

**The Constitution and Bylaws  
of  
Unity Baptist Church**

Approved and Adopted Sunday July 20, 1969  
Revised 2013 and 2021

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# CONSTITUTION

## **Preamble**

Under the Lordship of Christ, we declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

## **I. Name**

This body shall be known as Unity Baptist Church of Picayune, Inc., and is located at 3334 Highway 43 North in Picayune, MS. The church is incorporated as a religious, non-profit, entity. The records are on file in the church office.

## **II. Mission, Strategy, & Objectives**

Our mission is to make disciples of all nations. Our strategy is to gather, grow, give, and go. Therefore our objectives are to faithfully:

1. Gather together for worship so that we may magnify the greatness of God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit and the Word of God and appropriately respond by cherishing God's presence, living for His glory, and proclaiming the gospel.
2. Grow in our relationship with God and with one another through small group Bible studies, and thus mature in our faith and become Christ-like in our daily living.
3. Give of our time, talents, and treasures in recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We want to be a church that gives our time to minister unselfishly to people in the community and world in Jesus' name. We want to be a church that utilizes our gifts and talents to serve one another in the body of Christ. And we want to be a church that financially gives our tithes and offerings to support the mission and ministries of our church.
4. Go about our daily lives on mission with God. We want to be a dynamic spiritual body empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission by sharing Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world. We want to be a people that share the gospel through personal evangelism, participation in evangelistic events and community outreaches, and going on mission trips.

## **III. Statement of Basic Beliefs**

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God and the basis for our beliefs. This church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of "The Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention.

## **IV. Church Covenant**

Having been led as we believe by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and 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 biblical knowledge, holiness, and unity; to promote its spiritual growth and fruitfulness; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to disciple our children; to seek the salvation of our family, friends, and acquaintances; to walk worthy of the gospel; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our character; to live holy lives, avoiding every form of evil; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the word of our Savior to secure it without delay.

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.

## **V. Polity and Relationships**

This church is pastor-led, deacon served, committee/ministry team driven, and congregationally approved.

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership. All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.

This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation common among Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the association, the state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

## **VI. Amendments**

This constitution shall be amended at any regular or special church business meeting by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting. Written notice of such meeting, its purpose and the proposed amendment shall be published in the church bulletin and announced at least two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.

Any church member or organization may initiate suggested amendments to the church council. However, the recommendation for the proposed amendment must come from the church council.

# BYLAWS

## **I. Church Membership**

### *Section 1. General*

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

### *Section 2. Candidacy*

Any person may offer himself or herself as a candidate for membership in this church at any regular church service in any of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith and baptism according to the policies of this church.
2. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist church.
3. By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and biblical baptism when no letter is obtainable.

After new member orientation, candidates will be presented for church membership at a regularly scheduled business meeting. Candidates may be received into membership upon a three-fourths vote of acceptance.

### *Section 3. New Member Orientation*

Candidates for church membership must become oriented to the church's mission/strategy/objectives, basic beliefs, and church covenant prior to being presented for membership. The pastor or a person of his designation may do the new member orientation informally. A copy of the church constitution and the "Baptist Faith and Message" is to be given to each candidate.

### *Section 4. Rights of Members*

1. Every member of the church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present.
2. Every member of the church is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the church.
3. Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.

### *Section 5. Responsibilities of Members*

1. Every member should affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God and subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the "Baptist Faith & Message."
2. Every member should seek to carry out the spirit of the church covenant.
3. Every member of the church should strive to fulfill the church's mission/strategy/objectives.
4. Every member should honor, esteem, and love their pastor; pray for him, fervently and daily; submit to him in the scriptural exercise of his official

authority; support his ministry and manifest a tender regard for his reputation.

#### *Section 6. Termination of Membership*

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

1. Death of the member.
2. Transfer to another Baptist church.
3. Exclusion by action of this church.
4. Erasure upon request or proof of membership in a church of another denomination.

#### *Section 7. Discipline*

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastor, other members of the church staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption and reconciliation rather than punishment.

Should some serious condition exist that would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the pastor and the deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accordance with Matthew 18. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to exclude a member, a three-fourths vote of the members present is required; and the church may proceed to declare the person to be no longer in the membership of the church. A spirit of humility, gentleness, and love shall pervade all such proceedings.

The church may restore to membership any person previously excluded, upon request of the excluded person, and by a three-fourths vote of the church upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation.

## **II. Church Officers, Staff and Committees**

All who serve, as officers of the church and those who serve on church committees shall be members of this church.

The officers of this church shall be:

1. Pastor
2. Ministerial Staff
3. Deacons
4. Secretary-Treasurer
5. Trustees

#### *Section 1. Pastor*

The pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff to perform their tasks.

