

OAKWOOD COMMUNITY  
CHURCH

CONSTITUTION  
and  
BYLAWS

Revised July 17, 2011

**CONSTITUTION**

We, the members of Oakwood Community Church of Tampa, Florida, humbly seek to follow scriptural principles related to church government and do ordain and establish the following constitution.

**ARTICLE I  
NAME**

The name of this organization shall be Oakwood Community Church. Oakwood Community Church is incorporated in the State of Florida as a non profit corporation.

**ARTICLE II  
AUTHORITY AND AFFILIATION**

We affirm that our congregation is to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There is no other authority over our local congregation. While we are self-governing, we voluntarily place ourselves in an accountable relationship with the Evangelical Free Church of America and we participate in supporting its ministries.

**ARTICLE III  
DEFINITIONS**

Oakwood Community Church as a Florida non profit corporation has members, a governing board, and these officers of the corporation: President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The members of the corporation shall be those who have been accepted as members of Oakwood Community Church. The governing board of the corporation shall consist of the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons combined. The officers of the corporation will be elected from the governing board.

**ARTICLE IV  
PURPOSE**

The purpose of Oakwood Community Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ through the communication and demonstration of God’s word—leading believers into corporate worship, equipping them for growth in maturity and service, and reaching our families, community, nation, and the world.

## ARTICLE V

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Adopted by the Evangelical Free Church of America on June 26, 2008  
& adopted by Oakwood Community Church on May 31, 2009*

Oakwood Community Church is a self-governing congregation under the direct leadership of Jesus Christ. We also voluntarily place ourselves in an accountable relationship with the Evangelical Free Church of America. The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around the following theological convictions, which Oakwood fully affirms:

#### God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

#### The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

#### The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

#### Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

#### The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

#### The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

#### The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

#### Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

#### Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

#### Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

## **ARTICLE VI MEMBERSHIP**

The membership of this church shall be composed of those individuals who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal savior, who subscribe to the Statement of Faith, and who give evidence by their confession and conduct that they are living in fellowship with Him. The Bylaws further clarify policies and procedures related to membership.

## **ARTICLE VII PROPERTY RIGHTS**

### **Ownership**

This church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Florida and as is deemed necessary for the business of the church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed, or otherwise. All such property shall be in the name of the church.

### **Division**

In the case of a division of the church, the property of the church shall remain under the control of that party which abides by this Constitution and Bylaws.

### **Dissolution**

Should the church ever be dissolved, the property shall be assigned to the Southeastern District of the Evangelical Free Church to enable said conference to renew the work or use the values thereof to further the Gospel. The church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the membership, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

As a supplement to this Constitution, the Bylaws shall set forth the duties of officers and other procedures and regulations of the church.

## **ARTICLE IX AMENDMENTS**

The congregation may later amend, revise, add to, repeal, or rescind this Constitution and/or adopt new ones at pleasure by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of all the members at any congregational meeting, provided that notice of the proposed alteration, amendment, revision, addition, repeal, or recession of the

Constitution or adoption of a new Constitution shall have been given in writing at least thirty days preceding the meeting.

# BYLAWS

## PREAMBLE

We humbly seek to follow scriptural principles related to church government, but acknowledge that the primary interest of the New Testament is in the life and mission of the church, not in its government. The Spirit of God has allowed a certain flexibility, for the scripture legislates no specific church government. We therefore, respect the differences of practices among various churches and denominations and acknowledge that God honors congregations, regardless of their specific forms of government, who are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

## ARTICLE I CONGREGATIONAL AUTHORITY

### Local church autonomy

We affirm that our congregation is to live under the lordship of Jesus Christ. There is no other authority over our local congregation. While we are self-governing, we voluntarily place ourselves in an accountable relationship to the Evangelical Free Church of America and we participate in supporting its ministries. We also value the spiritual unity of the universal church and we fellowship and minister with other churches and para-church organizations who live by the same rule of Scripture and serve under the same Lord of the Church (*Ephesians 1:22 & 23; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 4:9-10; 2 Corinthians 11:9; Ephesians 4:3-6; 1 Corinthians 1:2*).

### Priesthood of believers

We affirm that God has sovereignly given various spiritual gifts to all believers and that all the members of the body of Christ should esteem those gifts. Since the responsibility for ministry belongs to the entire local church membership, leaders are to prepare each believer for their ministry. Leaders are also accountable to the congregation for their character, conduct, and doctrine (*1 Peter 2:5, 9; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 6:1-6; Acts 17:11*).

