



CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OPELIKA

ARTICLE I – OUR CHURCH NAME

The name of this church shall be First Presbyterian Church of Opelika, a particular church of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

ARTICLE II – ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these additional essentials of our faith.

- We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever!
- Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
- The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior, indwelling our hearts. He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
- Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.
- The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting she awaits the return of her Lord.
- Jesus Christ will come again to the earth personally, visibly, and bodily — to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)
- The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

The essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

ARTICLE III – OUR VISION / MISSION

Our vision at First Presbyterian of Opelika is to glorify God and exalt Christ by advancing gospel-saturated community through

gospel-centered teaching and gospel-motivated mercy. At FPO, the means by which we will pursue the glory of God is three-fold:

1. **Gospel-Saturated Community:** We believe we are worse sinners than we ever imagined but, through Christ, we are more loved, accepted and secured than we ever dreamed. It is this truth that enables our desire to forge out families, marriages, churches, universities, cities and a world that are marked by:
 - Lives and relationships motivated by grace over fear
 - Honesty and openness over showmanship and pretending
 - Service, sacrifice and ministry over isolation, self-centeredness and self-improvement
2. **Gospel-Centered Teaching:** We seek to advance gospel-saturated community by preaching and teaching the Bible in a way that emphasizes:
 - Our heart problems over our behavior problems
 - The Bible as the story of God's redemption over the Bible as tips for life
 - God's work for us in Christ as the only means for real change
3. **Gospel-Motivated Mercy:** We seek to advance gospel-saturated community through service of one another and our community that is:
 - Propelled by the grace of the gospel, not the compulsion of man
 - Aiming at long-term transformation and renewal over short-term fixes

ARTICLE IV – OUR VALUES

- **The Bible:** Scripture is God's inerrant Word, relevant for all of life. God's Word establishes the principles for all we do. God's Word reveals the nature of the covenants He establishes with humanity. God's Word is the source of all we teach and affirm.
- **Expository Preaching:** We believe that God works by His Spirit, through His word, with power to build His Church. Therefore, we are committed to expository preaching. What in the world is that? It just means that we seek to take out (exposit) of a particular passage of the Bible what it says, rather than trying to put into (deposit) a passage our own ideas or themes. Our practice is to go through books of the Bible, since this helps us to keep passages in context and protects us from making them mean what we want them to mean, rather than what they actually mean.
- **Worship:** Our aim in corporate worship is to tell the gospel story so that its Author might turn us away from our forgetful, faithless attempts to write our own outcomes, back to himself, thereby shaping us for our great work in the world which is to serve Christ the King in the places that he has put us.
- **Prayer:** Believing that we are completely dependent on our Creator, knowing that He is sovereign, good and worthy of our worship, and that we live in a fallen world as a result of sin, we view prayer as of primary importance in communicating with God as we relate with Him as our Heavenly Father through Christ our Lord.
- **Reformed Theology:** The Reformed tradition, which did not begin with John Calvin but traces its roots through him, affirms the sovereignty of God over all things (including you and me and our salvation). At FPO, we believe that the Reformed tradition is the most faithful, consistent and God-glorifying understanding of the Christian faith. We believe that it protects us from confusing the American dream (with hard work you can be what you want to be) or the Auburn Creed (I can only count on what I earn) with the gospel: And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies (declares 'not guilty') the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness (Romans 4:5). We think that there is a reason that Paul did not link our peace with God to our obedience or to our morning quiet time – because our standing before God on a day to day basis does not depend on anything we do but on what God has done for us in Christ! And we think that there is a wonderful result of that – freedom.
- **The Doctrine of Election:** We know that even the mention of this idea – that God calls individuals to himself by name not because of the good things that they have done but out of the depths of his own love and mercy – is one that can send people running for the hills. But under the authority of Scripture and as part of our Reformed tradition, we affirm this idea, not as the basis of pride or a source for debate, but as a gracious and life-giving truth. All preconceived ideas aside, the Biblical doctrine of predestination set forth in Scripture (Ephesians 1) exalts the grace of God and protects us from the burdensome idea that God loves us because we are good and is mad at us when we are not so good.
- **Discipleship:** Building people is more important than building the program. We are dedicated to developing every believer as a minister led by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus. Many of these followers of Jesus will be developed as servant-leaders

who will develop others.

