

**CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS
HOLMES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

INTRODUCTION

For the more certain preservation of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the accepted tenets of the Southern Baptist Convention, and for purposes of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual church and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish this document as our Corporate By-laws.

ARTICLE I. NAME

This body shall be known as the Holmes Baptist Association and shall be abbreviated as HBA in this document.

ARTICLE II. CHARACTER

Section 1. Policy- The government of this association is vested in the churches and her messengers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Southern Baptist churches. This association shall follow the latest version of Robert's Rules of Order in matters of parliamentary procedure. In cases where a difference exists between Robert's Rules of Order and these By-laws, the By-laws will have precedence.

Section 2. Affiliations- For the purpose of voluntary missionary cooperation and mutual sharing of spiritual values, this association shall be affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention and when and where it can be done without compromise of principles and doctrine, we will cooperate with any and/or all Christian groups in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Section 3. Doctrine- This association receives the Holy Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in essential accord with the belief of the Baptist churches as indicated in the Articles of Faith herewith.

The basis of common faith and practice for the Association shall be *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention of the year 2000, and the *Association Covenant* as follows: *"Being led, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit to enter into covenant as an Association of churches, we join ourselves together through this larger fellowship. To watch over one another in love and to nurture the spiritual welfare and fellowship of all churches in the Association. To provide a forum for the consideration of our Christian faith and the evaluation of those points of doctrine and polity which affect our life together. To assist the churches in planning, conducting, evaluating, and improving their programs of work designed to reach their objectives. To carry out the Great Commission of our Lord both within and beyond the bounds of our Association; and to facilitate the exchange of information and assistance between the covenanting churches and the Florida and Southern Baptist Conventions and their agencies, and other Christian bodies."*

Anyone serving in any capacity representing his/her particular church must be in compliance with this covenant.

ARTICLE III. Articles of Faith

Section 1. The Scriptures – We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and that it is the truth without mixture of error; and that it is the standard by which all human conduct and creeds should be tried. (II Timothy 3:15-17)

Section 2. The True God – We believe that there is one, and only one, True and Living God; that in the unity of the God-head there are three coequal eternal persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (John 4:24 and John 10:30)

Section 3. The Fall of Man – We believe that man was created in holiness, but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy state, in consequence of which all humankind are now sinners and are under the condemnation of eternal ruin. (Genesis 1:27 and Romans 5:12)

Section 4. The Way of Salvation – We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace through the atoning death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9, Isaiah 53:4-5 and Hebrews 7:25 We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner but his depravity and rejection of the Gospel. (Isaiah 55:1 and John 3:16)

Section 5. Justification – We believe that through justification the perfect righteousness of God is imputed to the believers in Christ Jesus. (Acts 13:39 and Romans 5:1-2)

Section 6. Grace in Regeneration – We believe that to be saved, sinners must be regenerated or born again through the work of the Holy Spirit. (John 3:3 and II Corinthians 5:17)

Section 7. Repentance and Faith – We believe that repentance and faith are inseparable steps to salvation. (Mark 1:15 and Romans 10:9)

Section 8. God's Purpose and Election – We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously saves and sanctifies sinners; and that this is consistent with the free agency of man. (Romans 8:28, 31 and II Peter 1:10-11)

Section 9. Sanctification – We believe that sanctification is a process by which the believer is made a partaker of God's Holiness and Righteousness. This process takes place in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. (I Thessalonians 4:3 and Philippians 2:12-13)

Section 10. The Preservation of The Saints – We believe that only real believers endure to the end and that they are kept by the power of God through faith in Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:38-39 and II Timothy 1:12)

Section 11. The Local Church – We believe that a New Testament Church as established by Christ, is a congregation of baptized believers bound together in faith, love, and fellowship of the Gospel. (Acts 2:41-42 and Matthew 28:18-20)

Section 12. Baptism and The Lord's Supper – We believe that baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, done so on the authority of Jesus Christ. We believe that baptism is a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper and only such as have been scripturally baptized are proper subjects for the Lord's Supper. (Acts 8:36, Matthew 28:19 and I Corinthians 11:26)

Section 13. The Christian Sabbath – We believe the principle of working six days and resting on the seventh is to be kept sacred and that the first day of the week is set aside as the Lord's Day. (Acts 20:7 and Exodus 20:8)