The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such, he works with the deacons and church staff to:

1. Lead the church in the achievement of its mission.
2. Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.

3. Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

The pastor is an ex-officio member of all the church organizations, and his leadership is to be recognized in them all.

The pastor will serve as moderator presiding over church business meetings. In the absence of the pastor, the chairman of deacons shall preside or, in the absence of both, the vice-chairman of the deacons shall call the church to order and preside as moderator. In guarding and maintaining the fellowship of the church, the aim of the moderator must be to bring about unity among people of different views, ideas, and convictions. The objectives of the moderator should be to maintain the spirit of Christian love while presiding, to be fair and courteous to all members, and to help members understand parliamentary procedures without embarrassment to them. The moderator must maintain a neutral position while presiding. If the moderator wishes to debate a question under consideration, he should ask an assistant to preside.

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The election shall take place at a special business meeting held during a regular Sunday morning worship service, of which at least two weeks public notice has been given.

The nominating committee shall select and present for election a group of five or more persons to serve as a pastor search committee. During the transition following its election, the pastor search committee alone shall be able to invite anyone to preach at the church and shall be responsible for recommending an interim pastor. The pastor search committee shall be elected by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and its recommendation will constitute a nomination. The pastor search committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one prospective candidate at a time. Election shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present being necessary for approval. The results of the vote shall be communicated to the prospective pastor and to the church. The pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his relinquishment or the church's declaration as herein below provided.

The pastor may resign the office as pastor by giving at least two weeks notice to the church.

The church may declare the office of pastor to be vacant and the pastor's employment terminated. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, which shall be called as and shall constitute a special business meeting. The meeting may be called upon the recommendation of a three-fourths majority of the deacon body after all steps in the church operations manual have been followed and no suitable resolution reached. Once the deacon body has determined that all steps have been taken and vote to bring the matter before the church, the pastor shall be placed on paid suspension where he has neither administrative authority nor pastoral duties. He shall not be allowed to occupy the pulpit during this time and his presence on campus should be minimized. The vote to declare the office vacant shall be by secret ballot; an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present being necessary to declare the office vacant. The termination shall be immediate.

When the office of pastor is vacant, the deacon body led by the deacon chairman shall handle the administrative duties of the pastor until the interim pastor is brought on. In the event that the pastor becomes incapacitated (illness, accident, administrative leave, Family Medical Leave Act, suspension, etc.), the deacon body led by the deacon chairman shall assume the administrative duties of the pastor.



### *Section 2. Ministerial Staff*

The ministerial staff, those staff members of whom the church requires evidence of a personal call of God to minister, shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for such offices. The pastor shall write a job description when the need for a staff member is determined.

Whenever the need arises for a ministerial staff member, the nominating committee shall select and present for election a group of five or more persons to serve with the pastor as a search committee. The search committee shall be elected by the church to seek out a suitable staff member and its recommendation will constitute a nomination.

The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one prospective candidate at a time. The call of a ministerial staff member shall take place at a special business meeting held during a regular Sunday morning worship service, of which at least two weeks public notice has been given. Election shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present being necessary for approval. The results of the vote shall be communicated to the prospective minister and to the church.

Each employed staff member shall serve until the relationship is terminated by the staff member's relinquishment or the church's declaration as herein below provided. A staff member may relinquish the position by giving at least two weeks notice at the time of resignation.

The church may declare the position to be vacant and the staff member's employment terminated at a meeting called for that purpose. The meeting shall be called upon recommendation of a three-fourths majority of the pastor and deacon body after all steps in the church operations manual have been followed and no suitable resolution reached. Once the pastor and deacon body have determined that all steps have been taken and vote to bring the matter before the church, the minister shall be placed on paid suspension where he has neither administrative authority nor ministerial duties. His presence on campus should be minimized. The vote to declare the office of the staff member vacant shall be by secret ballot, and the affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present shall be necessary to declare the office vacant and the staff member's employment thereby terminated. The termination shall be immediate.

### *Section 3. Deacons*

The church shall elect the number of deacons desired by the church annually. Only those persons who meet the scriptural qualifications set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 shall be elected.

The role of the deacon is one of servant ministry. The deacon body is not a governing body. They serve under the leadership of the pastor as an extension of his ministry. Deacons are to lead by example, serve the people, support the pastor and staff, and protect the peace. In addition, the pastor or various committees may choose to use the deacon body as a sounding board to get their input on ideas or recommendations, prior to bringing them to the church for consideration.

The specifics of the deacon election and ministries will be in accordance with the church operations manual.