- **Kingdom Focus:** None of us are where we are by accident. Rather, in his providence God has placed each of us in particular places with particular gifts and skills for his particular purpose – the advancing of his kingdom. Our goal is not to “program up” our people with church activities, but to equip them for the unique kingdom work to which they have been called in their homes, their neighborhoods, their workplaces and careers, their school, and their world.

ARTICLE V – OUR MEMBERSHIP

- A. **Communicant members** are persons who have made a credible profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior, have received or given assurance of willingness to receive the sacraments of water baptism and the Lord's Supper, have given assurance of a desire to lead a consistent Christian life with Jesus Christ as their Lord, have shown no flagrant sins or false doctrine which contradict their profession of faith, have pledged to submit to the Session of this church in all matters that come under the jurisdiction of the Session and this Constitution, and have been received by the Session.
- B. **Non-communicant members** are children of communicant members or children under the care of communicant members who stand with them as foster parents in place of the parents. One or both parents or foster parents of these children shall be under the solemn obligation to bring them up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” and to diligently train them to embrace Christ as their personal Savior. These children are not entitled to vote in any meeting of the church until they become communicant members and have reached the prescribed age (Article XIV, Section F). They are not to partake of communion until the Session, having examined their profession of faith, is satisfied that the child understands and has accepted personally the atoning death of Jesus Christ that is commemorated by this sacrament and confirms that he or she has been baptized or is willing to be baptized.
- C. Persons separated geographically from their home church because of educational, military, or other reasons, may ask to be received as **affiliate** members. This affiliation shall be good for one year and may be renewed. Such affiliates shall be given the rights and privileges of communicate members, including the oversight and concern of the church Session, except they may not vote or hold elected office within the congregation.
- D. To become a communicant or affiliate member of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika, a person shall ...
- complete Discover FPO new member class or communicants class
 - be examined satisfactorily by the Session regarding his or her credible profession of faith
 - meet the requirements of Article V, Section A
 - be received upon confession of faith, reaffirmation of faith or statement of faith and a reference letter from another evangelical church
 - take the vows of membership
- Persons so received shall be publicly welcomed by the congregation at a regular worship service designated by the Session.
- E. Members are expected to strive conscientiously to live according to the light given to them by the Holy Spirit through God's Word and support wholeheartedly and regularly participate in the services and activities of the church.
- F. It shall be within the province of the Session to review the church membership periodically, through the oversight of a committee of the Session. Members who seem to manifest inconsistency or flagrant sin in their Christian lives or a contentious attitude toward the church's doctrinal standards, or show indifference toward the life and work of the church shall be investigated for the purpose of remedying any weakness in their Christian lives. It shall be the practice of the Session to annually review the church's rolls and comply with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church's Book of Order with regard to non-attending members.
- G. A person may be removed from the church's roll of communicant members by one of the following methods:
1. record of decease
 2. letter of transfer
 3. record of member's uniting with another church
 4. record of ordination to the ministry
 5. disciplinary action
 6. a member not chargeable with an offense informs the Session that he or she does not desire to remain in the fellowship of the church

For actions 1 - 4 of Article V, Section G, the removal of a member in good standing is delegated to the Clerk of Session without particular action by the Session in each individual case. The Clerk of the Session shall report each action at the next regular meeting of Session. The Session shall not refuse a letter of transfer for a member in good standing to a sound church that affirms the basic Christian tenets. A letter of transfer shall be requested in writing by the transferring member or the receiving church.

Removal by actions 5 or 6 of Article V, Section G shall be completed only by a special action of the Session. Removal by disciplinary action is of two kinds:

- a. removal from active roll and placement on inactive roll for lack of attendance for more than one year without cause
- b. excommunication

In either case, the provisions of the Rules of Discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be carefully adhered to and the rights of the parties to appeal to the higher court shall be protected.

- H. The name of any person dropped from the rolls of the church for any reason shall be reported at a regularly convened congregational meeting.

ARTICLE VI – OUR GOVERNMENT

The government of our church is vested in its membership and executed by their elected officers. The ordinary and perpetual offices in the church are elders and deacons. Within the office of elder are two orders, teaching elders (pastors) and ruling elders. The elders have joint responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the flock and the government of the church. The office of deacon is one of service to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. The office of trustee is established to execute those legal matters which pertain to First Presbyterian Church of Opelika being an incorporated organization, holding real property and falling under the jurisdiction of the State of Alabama and the United States of America in some temporal matters.