### Congregational authority

We affirm that the congregation has a voice and rights of approval in seven key areas (*1 Corinthians 1:10; 14:40; Acts 6:1-6; 2 Corinthians 8:18-19; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13*):

- a) The calling and dismissal of our Lead pastor.
- b) The calling and dismissal of our full-time ministerial staff.
- c) The calling of our elders and deacons. The congregation also has the authority to dismiss elders and deacons.

- d) The establishing of our annual operating budget and purchasing or liquidating assets over 10 percent of the annual budget.
- e) The acquisition of land and the construction of major buildings.
- f) The receiving of new members.
- g) The adoption or change of the Constitution and Bylaws.

## ARTICLE II MEMBERSHIP

### Categories of Membership

Oakwood has two categories of membership, Member and Associate Member. Associate Membership is open, under exceptional circumstances, to those desiring dual membership with another body of believers (e.g. missionaries). Associate Members may vote on matters of church business and may serve in all areas of ministry except elected church positions.

### Membership procedures

Any person 16 years of age or older shall be eligible for membership who does the following:

- a) Trusts Jesus Christ as personal Savior
- b) Desires to live a consistent Christian life
- c) Expresses substantial agreement with the Statement of Faith
- d) Abides by Oakwood's Constitution and Bylaws.
- e) Willingly follows the church leaders as they follow the Lord.
- f) Supports the ministry of Oakwood through prayer, ministry, fellowship, and finances.

Prospective members shall complete the following:

- a) Orientation instruction
- b) Interview with one or more elders or their appointed representatives

The Board Of Elders shall:

- a) Publish prospective members names for review by the congregation
- b) Submit members for acceptance to the congregation with Elder recommendation. Members shall be accepted by a simple majority of the membership present through a voice or written vote.
- c) Welcome new members into the church

- d) At least annually, attempt to contact members who are not participating in the life of Oakwood. These members will be encouraged to return, or to join another evangelical congregation. Except under special circumstances, members who are inactive over six months may be removed from membership by a simple majority vote of the elders.

The Lead pastor and his wife and any ministerial staff and their spouses shall automatically become voting members of the congregation at the time of their official calling.

### Discipline

Members of Oakwood may be removed from membership by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the Board of Elders for any of the following three situations in which the member is not repentant:

- a) Violation of biblically prescribed standards
- b) Doctrinal views which are contrary to Oakwood's Statement of Faith
- c) Divisiveness or dissension that disrupts the unity and effectiveness of Oakwood.

Oakwood seeks to apply the principles of church discipline as found in such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6:1, 1 Timothy 5:19-20, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, Titus 3:10,11, Romans 16:17-20, and most notably, Mathew 18:15-20. The goal is always restoration of the offending individual to Christ and the church, and to maintain the church's spiritual health.

While each occasion of church discipline may vary, an outline of the principles of Matthew 18 is as follows:

1. (v 15) One member is to confront another member with his or her sin. At this stage, except in cases of serious violation of public law, or other crimes, this is normally a private matter. If the sinning person responds in repentance, the issue is settled. This is where the majority of church discipline ought to occur with the church and, hopefully, were the majority of sin stops.
2. (v 16) If step one is not successful, the concerned member is to involve two or three other members. Together they substantiate the facts of the sin and seek to persuade the member under discipline to repent. If the individual demonstrates repentance at this stage, the process is complete.
3. (v 17a) "Telling it to the church" means that the two or three members refer the matter to the elders, who are the spiritual representatives of the church. The elders also attempt to encourage the individual to repent.
4. (v 17b) If the individual does not repent in response to the elders' admonishment, then step four becomes necessary. At a meeting of official Oakwood members only, without necessarily stating the specific nature of the sin, the elders will inform the membership that the person has been removed from the membership and fellowship of the church. Members who request to withdraw from membership while undergoing church discipline will be

released from membership. However, the membership will be informed that a request for withdrawal came during the discipline process.

### Restoration

Members of the church who have been excluded from membership and who desire restoration of fellowship may be restored to membership by following the procedures for joining the church. This is the desired outcome of church discipline (2 Corinthians 2:1-11).

