ministerial staff”) shall be recommended to the church by the elders and employed by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present and voting. If termination of a staff member becomes necessary, it shall be effected upon either the recommendation of the elders or, if necessary, by the congregation in accord with Article VIII, Section 4, Paragraph E of this Constitution.

## **ARTICLE X: CHURCH LAY MINISTRIES**

### **SECTION 1.** General Statement.

Every member of the church is encouraged to participate in one or more of the ministries of the church. All such ministries and the names of those persons nominated by the elders to fill them are authorized and established by vote of the congregation at its Annual Meeting. Any additional ministries that are deemed necessary during the calendar year for the fulfillment of the purposes of this church may be established as needed upon recommendation of the elders. All ministries are to operate under the authority of the church and to submit to the leadership of the elders.

## **SECTION 2.** Established Lay Ministries.

**Paragraph A.** Budget and Finance Ministry. The budget and finance ministry shall consist of at least five regular members of the congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and clerk. They shall formulate the new church budget for the coming year, present it to the elders, and upon approval submit it to the congregation for vote at the annual business meeting. They shall oversee the accounting of all funds and see that proper records are maintained and a monthly financial report is produced and made available to the members. They shall meet at least quarterly to discuss the financial position of the church and shall make necessary recommendations to the elders regarding the stewardship of the church.

**Paragraph B.** Properties Ministry. The properties ministry shall consist of at least five regular members of this congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman. They shall be responsible for the upkeep and cleaning of existing buildings, land, and equipment. They shall also advise the elders regarding the need for new property or equipment.

**Paragraph C.** Personnel Ministry. The personnel ministry shall consist of at least five regular members of this congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman. They shall be responsible for reviewing the salaries and benefits of paid employees and for developing personnel policies, procedures, and job descriptions. They shall also advise the elders regarding the need for new or additional employees or positions.

**Paragraph D.** Hospitality Ministry. The hospitality ministry shall consist of at least five regular members of this congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman. They shall obtain kitchen supplies and foodstuffs, keep the kitchen and its materials clean, and arrange meals by request for funerals, sick members, church guests, and church fellowships. They shall also designate someone to be responsible to arrange for flowers in the auditorium and to purchase gifts for special occasions. They shall help as requested with practical outreach to the community.

**Paragraph E.** Youth Ministry. The youth ministry shall consist of at least two regular members of this congregation serving under the leadership of the youth minister who shall serve as chairman. If a youth minister is not serving in the church, a chairman shall be elected. They shall help in the planning and promotion of youth activities, retreats, outreach events, and encampments and attend special events as sponsors when needed.

**Paragraph F.** Children's Ministry. The children's ministry shall consist of at least three regular members of this congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman and be responsible for the planning and promotion of children's activities. They shall make any necessary recommendations to the elders to improve children's welfare, health, or safety. They shall also organize, secure material for, and solicit teachers and helpers for any children's church services held during regular worship services.

**Paragraph G.** Ushers and Greeters Ministry. The ushers and greeters ministry shall consist of at least four regular members of the congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman and vice-chairman. They shall welcome members and guests at each entrance, hand out bulletins, and assist in the offering during services. They shall also help with seating of guests and directing of guests for childcare, children's church, or classes. They shall assign someone to make a security check of the building and parking lot at least once each service and in the event of emergency, they shall direct the orderly vacation of the building.

**Paragraph H.** Nursery Ministry. The nursery ministry shall consist of at least three regular members of this congregation. They shall annually elect a Nursery Coordinator. They shall arrange for

attendants to be in the nursery for all regular and special church services, and care for and disinfect the nursery area, equipment, linens, and toys. They shall also recommend to the elders any rules necessary to ensure the welfare, health, and safety of the children entrusted to their ministry.

**Paragraph I.** Ordinance Ministry. The ordinance ministry shall consist of at least one male member and one female member. They shall prepare for observances of the Lord's Supper and Baptismal services and clean up afterwards. They shall also purchase any needed items relating to these two ordinances.

**Paragraph J.** Education Ministry. The education ministry shall consist of a Sunday School director and secretary, a Discipleship Training director and secretary, and other regular members of the congregation. The Sunday school director shall serve as chairman of the education ministry and the discipleship training director as vice-chairman unless an Education Minister is currently serving on the church staff, who then shall serve as chairman. The education ministry shall be responsible to see that all members are properly disciplined. They shall be responsible for planning and promotion, for training and replacement of teachers, and for ordering materials. They shall annually make recommendations to the elders regarding classes and teachers that should be authorized for the upcoming school year.