ARTICLE VII – OUR SESSION

- A. The governing body of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika is the Session. The Session consists of the senior pastor, associate pastor(s), if there be any, and those ruling elders elected by the congregation during their specified terms of office. Other members of the ministerial staff, although not members of the Session may be invited to attend and participate in discussion but without a vote.

B. Believing that God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the church, First Presbyterian Church of Opelika holds to the historically orthodox interpretation of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 that only men should be appointed into the authoritative position of ruling elder.

- C. The Session shall be responsible for the spiritual life, worship, and gospel ministry of the entire church and shall study and promote the best measures for the edification of the people for the role played by the local church in the denomination and in spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad. The Session shall be responsible for:

- administration of the sacraments
- regular and special worship and other services
- prayer meetings of the church
- ministry of music
- subject to the Presbytery, the supply of the pulpit in the absence of a pastor

The Session shall have supervision over the Sunday School curriculum, church's activities for weekday Christian instruction, discipleship and evangelism, youth groups, missionary organizations and all other organizations within the church.

The Session, through its appointed board, shall approve all teachers and leaders participating in these activities and all education materials. Teachers and ministry leaders shall be members in good standing of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika and shall agree with and teach consistent with the Doctrinal Statement of the Church as defined in this Constitution. Any exception to these standards requires special approval by the Session. The Session shall seek to promote wholesome Christian fellowship and edifying social activities among the members and young people.

- D. The Session is responsible for the spiritual government and discipline of the church. The ruling elders shall assist the pastor(s) in visiting the sick and the sorrowing of the membership, household visitation, inquiring into the spiritual

knowledge and conduct of the people and encouraging them in Christian living. The Session shall deal with offenders in accordance with Scriptures and the Rules of Discipline always observing especially the admonition of Galatians 6:1.

- E. The Session shall have authority to ...
- examine, ordain and install ruling elders and deacons, upon their election by the church, and require these officers to devote themselves to their work
 - approve the annual budget
 - determine the purposes for which the buildings all moveable property, and the grounds of the church may be used
 - examine the records of the proceedings of the deacons and trustees
 - direct the examination and reception of applicants for church membership and their fitness in accordance with Article V
 - call congregational meetings for the purpose of recommending such actions as a call for a vote from the membership
 - consider and act upon suggestions, recommendations and grievances upon the part of any member or organization affiliated with the church
 - approve all designated gifts
- F. The Session shall hold stated meetings at regular intervals. Fifty percent (50%) of the active teaching and ruling elders shall constitute a quorum. Unless the Session shall rule otherwise, notice by the senior pastor or moderator shall constitute due notice of a special meeting of the Session. The senior pastor has power to convene the Session when he judges it requisite and he shall always convene it when requested to do so by any two of the ruling elders. The Session shall also convene when directed to do so by the Presbytery. Each meeting shall be opened and closed with prayer.
- G. When the church is without a senior pastor, the Moderator of the Session may be either a minister appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery, without the consent of the Session, or one invited by the session to preside on a particular occasion, or in an emergency, one of its own members elected to preside. In this situation, fifty percent (50%) of the ruling elders shall constitute a quorum. In judicial cases, the Moderator shall be a minister of the Presbytery to which the church belongs.
- H. The Session shall appoint elders to represent the church as commissioners at the meetings of the Presbytery and General Assembly. These representatives shall, on their return, make a report of proceedings.
- I. The Session shall elect as its Clerk a ruling elder who is competent in the keeping of records. The clerk so elected will serve for a definite period as determined by the Session. The Session shall keep an accurate record of its proceedings, which record shall be submitted at least once in every year to the inspection of the Presbytery. The Clerk shall be further responsible for the keeping of an accurate and clear register or roll of the members of the church, including the names of communicant, affiliate and non-communicant members and the names of former communicant members transferred to other churches or suspended or otherwise removed from the rolls. Records shall be kept of admissions, dismissals, deaths, baptisms, ordination services and communion services. The Clerk shall carry on and maintain a complete record of all correspondence and such other records as may pertain to the office. He shall also have in his custody any other papers, records or other documents as directed by the Session or the Congregation.
- J. The Session may delegate certain aspects of its powers and duties to its officers, to its standing or ad hoc committees, or to other organizations within the church, but the Session may not delegate any of its powers or duties irrevocably or in any such manner as to cease to be fully responsible for the spiritual life of the entire church.