Section 14. World to Come - We believe at the last day Christ will descend from Heaven and raise the dead; and that a solemn judgment and separation will then take place, and that His judgment will fix, forever, the final state of humankind in Heaven or Hell. (Acts 1:11, Acts 24:15, Mathew 13:49, and Matthew 25:1-46)

Section 15. Sexual Immorality – We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God’s gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one’s gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)

Section 16. Marriage – We believe that the only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)

Section 17. Sobriety – We believe that God has commanded, disapproves of and forbids any form of drunkenness or addiction. Drunkenness and addiction are a sin. Due to the biblical concerns regarding alcohol and its effects, due to the easy temptation to consume alcohol in excess, and due to the possibility of causing offense and/or the stumbling of others, we believe it is best for a Christian to abstain from drinking alcohol, using illegal drugs or misusing legal drugs. (Leviticus 10:9; Numbers 6:3; Judges 13:4; Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:29-35; Isaiah 5:11&22; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Corinthians 6:12)

ARTICLE IV. PURPOSE

The Holmes Baptist Association is a fellowship of autonomous, independent, self-governing Southern Baptist churches that choose to partner together to fulfill the Great Commission in Holmes County, FL, and the surrounding area. The purpose of Holmes Baptist Association shall be to promote cooperative Kingdom work among her churches and to help resource those churches in their divinely appointed task of fulfilling Christ’s Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Also, to assist churches in forming relationships of interdependence to assist each other so that individually and corporately the churches might be more effective in their mission and to promote a sense of oneness and fellowship.

The association shall perform the following tasks to achieve its purpose:

- a. Nurture fellowship, cooperation, and harmony in faith and practice among sister churches, church leaders, and members.
- b. Provide resources for churches and church leaders.
- c. Equip, develop, and encourage church and associational workers.
- d. Provide opportunities for churches to work together in missions, ministry, church growth, new work, evangelism, and worship.
- e. Provide counsel and assistance to churches when requested.
- f. Establish and maintain communication between sister churches, the Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Cooperating Churches -Churches desiring affiliation with the Holmes Baptist Association shall make written application to the associational office by letter. The letter should include a copy of the following documents: letter of application for membership, the official action of the church business sessions approving the application to affiliate with the Holmes Baptist Association, and a copy of the applicant church’s constitution and By-laws. Record of mission contributions through the Cooperative Program and the local association will be considered as well.

Upon receiving a written application and during a scheduled Executive Committee meeting, if approved by a two-thirds majority vote of representatives of the Holmes Baptist Association present and voting, the church shall be placed under the watch care of the association for a length of time determined at the discretion of the Executive Committee. Churches under watch care are encouraged to attend all associational meetings and will have a voice, but they will not have voting privileges.

Upon a favorable recommendation from the Administrative Team's Credentials Team, having reviewed their Constitution and By-laws and inquired into their Articles of Faith, which shall be in harmony with the current Baptist Faith and Message adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Holmes Baptist Association shall vote upon their reception during a scheduled Executive Committee meeting and if a two-thirds majority of votes cast are in favor of receiving such church, their representatives shall be seated, and they will become a cooperating church.

If a church petitions for membership in the Association which has been birthed by, and/or previously existed as a mission of a member church of the Association, or a sister Association, the watch-care period may be waived at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

The persons who are members of a mission congregation of a member church are considered members of the sponsor church until such time as the mission congregation constitutes as a church. Therefore, while the members of the mission congregation may serve on the Association Executive Committee or as messengers to the annual sessions, they may only do so as members of the sponsor church. A mission congregation does not have associational representation independent of their sponsor church.

Section 2. Messengers-This association shall be composed of duly elected messengers of the cooperating churches affiliated with the Holmes Baptist Association. Each cooperating church shall be entitled to (3) three messengers (pastor and two additional members). Also, there shall be allowed alternates for each HBA church messenger ready to replace elected messengers who may fail to attend the annual meeting. Both messengers and alternates must be on file. In the event a church is without a Pastor, the church may elect a representative from said church to serve until such time a Pastor is called.