## ARTICLE III CHURCH MEETINGS

### Procedure

The Chair of the Board of Elders shall preside at Church business meetings. In his absence, the Board of Elders may appoint a representative to assume his duties.

### Quorum

Twenty-five percent (25%) of the Membership shall constitute a quorum at a business meeting of the church. Members and Associate Members who reside in another community during a business meeting will not be counted when calculating the quorum. Although proxy votes may be accepted at business meetings, proxy votes are not counted to determine whether a quorum is present. All votes shall be decided by a simple majority except where otherwise noted in these Bylaws. Members who are present and then leave shall not cause failure of a duly constituted quorum at that meeting. If any meeting is less than a quorum, a majority of those present may vote to convene the meeting at another specified time and place.

### Rules

Standard rules of parliamentary procedure as outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be the basis for conducting all meetings of the church.

### Minutes

Minutes shall be taken and kept on file for all official meetings of the church, including meetings by the Board of Elders, Board of Deacons and Annual and special congregational meetings. Official meeting minutes may be edited to preserve the confidentiality of any personal or disciplinary matters discussed, but such editing shall be indicated in the minutes.

### Annual Meeting

The annual business meeting of the congregation shall be held during the last quarter of the year, or during the month of January of the succeeding year. The agenda of this meeting shall include the presentation of annual reports, including the budget and the election of church officers. At this meeting, the congregation shall approve the budget for the coming year. Copies of the proposed budget and

current financial statements shall be made available to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Written public notice of the annual meeting shall be made a minimum of four Sundays in advance. The newly elected officers shall take office at the beginning of the next calendar year, unless another start date was presented to and affirmed by the congregation.

### Special Meetings

Special business meetings may be called by the Board of Elders, Board of Deacons, or by written request of 51% of the membership. Written public notice of such meetings shall be given a minimum of 14 days in advance. If necessary to meet the 14 day requirement, a notice may be mailed or emailed to each member at the address listed in the church directory. The notice will state the items of business to be presented. At the meeting only those items will be considered.

### Voting

Members are entitled to one vote, in person or by proxy, upon every proposal properly submitted to vote at any meeting of the congregation.

Voting on issues shall typically be by voice vote. Written and email ballots shall be used at the discretion of the Chair or upon the approved motion of any member.

## ARTICLE IV THE PRINCIPLE OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP

### Biblical rationale for church leadership

*"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given me, as a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it" (1 Corinthians 3:9 & 10).*

God's plan for leadership is revealed in Scripture. He launched the church by giving certain individuals—"apostles, prophets"—specific gifts. These believers, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, initiated the Christian movement and founded local churches through their teaching and preaching (*Ephesians 4:11-13, Romans. 15:20*).

*"For this reason I left you in Crete that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you" (Titus 1:5).*

*"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).*

As churches were established in the faith, and when more than one person became qualified, elders were appointed to continue the pastor-teaching ministry in each local church. To the elders was given the ultimate responsibility for the oversight

of that particular church body, and the shepherding of its members (*1 Timothy 3:1-7, Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28-32*).

*"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17).*

Some elders would give more time to the spiritual leadership than others and would be called to fill more demanding responsibilities. They therefore would be worthy of "double honor."

*"And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. But select from among you brethren, seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, who we may put in charge of this task'" (Acts 6:2-3).*

As necessary, deacons were also appointed to serve the church, particularly in undertaking those areas of need that would otherwise prohibit the elders and other leaders (pastor and staff) from performing their Biblical responsibilities (*Acts 6:1-7*).

These leaders, along with all members of each local body form a unique organism - a visible and functioning expression of the universal church. Oakwood Community Church recognizes this Biblical pattern for the plurality of godly leadership, under the oversight and watchcare of elders.

*"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your soul as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy, not grief, for this would not be profitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).*

In response to the Biblical pattern of leadership, members of the body are taught in Scripture to lovingly support their leaders and to submit to their leadership as the leaders model godly, servant-leadership (*1 Corinthians 16:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 & 13*).

## ARTICLE V THE BOARD OF ELDERS

The congregation entrusts the human leadership of the church to the guidance and direction of the Board of Elders. All members of the Board of Elders will be male. Oakwood Community Church follows an "elder led" principle of leadership. The congregation is expected to follow their leadership. However, we do not practice an "elder rule" approach. The elders, and other church leadership, are accountable to the congregation. If the congregation loses confidence in any or all of the elders, they may vote to remove them from office prior to the expiration of their terms.