#### *Section 4. Secretary-Treasurer*

The secretary-treasurer shall be responsible for receipt, preservation, and payout, with receipt of vouchers approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money or things of value paid by or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. The secretary-treasurer shall work within the guidelines of all financial policies and procedures set forth by the church. The secretary-treasurer shall review and approve all tax payments to local, state, and federal taxing agencies. The secretary-treasurer is the signing authority on all contracts for goods and services as they apply to budget accounts already approved by church action. The secretary-treasurer shall be bonded with the church paying for the bond.

It shall be the duty of the secretary-treasurer to render to the finance committee and deacons monthly and the church at each regular business meeting a summary report of all receipts and disbursements for the period. In addition, the secretary-treasurer will provide to the finance committee an itemized report of receipts and disbursements of the preceding month. This report will be made available to any other church member requesting a copy. The secretary-treasurer shall render to the church in the first business meeting of a new year, a detailed accounting of all receipts and disbursements for the previous year. Copies of monthly, quarterly, and annual financial reports shall be kept on file in the church office by the secretary-treasurer.

The secretary-treasurer is an ex-officio member of the finance committee and shall serve as chairman. He or she shall work closely with the finance committee to develop and recommend to the church adequate policies and procedures related to receiving, accounting, disbursing, and reporting church monies.

The secretary-treasurer shall serve as church clerk. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a register of names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal, death, or erasure, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give required notice of all meetings where notice is necessary, as indicated in these bylaws. The clerk shall be responsible for preparing the annual letter of the church to the association. All church records are church property and shall be kept in the church office at all times.

#### *Section 5. Trustees*

The church shall elect three 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 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.

The trustees shall be responsible for securing and maintaining an insurance portfolio to be approved by the church, which adequately insures all church property and personnel.

Trustees shall serve on a rotation basis, with one new trustee being elected every year for a three-year term.

### *Section 6. Non-ministerial Staff*

The non-ministerial staff members shall be employed as the church determines the need for their services and they shall work under a job description approved by the church under the general direction of the pastor or staff member he designates.

The pastor shall have the authority to employ and to terminate services of non-ministerial staff members. Such employment and termination of services shall occur after consultation with the supervising staff member and, as appropriate, with the consultation of related committees of the church.

### *Section 7. Church Committees*

A committee is a group of church members elected by the church body to consider, report, and/or act on matters essential to the administration, responsibility and purpose of the church.

The committees of this church shall be a nominating committee, a church properties committee, a finance committee, a missions committee, a cemetery committee, and such other regular and special committees as authorized by the church in accordance with policies and procedures. The church in accordance with policies and procedures may create additional committees. All committee members shall be church members recommended by the nominating committee and elected by the church unless otherwise specified within these bylaws. The pastor will be an ex-officio member of all committees and shall have voting privileges. The church operations manual shall specify the makeup and governance of each committee.

1. **The nominating committee** coordinates the staffing of all church leadership positions filled by volunteer workers, including vacancies, which occur during the year. The nominating committee shall act on behalf of the church to nominate persons to fill positions with the persons whose gifts, potential and commitment match the requirements of the positions. The nominating committee shall first approve individuals considered for any such position before they are approached for recruitment. The nominating committee shall present to the church for election all that accept the invitation to serve. The members of the nominating committee shall be nominated by the deacons and elected annually by the church to serve until their successors are elected.
2. **The church properties 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 pastor and the church staff regarding the needs for, and the employment of, maintenance personnel, and regarding the assignment of supervisory responsibility to appropriate personnel.
3. **The finance committee** is responsible for the total stewardship education of the church. They shall develop and implement an annual stewardship plan, which will encourage regular and systematic giving of all church members. The finance committee, chaired by the secretary-treasurer, shall develop annually a unified church budget to be presented to the church for adoption. As needs arise, the finance committee will review and make recommendations to the church for adjustments to the unified budget. The finance committee

shall receive and review a monthly report from the secretary-treasurer detailing the expenses and receipts of the church for the preceding month.

4. **The missions committee** is responsible for assisting the church in its mission endeavors. They will seek to discover mission opportunities locally, nationally, and internationally.
5. **The cemetery committee** is responsible for the oversight of the cemetery. They are to assist families in choosing a burial plot, mark the gravesites, see to the regular up-keep of the cemetery plot area, and recommend policies regarding the cemetery.

#### *Section 8. Ministry Teams*

Ministry teams may be established and shall function as directed by the church.

A ministry team is a group of Christians associated by a common gifting of the Holy Spirit and with the undergirding of the church body for the collective goal of fulfilling and facilitating the purposes and programs of the church.

### **III. Church Program Organization**

The church shall maintain a program of Bible teaching. It shall be under church authority, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church and all program activities subject to church coordination and approval the church shall provide the human resources, the physical resources, and the financial resources for the appropriate advancement of this program.

1. The basic responsibility of Unity Groups is Bible teaching and biblical revelation in a way that would reach people for Christ and church membership, and aid in the interpretation of information pertaining to the church and denomination.