ARTICLE VIII – OUR DIACONATE

- A. The office of deacon is not one of rule but rather of service to both the physical and spiritual needs of the people, after the example of the Lord Jesus. It also expresses the communion of saints as they help one another in time of need.
- B. The Diaconate shall be elected by the congregation to this work of service and organized as a Board. The Board shall elect a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer from their number. The senior pastor (or associate pastor) and an elder designated by the Session shall be advisory members of this Board and at least one of these shall attend the meetings of the Diaconate.
- C. With regards to the Diaconate, First Presbyterian Church of Opelika holds to the egalitarian view that this leadership role in the church is gift-based and not gender-based. As such, no distinction is made on the qualifications for the office between women and men in this ministry.
- D. The Diaconate shall meet at least once per quarter and when requested by the Session. A quorum shall be fifty percent

(50%) of its membership. The Diaconate shall keep a record of its proceedings and of all funds and their distribution. The Session and the Diaconate shall meet quarterly to confer on items of common interest.

- E. In matters of church finance, the Diaconate shall:
- propose an annual budget for the general expenses and submit it to the Session for their approval
 - obtain from the Session the budgets for pastoral compensation and missions and benevolences
 - compile the total annual church budget and present it to the congregation at the annual meeting of the congregation
 - administer the approved budget during the ensuing year
 - bring before the Session for their approval significant levels of expenditure in excess of budgeted amounts
 - anticipate major expenditures for capital projects, maintenance and other items and include in their financial planning
 - assume through the Treasurer, fiscal accountability for the current budget of the church
- F. The Diaconate shall be responsible for ministry to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. They shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, shall keep it in proper repair, and shall provide security for the property. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session. They shall be responsible for the service of ushering. They shall be responsible to the Session and shall report their activities, transactions, receipts and disbursements at intervals stated by the Session. They shall make an annual report to the congregation at the annual meeting. The financial records must be submitted for review at least once a year.

ARTICLE IX – TRUSTEES OF OUR CORPORATION

- A. First Presbyterian Church of Opelika is incorporated in the State of Alabama to conduct the legal affairs of the church as disclosed in the Articles of Incorporation. All persons on the active membership rolls of the congregation who are at least eighteen years of age shall be members of this corporation.
- B. The officers of the corporation, hereinafter called Trustees, shall be elected from the congregation. Nominations for this duty will be prepared by the Session and presented at the annual congregation meeting in January at which time elections will be held. Membership on the Board of Trustees shall include the Treasurer, a ruling elder and, at a minimum, two other qualified members of the church. After election, the members of the Board of Trustees shall annually elect a chairman and a secretary for a one-year term. The chairman shall be the president of the corporation.
- C. The Trustees shall be responsible to the Session, the governing body of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika. They shall meet as required by business or at the request of the Session.
- D. The Board of Trustees shall have supervision over the business affairs of the corporation and shall have authority to call special corporate meetings. The President of the Board of Trustees shall be the Moderator of said meetings of the corporation.
- E. The Board of Trustees shall not transfer, sell, purchase, or encumber with loan any real estate for the church except by express authorization conveyed through a two-thirds vote of the membership present at a meeting of the corporation held in accordance with the laws of the State of Alabama.
- F. The Trustees, in accordance with Article IX, Section E, shall execute the buying, selling and mortgaging of property for the church, the acquiring and conveying title to such property, and the holding and defending title to the same.
- G. The annual congregational meeting of the First Presbyterian Church of Opelika will be held on the second Sunday of January. At this meeting, the corporation shall transact all regular and necessary business. The Board of Trustees may call for a special corporation meeting at any time to address the legal issues of the church. All corporation meetings shall require not less than two weeks' notice and shall require that notice setting forth date, time, place of meeting and the business for which the meeting is called be announced from the pulpit at two regular services on the two Sundays preceding the meeting.
- H. The Board of Trustees will request the Session to approve all planned expenses on items pertaining to the legal affairs of the church.
- I. The Trustees shall perform other duties, as officers of the corporation, as may be delegated to them by the Session or congregation.