### Structure

The number of Elders shall be according to the number of men who have been recognized by the Holy Spirit, recommended by the Board of Elders, and approved by the deacons and the church membership. All the elders together comprise the

Board of Elders. If at any time the number shall fall below three, the normal authority of the Board of Elders will revert to the congregation. The Lead Pastor shall be deemed a voting member of the Board of Elders for the duration of his Lead Pastorate.

#### Description

An elder is a man raised up by the Holy Spirit for spiritual leadership of the local church. He is a member and an overseer of the total ministry of our church. He is to work with his fellow elders in protecting doctrinal purity, encouraging discipleship and maintaining church order and discipline within the fellowship over which God has placed him as a shepherd. The Board of Elders is the governing authority of the church under the Lordship of Christ and the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Elders are to be accountable to the congregation.

#### Qualifications

Qualifications for elder are specified in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These qualifications are not to be used as checklists, but as principles and guidelines to discern the spiritual maturity of potential elders.

#### Elders Role

- a) **Shepherd the Flock**  
Serving in all humility, elders are to guide, direct, guard and protect the members of the body, seeking to meet their needs and assist in any way possible, warning against harmful influences and guarding against false teachers (*Acts 20:28ff, 1 Peter 5:1-3*).
- b) **Lead Through Example**  
Elders are to provide a Scriptural role model and are to set a pattern before the flock of a rightly ordered life—with a single purpose, to glorify God (*1 Peter 5:3*).
- c) **Teach & Exhort**  
Elders are to see that the flock is fed through insightful and accurate Biblical instruction and admonition (*1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9*).
- d) **Pray**  
Elders are to pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of members of the congregation (*Acts 6:4, James 5:14*).
- e) **Refute Those Who Contradict Truth**  
Elders are to confront those who are teaching what they should not teach or who are continuing in a pattern of behavior contradictory to Biblical truth. Thus, elders are to keep closing potential entrances for Satan, so that the truth of Christ will remain credible to both the congregation and the community (*Acts 20:29-31, Titus 1:9*).
- f) **Direct the Church's Ministry**  
Elders are to "oversee" the life of the church, with the assistance of other godly leaders. They are to direct the affairs of the church effectively. It is

critical that they empower other leaders and servants for ministry (*1 Timothy 3:1, 5; 1 Timothy 5:17; Ephesians 4:12*).

#### Responsibilities

Each Elder shall be responsible for a specific area of church ministry. These responsibilities may be delegated to others, but the elders retain final authority. Other duties shall include:

- a) Choosing a chair each year by a simple majority vote.
- b) Meeting regularly for prayer and study of Scripture.
- c) Meeting monthly with deacons to give encouragement and direction, reviewing and modifying Deacon responsibilities and job descriptions and determining the number of deacons required.
- d) Being available to the congregation for counsel and visitation.
- e) Assisting the pastors with the ministry of the Word.
- f) Evaluating the job performance of the pastoral staff.
- g) Reviewing and recommending applicants for membership.
- h) Giving leadership to the vision, long range plans, and goals of the church. One or two extended retreats per year are recommended.
- i) Handling church discipline issues.
- j) Establishing policies in areas of scriptural interpretation when necessary to clarify sensitive issues and preserve congregational unity.
- k) Commissioning other leaders for ministry leadership in specific areas.
- l) Together with the Board of Deacons hiring and terminating all support staff (such as secretaries, custodians) and part-time ministerial staff.

#### Term

An elder will serve for a three year period. He may be elected again for a consecutive three year term, but he may not serve more than two consecutive terms. An elder must retire for at least one year following his second consecutive term of office before being eligible to assume that office again. It is desirable to have the number of elder openings arranged on a rotation basis so that approximately 1/3 shall stand for election each year. The rotation system does not involve the Lead Pastor, who shall remain a voting member of the Board of Elders as long as he remains Lead pastor.

An elder is usually elected at the annual meeting to assume his ministry responsibilities on January 1. However, elders may be elected any time of the year. If elders are elected during the year, the following procedure will be used to count years of service. If the new elder assumes ministry responsibilities before July 1, the counting of the first year of his term will begin on the preceding

January. If he assumes his responsibilities after July 1, the counting of the first year of his term will not begin until the succeeding January.