ARTICLE VI. AUTHORITY

This association is an autonomous body, and its authority is derived from the elected messengers of the affiliated independent and autonomous churches. While the HBA has no ecclesiastical authority over affiliated churches, it shall be the right of the association at any annual meeting, or a duly called meeting of the association for the stated purpose of withdrawal of affiliation, upon two-thirds vote of the messengers present, to withdraw affiliation with any church which persists in doctrinal practices out of harmony with the current Baptist Faith and Message, or which fails to be represented either by letter or messengers for two successive years, or upon notification from a church of its withdrawal. For the purpose of carrying out its objectives, the association has invested in the Administrative Team the right to function as the Corporate Committee of Directors.

Section 1. Discipline - If a situation in a church arises, which is not in keeping with the Associational Covenant (Article 2 Section 3), the Article of Faith (Article 3) and the By-laws which govern this Association, the following action will be taken as laid out by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17.

1. The Associational Mission Strategist (or Moderator in the instance where the Association is without an Associational Mission Strategist) will contact the Pastor and leadership of said church and confront the situation without delay, with the purpose being, to right the situation.

If there is no resolution after this step, then:

2. The Associational Mission Strategist (or Moderator in the instance where the Association is without an Associational Mission Strategist), and a member of the Executive Committee will contact said church and confront the situation without delay, with the purpose again being to right the situation.
3. If after these steps, no resolution is obtained, all pastors of the supporting churches will be sent a letter notifying them of the actions taken to achieve resolution. This letter will state that recommendation will be made for the removal of said church by the Association by a two-thirds majority vote at a scheduled meeting of the Executive Committee. Said letter will be sent 30 days prior of called meeting and will be signed by the Associational Mission Strategist, Moderator and Clerk of the Association.

This procedure is always to be a last step effort and always to be carried out in a spirit of love with restoration as the ultimate objective.

ARTICLE VII. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF AFFILIATED CHURCHES TO THE ASSOCIATION

It shall be the responsibility of the clerk of each HBA church to submit a completed Annual Church Profile no later than December 31 of each year. Each church may also send appropriate additional information as may be requested. Support of the association should be recognized by each church in financial stewardship through regular giving and regular attendance at the Annual, Semi-Annual and Executive Committee meetings throughout the year. The above is the metric for determining if a church is a cooperating HBA church.

ARTICLE VIII. ANNUAL AND SEMI-ANNUAL MEETINGS

The Association shall have an Annual Meeting and a Semi-Annual Meeting of the Corporation. Messengers to said meetings shall be elected by the churches of the Association. Each cooperating church shall be entitled to (3) three messengers (pastor and two additional members). In the event a church is without a Pastor, the church may elect a representative from said church to serve until such time a Pastor is called. The association office must be notified of any change or the election of additional members ten (10) days prior to the Annual or Semi-Annual meeting.

The quorum for an Associational Annual & Semi-Annual meeting shall consist of messengers present from cooperating churches, as recorded by the Clerk. The latest version of Robert's Rules of Order shall be the guide in matters of parliamentary procedure. In cases where a difference exists between Robert's Rules of Order and these By-laws, the By-laws will have precedence. Neither proxy nor absentee voting shall be allowed. The Associational year shall begin on the first day of October and end on the last day of September of each year.

No new business may be presented at the Annual or Semi-Annual meetings of the association unless previously discussed and presented by the Executive Committee or a standing Team of the association. All motions presented should be put in writing and submitted to the clerk at the time of presenting.

ARTICLE IX. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1. Membership – The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Pastor and one (1) layperson elected from each church in the Association. It is preferable that the layperson elected to the Executive Committee also serve as a messenger for the Annual and Semi-Annual meetings of the HBA. The official Executive Committee members are those duly elected by the church. In the event a church is without a Pastor, the church may elect a representative from said church to serve until such time a Pastor is called.

The association office must be notified of any change or the election of additional members ten (10) days prior to an Executive Committee meeting. Churches under watch care are encouraged to attend.

Associational Officers and Department Directors shall also serve as members of the Executive Committee. The moderator shall serve as the chairperson of the Executive Committee; the Assistant Moderator shall serve as assistant chairperson. The clerk shall serve as secretary. Vacancies occurring among associational leaders or team members will be filled through a recommendation of the Administrative Team to the Executive Committee.