ARTICLE X – OUR FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

- A. All giving to First Presbyterian Church Opelika will be directed to one of the following spending categories:
- **General Fund:** to be used for financing the operating expenses of the church
 - **Missions:** to be used in financing the approved local, regional, national and global missions programs of the church
 - **Benevolence:** to be used by the Diaconate to address the financial needs of the membership and local community
 - **Building:** to be used for congregationally approved capital projects of the church (Article IX)

Givers are encouraged to designate gifts to one of the above categories. Undesignated gifts will be directed to the General Fund unless the giver requests the Session to designate the gift to a prioritized spending category (Article IX; Section E).

- B. All funds shall be administered with good stewardship and in a manner that is honoring unto the Lord.
- C. The Treasurer of the church shall be a member of both the Diaconate and the Board of Trustees.
- D. The church treasurer and church administrator shall be bonded and entrusted with the funds of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika, which include funds for general expense, missions, benevolences, projects, special programs, escrow accounts, cash reserves and any other financial accounts.
- E. Treasurer shall devise suitable accounting and reporting procedures and present these to the Session for approval. He or she shall submit a monthly financial report to both the Diaconate and the Session for their review. He or she shall also prepare a financial statement for each fiscal year for presentation at the annual meeting of the congregation. The financial records shall be available at any time to the Session or Diaconate and must be submitted to audit at a minimum of once per year.
- F. The Treasurer or his / her designee shall draw checks as directed by the Session, Diaconate or the Board of Trustees within their areas of assigned responsibility as defined in this document. Deacons or elders of the First Presbyterian Church of Opelika who have been authorized for this duty by the Session must sign all checks. All checks over the minimum to be designated by the Session from time to time shall be signed by two officers. The Treasurer shall be one of these two if available in a timely manner.
- G. The Treasurer shall have custody of the legal papers pertaining to the property and finances of the church, such as deeds, abstracts, insurance policies, bonds, notes, etc., which shall be kept in a safe place designated by the Board of Trustees.
- H. The Diaconate may, at their discretion, provide help to the Treasurer by appointing or contracting an assistant to conduct designated portions of the record keeping, check preparation and report preparation. The Financial Secretary shall, with such other assistants as may be authorized by the Diaconate, arrange for the receiving, counting and crediting in their proper form in books or Session approved computer software provided for that purpose, all offerings and monies received by the church and shall be responsible for banking of such funds each week to the proper account in a bank designated by the Diaconate, and shall account to the Treasurer in a formal monthly report for all funds so deposited. The books shall always be available for inspection by the Treasurer, the Session or the Diaconate. In the event the Financial Secretary is unable to perform his duties, or there shall be a vacancy in the office, the duties of the Financial Secretary shall become the responsibility of the secretary of the Diaconate until action is taken for a substitute.
- I. In the event the Treasurer is unable to perform his/her duties or there is a vacancy in the office, the duties of a Treasurer may be taken care of by any person authorized in an official meeting of the Session or Diaconate until action is taken by the Diaconate for a substitute.

ARTICLE XI – ELECTION OF OUR OFFICERS

- A. Teaching elders, ruling elders and deacons of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika shall be elected, ordained and installed according to chapters 20, 21 and 24 of the Book of Order. The designations "ruling elder" and "teaching elder" describe the two classes of elder as defined in 1 Timothy 5:17 where the single office is seen as comprising the two major functions of "ruling" and "preaching and teaching." The office of Deacon is defined in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- B. The teaching elder currently serving as the senior pastor shall be Moderator of Session and all congregational meetings. In his absence, an associate pastor called by the congregation will serve as moderator. Should neither of these options be viable, the Session may elect one of its own number as Moderator or may invite another teaching elder from the rolls of Presbytery to serve as Moderator as required (BO 12.2).
- C. Election, ordination and installation to the office of elder or deacon shall be according to the language of Chapter 24 of the Book of Order. Election and installation of pastors shall be according to the language of Chapter 21 of the Book of Order.