### Selection

The following procedure will be followed for adding members to the Board of Elders.

- a) Elder nominees must be members of Oakwood Community Church for at least two years.
- b) All nominations will be made by the elders with prayerful consideration given to the recommendations of the congregation.
- c) Unanimous approval by elders.
- d) Three-fourths (3/4) approval by deacons.
- e) Two-thirds (2/3) approval of church membership at a congregational meeting.
- f) Final affirmation by elders following membership response.

### Termination of Service

The following reasons for termination of service will be accepted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of elders, or a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the membership of the congregation. The elder being terminated from service is not eligible to vote.

- a) Resignation.
- b) Continued behavior which violates the Biblical qualifications for the office.
- c) Continued agreement with doctrine contrary to the Statement of Faith or doctrinal policies of Oakwood
- d) Continued behavior which promotes discontent or divisiveness that injures the unity and effectiveness of the Board of Elders or the church

## ARTICLE VI DEACONS

### Description

Working with fellow deacons, a deacon extends the over-seeing ministry of the elders to the physical needs of the congregation and property of the church. Under the elders' leadership, a deacon cares for and provides for the orderly administration of our fellowship. There shall be as many deacons as need requires. Deacons may be male or female.

### Term

A deacon will serve for a two year period. A deacon may serve no more than three terms consecutively. A deacon must retire for at least one year following the third consecutive term of office before being eligible to assume that office again.

A deacon is usually elected at the annual meeting to assume ministry responsibilities on January 1. However, deacons may be elected at any time of the year. If deacons are elected during the year, the following procedure will be used to count years of service. If the new deacon assumes ministry responsibilities before July 1, the counting of the first year of the term will begin on the preceding January. If the deacon assumes responsibilities after July 1, the counting of the first year of the term will not begin until the succeeding January.

### Qualifications

The qualification for deacon are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. These qualifications are not to be used as checklists, but as principles and guidelines to discern the spiritual maturity of potential deacons.

### Obligations

- a) To choose a chair each year, by simple majority vote. In the chair's absence, a representative selected by the chair shall assume his duties. If the chair has not appointed a representative, then the deacons shall select one of their members to assume the chair's duties. A quorum of two-thirds (2/3) is required to take official action.
- b) To meet monthly with the elders to deal with the business of the church.
- c) To develop and meet regularly with committees formed to carry the responsibilities for the office of deacon.
- d) To provide encouragement and help to the elders in their ministry.

### Responsibilities

The deacons should assume their various responsibilities for one year periods beginning January 1 and ending December 31. Responsibilities include:

- a) Handling the financial assets of the church, including audits.
- b) Ushering.
- c) Maintaining the building, grounds, and church equipment.
- d) Administering the Compassion fund.
- e) Preparing the Annual Budget in conjunction with input from the elders and ministry leaders, presenting it to the Board of Elders, then to the congregation for ratification.
- f) Submitting to the Board of Elders and congregation any recommendations for acquisition or disposal of capital items of property with a value of more than (10%) ten percent of the total annual operating budget of the church.
- g) Representing the corporation in matters of business.
- h) Responding to any other defined area of responsibility appropriate to the role of deacon as established by the Board of Elders.

**Selection**

The following procedure will be followed for adding members to the Board of Deacons:

- a) Deacon nominees must be members of Oakwood Community Church for at least one year.
- b) Nominations made by the Board of Deacons with recommendations from members. All nominations will be made by the deacons with prayerful consideration given to the recommendations of the congregation.
- c) Unanimous approval by deacons.
- d) Unanimous approval by elders.
- e) Two-thirds (2/3) approval by church membership at a congregational meeting.
- f) Final affirmation by elders following membership response.

**Termination**

The following reasons for termination of service will be accepted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of either the Board of Elders, the Board of Deacons, or membership of the church. The deacon being terminated from service is not eligible to vote.

- a) Resignation.
- b) Continued behavior which violates the Biblical qualifications for the office.
- c) Continued agreement with doctrine contrary to the Statement of Faith or doctrinal policies of Oakwood.
- d) Continued behavior which promotes discontent or divisiveness that injures the unity and effectiveness of the Deacons or the church.

## ARTICLE VII LEAD PASTOR

**Description**

The Lead Pastor of the Church shall have the oversight of the entire ministry of the Oakwood Community Church of Tampa, Inc. He shall give supervision to other members of the ministerial staff according to the organizational plan set forth by the elders.