**Paragraph K.** Evangelism Ministry. The evangelism ministry shall consist of at least three regular members of the congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman. They shall plan, promote, and participate in evangelistic outreach on behalf of the church and under the direction of the elders. They shall also plan, promote, and participate in missions awareness opportunities and projects.

**Paragraph L.** Prayer Ministry. The prayer ministry shall consist of at least seven members of the congregation. They shall annually elect a chairman and vice-chairman. They shall be responsible to see that every member of the church is prayed for regularly. They shall strive to pray in preparation of and during every event in the life of the church. They shall also maintain both congregational and private prayer lists over which they shall make intercession daily.

**Paragraph M.** Practical Ministry. The practical ministry shall consist of the deacons and at least three regular members of the congregation. The chairman of deacons shall serve as chairman. The practical ministry shall be responsible to establish and oversee any ministries necessary for the care of the practical and physical needs of church members. They shall be responsible for church visitation and shall also use their gifts for practical outreach to the unsaved.

## **ARTICLE XI: TRUSTEES**

### **SECTION 1.** Composition of the Board.

The board of trustees shall consist of the primary teaching elder ("senior pastor"), who shall serve as chairman of the board, the chairman of deacons, who shall serve as vice-chairman, the chairmen of the budget and finance, personnel, and properties ministries, and the church clerk.

### **SECTION 2.** Duties of Trustees.

The trustees shall perform the legal and business transactions of this corporation as are designated to them by the laws of the State of Oklahoma. In the discharge of their duties, trustees shall act only at the direction of the elders and of the church. The disposal or acquisition of land or buildings and the entering into of any contract or indebtedness shall have been approved by the elders and by vote of the congregation.

## **ARTICLE XII: CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS**

### **SECTION 1.** General Statement.

There shall be an Annual Business Meeting of the church for the hearing of reports, the nominations of new officers, the authorizing of ministries and their participants, the setting of an annual budget, and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the congregation. Additional business meetings may be called at the discretion of the officers of the church assuming proper notice is given.

### **SECTION 2.** Notice of Meetings.

**Paragraph A.** Business Meetings. Notice of all business meetings shall be given at regular worship services two weeks prior to the meeting. However, in the case of an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each member by mail or phone of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

**Paragraph B.** Special Meetings. Meetings for the hearing of special reports or for seeking the counsel of the congregation may be called on shorter notice, but no vote may be taken or other business transacted at such meetings.

### **SECTION 3.** Quorum.

The regular members present at any properly convened congregational meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

### **SECTION 4.** Maintenance of Order.

An elder shall moderate all business meetings. If an elder is not available, then the chairman of deacons shall moderate the meeting.

### **SECTION 5.** Voting.

**Paragraph A.** Eligibility. All regular members who have reached the age of sixteen years and are in good standing in the church may vote on any question brought before the congregation.

**Paragraph B.** Decision Standards. Unanimity of heart and mind under God shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5), but when unanimity is not realized, not less than a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is required to make a resolution valid.

## **ARTICLE XIII: BY-LAWS**

The church under the leadership of its elders shall draft and amend from time to time, such by-laws as they deem necessary for the efficient implementation of this Constitution; but no by-law that is in violation of any of the terms of this Constitution shall be valid. These by-laws shall be added to this Constitution under the guidelines of Article XIV.

## **ARTICLE XIV: AMENDMENTS**

### **SECTION 1.** Procedure.

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the regular members present and voting at a duly convened business meeting of the congregation.

### **SECTION 2.** Notification.

No proposed amendment may be voted on which has not been distributed to the members in written form at least two weeks prior to such a meeting.

## **ARTICLE XV: DISSOLUTION**

If Gatlin Baptist Church should conclude its ministry and be dissolved, none of its assets remaining after meeting all responsibilities and payment of all just obligations shall inure to the benefit of an individual member of the church, its officers or other private individuals. Such assets, if any, shall in the event of its dissolution, be assigned by action of its members, at a properly called meeting, to such other organization(s) which are in harmony with the objectives and doctrinal position stated in this Constitution. Such organization(s) must also be recognized by the United States Internal Revenue Service as entitled to income tax exempt status under section 501 (c) (3) or amendments thereto of the revenue code.