- D. At First Presbyterian of Opelika, officers will serve a three-year term. At the conclusion of this term, an officer may agree to serve an additional three year-term without being re-elected to the same office by the congregation. At the conclusion of the second three-year term, all officers must take a sabbatical of at least one-year before having his/her name nominated to the congregation to serve in a church office.
- E. Because ordination to the office of elder or deacon is perpetual (Book of Order 24.6), all those elected by the congregation to that office should so serve the Lord and His people in the office, unless granted temporary sabbatical for reasons deemed by the session to be prudent. Elders or Deacons wishing to be released entirely from the obligations of their ordination may only do so by way of the processes described in the Book of Order.
- F. A majority of the congregation, voting at a regularly called congregational meeting, may request the Session to dissolve the official relationship of a ruling elder or deacon to the congregation without censure. If the Session fails to do so, the action may be complained against per the provisions of Book of Order, Chapter 43.
- G. The qualifying characteristics to be sought in the lives of church members being considered for the office of elder or deacon are outlined in the Scriptures, primarily 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Generally, the congregation has the responsibility to nominate candidates, the Session has the responsibility to examine and recommend the slate of candidates to the congregation and the congregation has the responsibility to elect officers.

In July of each year, the Session shall call for nominations from the congregation for the office of ruling elder and deacon, and proceed to qualification and election during the congregational meeting the second Sunday of January.

ARTICLE XII – OUR COMMITTEES

- A. The leadership of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika recognizes that “*all parts of our body*” bring different gifts, interests and experiences into our church family. As a result, committees of the church allow our members to participate in the management and administration of our ministries and necessary functions and provide an opportunity to demonstrate their personal expertise and skills in striving to achieve our Vision / Mission.
- B. To ensure effective and efficient coordination of this organizational structure, all types of committees and its respective members must be approved and, if necessary, annually re-formed through the church’s budgeting process. Committees will be categorized into one of the following types:
 1. **Congregational Committee** – formed and called by the congregation at a congregational meeting. The congregation will elect committee members from nominations by the Session and nominations from the floor. After committee membership is established, the Session will appoint committee leadership. (example - pastor search committee)
 2. **Session Standing Committee** – formed, membership approved and leadership appointed by the Session as a permanent committee of the church to manage a strategic ministry or church function. (example - missions committee)
 3. **Session Ad-Hoc Committee** – formed by the Session to address a single objective or issue and then to disband after the completion of the project. Committee leadership will be designated by the Session. (example - building committee)
 4. **Ministry Team** – formed and membership approved by the Session for the purpose of planning and overseeing a specific ministry effort within the church. Leadership will be determined by the ministry team. (example – women’s ministry)
- C. The following are requirements in the formation of a church committee:
 - minimum of one elder and one deacon will be assigned as a member of congregation / session committees as regular member
 - an elder and deacon will be assigned to all ministry teams as liaisons
 - senior pastor and associate pastor(s) are ad-hoc members of all committees
 - each committee is responsible for engaging its membership in the work of the committee and informing its members of meetings, activities and events
 - during the church year, all new members of a committee must be approved by the Session
- D. All committees will meet a minimum of once every three months. The meetings will be conducted on church property unless an alternate location is approved by the Session. Meetings are to be conducted with a published agenda which is distributed to the membership in advance of the meeting. Committee / ministry team members are encouraged to attend all meetings to allow conferring with each other on matters of joint committee interest.

- E. All committees will draft and distribute to the Session a report on its activities, achievements and recommendations at a minimum of once every three-months. Clerk of Session will receive the committee reports by the Sunday preceding the normal monthly Session meeting so as to allow time to collate and distribute the reports to all elders in advance of the meeting.

ARTICLE XIII – OUR PASTORS (TEACHING ELDERS)