**Term**

There is no set term of service.

**Qualifications**

Qualifications for Lead pastor are specified in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These qualifications are not to be used as checklists, but as principles and guidelines to discern the spiritual maturity of a potential Lead pastor.

**Accountability**

The Lead pastor is directly accountable to the Board of Elders and through them to the congregation.

**Obligations**

He shall be a member of the Board of Elders but is not eligible to be an Officer of the Board of Elders. He shall also be an ex-officio member of all committees with voting privilege, but not expected to attend. He shall be the spiritual leader, preach and teach God's Word, guide and advise various church organizations and ministries, direct and supervise other members of the ministerial staff in their duties, and represent the church in the community and in the regional and national affairs of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

**Selection**

The Lead Pastor will be chosen by:

- a) A nominating committee from among the elders or appointed by the elders.
- b) Unanimous approval by elders.
- c) Three-fourths (3/4) approval by the deacons.
- d) Three-fourths (3/4) approval by the congregation.

**Termination of service**

The following reasons for termination of service will be accepted:

- a) **Resignation**  
A minimum of thirty days written notice of resignation shall be given to the elder chairman who shall then present it to the elders and church, unless waived by mutual consent.
- b) **Dismissal**  
Dismissal shall be based upon two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of both the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons (with the Lead pastor not eligible for voting) and a simple majority vote of those present at a congregational meeting, or a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the membership at a congregational meeting if dismissal is not initiated by the Board of Elders and Board of Deacons. The basis for dismissal would be for such considerations as (1) behavior which violates the Biblical qualification for the position, (2) promoting doctrine contrary to the Statement of Faith or doctrinal policies of the church, (3) insubordination to the elders, or (4) ineffectiveness of ministry. For reasons indicated in items (1), (2), and (3), the termination shall be immediate. Following one year of service, a one to three

month severance pay will be granted as determined by the elders. For reasons indicated in (4), after one year services, termination will begin within 60 days with a three months severance pay to follow as determined by the elders. Any and all severance pay terminates upon the procurement of gainful employment.

In the event that difficulties arise between the Lead pastor and the Board of Elders which they are not able to easily settle, before taking the matter to the deacons and congregation, they are urged to seek the counsel of the leadership of the Southeastern District of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

#### **Age Limit**

An age limit of 70 will apply to the Lead pastor with the option of one year renewals when recommended by two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board of Elders and ratified by the membership.

## **ARTICLE VIII MINISTERIAL STAFF**

#### **Description**

All ordained ministerial staff shall be pastoral elders of our church, but not members of the Board of Elders, except for the Lead pastor, who shall be a voting member of the Board of Elders. They are to work with their fellow elders in this ministry, giving full-time attention to the equipping of the members of the church to minister to one another and so build up the body of Christ.

#### **Term**

There is no set term of service.

#### **Qualifications**

Qualifications for ministerial staff are specified in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These qualifications are not to be used as checklists, but as principles and guidelines to discern the spiritual maturity of a potential staff person.

#### **Obligations**

Beyond those obligations already stated for the elders, the ministerial staff should be diligent to fulfill their duties as outlined in their ministry descriptions. The ministry descriptions shall be reviewed annually by the Lead pastor.

#### **Accountability**

The ministerial staff are directly accountable to the Lead pastor and through the Lead pastor to the Board of Elders.

#### **Selection**

Full-time ministerial staff will be chosen by:

- a) A nominating committee from among the elders or appointed by the elders.
- b) Approval by the Lead pastor.
- c) Unanimous approval by elders.
- d) Three-fourths (3/4) approval by the deacons.
- e) Three-fourths (3/4) approval by the membership.

Part-time ministerial staff will be chosen by:

- a) A nominating committee from among the elders or appointed by the elders.
- b) Approval by the Lead pastor.
- c) Unanimous approval by elders.
- d) Three-fourths (3/4) approval by the deacons.