### **IV. Church Council**

The church council shall serve the church by suggesting church objectives and goals; reviewing and coordinating ministry and program plans recommended by church officers, organizations and committees; recommending to the church the use of leadership and other resources according to program priorities; and evaluating achievements in terms of church objectives and goals.

The church council shall serve in long-range planning and is responsible for developing an analysis of long-range church and community needs, recommending long-range goals and strategies to the congregation and evaluating the long-range effectiveness of the church program.

The church council shall further be charged with coordinating and maintaining the church calendar, maintaining the church operations manual, and recommending amendments to the constitution and bylaws in accordance to the amendment procedures.

Regular members of the church council shall be:

- Pastor
- Other Ministerial Staff
- Deacon Chairman
- Secretary-Treasurer
- Unity Group Director

- Preschool Ministry Leader
- Kids Ministry Leader
- Student Ministry Leader
- Men's Ministry Leader
- Women's Ministry Leader
- Senior Adult Ministry Leader
- Church Properties Committee Chairperson
- Missions Committee Chairperson
- Kitchen Ministry Leader

## **V. Church Ordinances**

### *Section 1. Baptism*

This 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. The pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism. The deacons shall assist in the preparation for, and the observance of, baptism.
3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
4. A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastor and/or staff or deacons. If negative interest is ascertained on the part of the candidate, he or she shall be deleted from those awaiting baptism.

### *Section 2. The Lord's Supper*

This church shall observe the Lord's Supper as scheduled by the church. The pastor and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper.

## **VI. Church Meetings**

### *Section 1. Worship Services*

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning for the worship of Almighty God. Prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services. The pastor shall direct the services for all church members and for all others who may choose to attend.

### *Section 2. Special Services*

Revival services and any other church meetings for the advancement of the church's objectives shall be held as recommended by the pastor in coordination with the church council.

### *Section 3. Regular Business Meetings*

The church shall hold regular business meetings on an established frequency which shall be no less frequent than quarterly and no more frequent than monthly, except as otherwise rescheduled by the church.

Notice of any such rescheduled meeting shall be announced two weeks in advance in such a manner that all resident members have an opportunity to know of the meeting.

#### *Section 4. Special Business Meetings*

The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. A two-week notice must be given for the special called business meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. Written notice of such meeting and its purpose shall be published in the church bulletin and announced at least two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting. No business except that for which the meeting was called may be transacted.

A special business meeting may be called by the pastor, the church council, the deacon body, or as otherwise provided specifically in these bylaws.

#### *Section 5. Quorum*

A quorum consists of those members who attend the properly called business meeting.

#### *Section 6. Parliamentary Rules*

The most recently revised version of Robert's Rules of Order as may from time to time be amended is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church.

### **VII. Church Finances**

#### *Section 1. Budget*

The finance committee led by the secretary-treasurer shall prepare and submit to the church for approval a unified budget, indicating by the items the amount needed and sought for all local and other expenses.

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts.

#### *Section 2. Accounting Procedures*

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the secretary-treasurer, and 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 secretary-treasurer.

The church fiscal year shall run concurrently with the calendar year.

### **VIII. Church Operations Manual**

The church shall develop a church operations manual to include church policies and procedures and organization charts depicting lines of responsibility in the administration of the church. The manual shall be kept in the church office and made available for use by any member of the church. The church council shall maintain the manual. The church council shall review the manual at least annually, with authority to recommend changes for the church to consider.

Any church member or organization may initiate suggested changes in the manual.

Addition, revision, or deletion of the church operations manual requires:

1. Suggestion to the church council from the church officer or organization whose areas of assignment the policy relates.
2. Discussion by the church council and its recommendation to the church.
3. Approval by the church with a three-fourths vote.

The final arbiter of any part of the church operations manual shall be a three-fourths vote of the church.

### **IX. Amendments**

These bylaws shall be amended at any regular or special church business meeting by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting. Written notice of such meeting, its purpose and the proposed amendment shall be published in the church bulletin and announced at least two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.

Any church member or organization may initiate suggested amendments to the church council. However, the recommendation for the proposed amendment must come from the church council.

### **X. Operation and Dissolution**

This church is organized and operated primarily for the purpose of engaging in religious worship and promoting the spiritual development and well-being of individuals. It is to be operated in a way that does not result in the accrual of distributable profits, realization of private gain resulting from payment of compensation in excess of a reasonable allowance for salary or other compensation for services rendered, or realization of any other form of private gain.

The church pledges its assets for use in performing the organization's religious functions. It directs that on discontinuance of the church by dissolution or otherwise, the assets are to be transferred to the Southern Baptist Convention under Section 501(c)(3), Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.