Section 2. Authority – The Executive Committee has the authority to attend to the business of the association between annual sessions.

Section 3. Meetings - The Executive Committee shall hold such regular meetings as it may determine, and a special meeting thereof may be called by the Associational Mission Strategist, Moderator or by the Assistant Moderator and the Clerk, but a full week’s notice shall be given in writing to each member of said Executive Committee, stating the purpose of the meeting. Between annual meetings of the Association, the business of the Association may be transacted by the Executive Committee.

Section 4. Quorum - The quorum for the Executive Committee shall be those Executive Committee members present at a duly called meeting of the committee.

ARTICLE X. LEADERSHIP

Section 1. Officers - The officers of the Association shall consist of a Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer. These officers, along with Associational Teams and all Teams and Councils whose duties are specified in the Associational Policies and Procedures Manual, shall be elected at the Semi-Annual Meeting after being placed in nomination by the Nominating Team appointed by Moderator. These elected leaders shall officially assume their duties at the close of the Annual Meeting and shall serve for one (1) year.

The moderator shall be eligible to be re-elected for only one (1) year in succession. All officers have full and complete voting rights on all items of business brought before the association.

Section 2: Administrative Team - The Administrative Team will consist of the Associational Mission Strategist (who is a non-voting Ex-Officio member), the Moderator, the Vice-Moderator, the Treasurer, the Clerk, the Team Leaders (or the Assistant Team Leaders if the Team Leader cannot be present) of each of the teams serving in the association. The Associational Mission Strategist will serve as facilitator of this team. In his absence, the Moderator of the Association will serve as facilitator. Ministerial staff, directors, and/or associates who are serving on the Association staff, whether paid or not, are ex-officio members of this team. The parliamentarian shall serve as an ex-officio member of the administrative team.

The Administrative Team is directly responsible to the Executive Committee and ultimately to the Association as a whole. This team will serve as an advisor to the Associational Mission Strategist, office personnel, and other staff members in making decisions and will meet as needed and agreed upon by the team.

The purpose of this team is to provide administrative leadership and resources for the Holmes Baptist Association. This team will be organized to carry out duties related to personnel, financial, stewardship, property, assets, leadership enlistment and planning quarterly meetings. The team will also help the staff to plan, promote, and evaluate programs and services so that all efforts will be directed toward achieving the objectives of the association.

Further explanation of the duties and responsibilities of the Administrative Team is found in the Association's Policies and Procedures Manual.

Section 3: Election and Duties - The Association Policies and Procedures Manual shall be used as a guide for the selection and duties of all personnel, officers, teams, and councils.

ARTICLE XI. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

The Administrative Team shall maintain a "Policies and Procedures Manual." The manual will function as the mutually agreed upon manner in which the Association shall operate. It seeks to describe and/or define the function(s) and responsibility(ies) of the officers, program directors and Teams of the Association, all of whom shall be active members of a church affiliated with the Association. All (paid) Association staff job descriptions, benefits, policies, and lines of supervision appear in this Manual.

ARTICLE XII. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The parliamentary authority shall be "Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised." In cases where a difference exists between Robert's Rules of Order and these By-laws, the By-laws will have precedence. The Associational Mission Strategist shall have the authority to appoint a parliamentarian from the membership of supporting churches. The parliamentarian shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Executive Committee and the Administrative Team of the HBA.

ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS

These By-laws may be amended or revised, in part or in their entirety, by recommendation of the Administrative Committee and an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the members present and voting at Semi-Annual Meeting of the Association or at a meeting called specifically for that purpose. The proposed changes will have been given to the members of the Executive Committee at least ten days prior to duly called meeting. These By-laws may not be suspended or set aside.

ARTICLE XIV. ADOPTION

These By-laws shall be effective upon adoption by an affirmative two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Executive Committee of the Holmes Baptist Association. These Bylaws supersede and replace the previously adopted Constitution and Bylaws. These Bylaws also supersede and replace any rules or policies adopted to the extent that such rules or policies are inconsistent with these Bylaws.

Date of Adoption: September 21, 2021
Signature of Moderator: [Signature]
Signature of Clerk: [Signature]

Submitted to Clerk 4/21
Revised 8/21