#### **Termination of service**

The following reasons for termination of service will be accepted:

- a) **Resignation**  
A minimum of thirty days written notice of resignation shall be given to the Lead pastor (who shall then present it to the elders and church) unless waived by mutual consent.
- b) **Dismissal**  
Dismissal shall be based upon a simple two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the elders, or a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership at a congregational meeting. The basis for dismissal would be for such considerations as (1) behavior which violates the Biblical qualification for the position, (2) doctrine which violates Oakwood's statement of faith or divisively conflicts with the Lead pastor's positions, (3) insubordination to the Lead pastor or elders, or (4) ineffectiveness of ministry. For reasons indicated in items (1), (2), and (3), the termination shall be immediate. Following one year of service, a one to three month severance pay will be granted as determined by the elders. For reasons indicated in (4), after one year services, three months severance pay shall be granted following the effective termination date as determined by the elders). Any and all severance pay terminates upon the procurement of gainful employment.

#### **Age Limit**

An age limit of 70 will apply to all full-time ministerial staff with the option of one year renewals when recommended by two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board of Elders and ratified by the Church.

## **ARTICLE IX**

Membership of the corporation shall consist of the members of the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons.

## ARTICLE X OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION

### Number and Term of the officers of the corporation

The business, property and affairs of this corporation shall be managed by the officers of the corporation, composed of three persons who shall be members of this corporation. Each officer shall hold office for the term for which the officer is elected and qualified.

### Duties of the officers

The officers shall assume responsibility for the guidance of the affairs of the corporation.

### Vacancies

Vacancies among the officers of the corporation shall be filled by election by the remaining officers. Each person so elected to fill a vacancy shall remain an officer until a successor has been elected by a vote of the membership present, who may make such election at their next annual meeting, or at any special meeting duly called for that purpose and held prior thereto.

### Delegation of Powers

For any reason deemed sufficient by the corporation, the members may delegate any power or duty of any officer to any other member, but no member shall execute, acknowledge, or verify any instrument in more than one capacity.

The officers of this corporation shall be a President, Treasurer, Secretary, and such other officers as may be provided for in the Bylaws. The officers shall be elected from among the members of the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons combined together. This shall be done at the annual meeting of the corporation. The officers of the corporation shall serve until their successors are elected and take office.

### President

The President shall:

- a) Also be the chair of the Board of Elders.
- b) Preside at all meetings of the corporation, or delegate that authority to another member.
- c) Perform all other duties usually pertaining to the office of President.

### Treasurer

The Treasurer shall conduct all financial responsibilities in accordance with the financial procedures and controls established by the Board of Elders. The Treasurer shall:

- a) Be custodian of all funds and securities of the corporation and collect interest thereon.
- b) Keep accurate and auditable record of the accounts of the corporation and report thereon at each regular meeting of the corporation.
- c) Make report at annual meeting and special report to the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons when requested.
- d) Be responsible for the deposit of all moneys of the corporation in the name of the corporation in a bank or banks selected and designated by the corporation.
- e) Be responsible for all withdrawals for authorized purposes, in accordance with the financial procedures and controls established by the Board of Elders.
- f) Prepare and file reports and returns required by all governmental agencies.

### Secretary

The Secretary shall:

- a) Record the minutes of all meetings.
- b) Write up the minutes the day following the meeting.
- c) Confer with the President for possible omissions.
- d) Provide the minutes to any members who request them.
- e) Have custody of the seal of the corporation and all other official records.
- f) Give notice of all meeting required by statutes.
- g) Take attendance record at all congregational meetings.
- h) Maintain committee reports.
- i) Carry on all necessary correspondence of the corporation.
- j) Perform such other duties as may be delegated to him by the corporation.

## ARTICLE XI FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the corporation shall be January 1 through December 31.

## ARTICLE XII EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

The corporation shall be required to adopt in writing employment policies for each employee.

These policies shall be set by a majority vote of the corporation.

These policies will be reviewed for periodic adjustment.

These policies shall govern the employment of all personnel hired by the corporation.

### **ARTICLE XIII AMENDMENTS**

The corporation may later amend, revise, add to, repeal, or rescind these Bylaws and/or adopt new Bylaws at their pleasure by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of those present at a congregational meeting, provided that notice of the proposed alteration, amendment, revision, addition, repeal, or recession of the Bylaws or adoption of new Bylaws shall have been given in writing at least thirty days preceding the meeting.

### **ARTICLE XIV COMPENSATION**

No compensation shall be paid to officers for services performed by them for the corporation in any capacity unless a resolution authorizing such remuneration shall have been adopted by the corporation before the services were rendered.