- A. Ministers are presbyters whose qualifications are enjoined in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). They are also called teaching elders and are differentiated from ruling elders by ordination to their special vocation, that they shall "labor in the Word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17-18). When a minister is called by a specific congregation to provide spiritual oversight (or assist) he is called a pastor (or assistant / associate).
- B. The senior pastor shall have general oversight of the spiritual life, regular services, ministration of the sacraments of the church and ordination and installation of elders and deacons. He shall be an ex-officio member of all Board and committee meetings connected with the church or any of its organizations, act as moderator in the meetings of the Session. He shall conscientiously perform such duties as may be arranged between the Session and himself. He shall moderate all meetings of the congregation. Although layman may teach the Word of God, deliver religious addresses from the pulpit, lead in public prayer and worship and in many ways exercise responsible leadership in the church, yet the functions of a pastor installed by a Presbytery, the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and the blessing of the people by divine benediction are, in orderly procedure, reserved to ordained ministers and the preaching of the Word of God in regular sermons is reserved to ordained ministers and candidates for the ministry who are licensed to preach.
- C. A senior pastor or an associate pastor shall be called in the following manner:
- Session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a Pastor Search Committee
 - an active elder shall serve as Chairman of the Pastor Search Committee
 - other members may be representative of a cross-section of the congregation
 - Pastor search committee shall develop and recommend a candidate at a congregation meeting called for that purpose
 - A vote to call the candidate will be forwarded to Presbytery for appropriate action and transmittal to the candidate
 - The election and call shall be in accordance with the Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church
- D. An assistant to the pastor may be called by the Session, by permission and approval of Presbytery. An assistant pastor is not a member of the Session, but may be appointed on special occasions to moderate a Session meeting.
- E. Senior and associate pastors shall serve in their positions until their pastorate is terminated by resignation or by request of the congregation subject to the Presbytery's authority and approval. In instances of pastorate termination by resignation, the pastor shall give a minimum thirty days' notice before termination of his services. In the event the congregation requests Presbytery to terminate a pastor's services abruptly, the salary involved shall continue for thirty days or longer at the discretion of the congregation. Any pastor or officer's service may be terminated for cause at any time after a fair and impartial trial conducted in accordance with the Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
- F. The Presbytery has the sole power to install and remove pastors since it is responsible for the faithful preaching of the Word and performance of pastoral duties in all the particular churches adhering to it. The Presbytery shall not, under any circumstances, install a Pastor against a majority vote of the congregation as expressed by orderly ballot in a legally called meeting and the Presbytery shall not, under any circumstance, refuse to dissolve the pastoral relationship if requested to do so by a majority vote of the congregation expressed by an orderly ballot in a legally called meeting.

ARTICLE XIV – OUR MEETINGS

- A. Corporation meetings shall be called and conducted in accordance with the laws of the State of Alabama and the Articles of Incorporation of First Presbyterian Church of Opelika. They shall be moderated by the President of the Trustees or alternate as designated by the Session.
- B. Congregational meetings shall be called by the Session or upon written request to the Session signed by twenty-five percent of the membership and conducted in accordance with the Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The congregational meetings shall be moderated by the senior pastor.

- C. A special congregational meeting may be called by the Session or upon the written request of twenty-five percent of the members with power to vote; said meeting and its purpose shall be announced as provided in this Constitution and shall be convened within four weeks after filing of the request with the Session. At these special congregation meetings, only the announced items of business can be acted upon; new items cannot be introduced from the floor.
- D. Announcements of the above described meetings shall be made from the pulpit at the regular church services on the two Sundays preceding the meeting.
- E. An annual congregational meeting shall be called by the Session and held the second Sunday of January after the close of the church's fiscal year. At a minimum, the regularly scheduled, annual business meeting shall include the following agenda items:
- Annual Report – reports of Clerk of Session and the financial report shall be presented
 - Election of Officers – election shall be conducted to fill the offices of elder and deacon
 - Election of Board of Trustees – election shall be conducted to fill the offices of the Board of Trustees
 - Presentation of Budget – annual budget, previously approved by the Session, shall be presented by the Church Treasurer
- F. Voting in any constituted congregational meeting shall be those active members who are at least years eighteen of age.
- G. Ten percent of the eligible voting members of the congregation shall constitute a quorum at a business meeting called in accordance with this constitution for all matters except the amending of the constitution (Article XV).
- H. A two-thirds vote of the eligible voting members present at a constitutionally called meeting shall be required for the election of officers or to render final decisions in any matter under consideration. In voting on the call of a senior or associate pastor, the required vote will also be two-thirds of the eligible voting members present at the constitutionally called meeting of the congregation for the purpose on considering the pastor call.
- I. In conducting congregational meetings, any parliamentary questions not covered by this constitution shall be decided according to the latest edition of "Roberts Rules of Order".

ARTICLE XV – AMENDMENTS TO OUR CONSTITUTION

This constitution may be amended or replaced by a new constitution by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any congregational meeting, provided that the proposed amendment(s) have been read or distributed to the congregation at least two Sundays preceding said meeting and provided a quorum of twenty-five percent (of those on the active membership roll is present. An exact copy of the proposed amendment(s) shall be posted conspicuously on the bulletin boards at the church exits with two copies of the amendment(s) made available to the congregation on the four Sundays immediately preceding said meeting.

Note: Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed as being in conflict with the Standards of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.