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# **Thixton Lane Baptist Church Constitution & Bylaws**

# **Thixton Lane Baptist Church, 7700 Thixton Lane, Louisville KY 40229**

# **Ratified by church vote 8/7/2022**

Preamble

We declare and confirm these bylaws in order to establish and preserve the principles of our faith and to help govern this body of believers in a God-glorifying manner. This constitution will, under God’s provision and guidance, help maintain the liberties of each individual member and the freedom of action in this body, in pursuit of being the local church we are called to be. Beholden to Scripture as our guide and in the leading of the Holy Spirit to accomplish a trifold mission statement: to glorify God, to live missionally, and to see lives transformed by the Gospel.

Objectives

The express goal of this church is to be a vibrant spiritual organism, under the guidance of and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone we interact with – in our church, our community, and beyond. We desire to be a worshipping fellowship of like-minded believers united in mission, seeking an acute awareness of God’s presence, submitting to His authority, and wholeheartedly obeying His commands as laid forth in Scripture. With that as our foundation, we seek also to experience an ever deeper fellowship with God the Father, as well as our fellow believers both at TLBC and our brothers and sisters in other theologically solid churches. We seek to help others experience a growing knowledge of God and therefore a proper view and understanding of humanity, as we are rooted in the Word for our worldview, our mission, and our personal lives. We seek to be Christlike in our daily living as we seek to increasingly live out our Savior’s words found in Matthew 16: to *deny ourselves, take up our cross,* and *follow Him*. We recognize Jesus as the supreme High Priest, who is Lord over our lives, and seek to fully submit to Him as our true north, the very Source of life, our everything.

Statement of Beliefs

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired, infallible, living Word of God and the foundation for our beliefs. We subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Nicene Creed in reference to the Trinity, written in the year 381:

*We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God,*

*Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.*

*Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven;*

*He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human.*

*He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried.*

*The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.*

*He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

*He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.*

*His kingdom will never end.*

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.*

*He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.*

*He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic (*see: universal*) and apostolic church.*

*We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.*

*We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.*

As the members of Thixton Lane Baptist Church, we voluntarily unite ourselves together as a body of believers baptized in Jesus Christ and personally commit ourselves to fulfilling the Great Commission, as we recognize that every professing believer is under the direction of our Lord’s words. The ongoing ordinances of this church are believer’s baptism and regular observance of the Lord’s Supper. Furthermore, we subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (copies available upon request). A summary statement that encapsulates the focus of this church is found in 2 Peter 1:3-4: “**His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire**.”

Furthermore, we reach back into history and recognize the 5 Solas of the Reformation as guiding principles of the Christian faith to this day: *sola scripture* (Scripture alone), *solus Christus* (Christ alone), *sola fide* (faith alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), and *soli Deo gloria* (to the glory of God alone). These five statements of faith lay at the center of what distinguished the theology of the Reformation in the 16th century, and are timeless in both theology and implication. *Sola scriptura* is the belief that because Scripture is God’s inspired Word, it alone is inerrant, sufficient, and the final authority for the church. *Solus Christus* is the declaration that Christ alone is the basis on which the ungodly are saved and justified in God’s sight. *Sola fide* maintains that the believer obtains the redemption Christ has accomplished only through faith. *Sola gratia* proclaims that the entirety of our salvation, from beginning to end, is by grace and grace alone. Because of these things, we join with the Reformers and hold fast to the phrase *soli Deo gloria*: only God receives glory for our salvation.

Church Covenant

In the presence of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge the responsibility we each have upon one another as brothers and sisters seeking ever-greater unity in Christ, and to that end we joyfully enter into covenant with one another. Therefore, as church family seeking to cultivate true *koinonia* – genuine spiritual fellowship – we will seek to hold ourselves to a higher standard and nurture a mindset focused on living out the words of Colossians 3:1-3: “**If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God**.” The foundational tenets of this covenant are rooted in the following:

* To *walk together* in Christian love, bearing one another’s burdens
* To *encourage* one another in the true spirit of urging each other on to deeper pursuits of God
* To *promote unity* and peace among our church members and beyond everywhere we can
* To *sustain true worship* within the walls of this church with our words and our demeanor
* To be *Biblically zealous* in our endeavors to advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ
* To *watch over one another* in brotherly and sisterly love, remembering one another in prayer
* To *be the body of Christ* as we are so undeniably called to be, in the power of the Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Church Polity

The government of Thixton Lane Baptist Church is and will be vested in the body of believers who comprise the church. All members in good standing will have the same rank, that of servants. Any person duly received by the members shall constitute the membership of the church (more on this under Article 1, Church Membership).

Any and all groups (*see*: Sunday School, small groups, specific Bible studies) created in and commissioned by the church shall report to and be accountable to this church and this church only, unless otherwise specified by church action. This church is and shall be subject to control of no other ecclesiastical body, as it recognizes and seeks to sustain the obligation of mutual counsel and wisdom, in cooperation which is common among Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will work with and support the Louisville Regional Baptist Association (formerly Long Run Association) and the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

**Article I: Membership**

*Section A: Qualifications*

Rule 1. The membership of this church shall consist of such persons as confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and have been baptized by immersion.

Rule 2. The persons coming on profession of faith shall be baptized by immersion either previously or upon entering membership of TLBC. If transferring membership from another body of believers into TLBC, a proper letter of recommendation from previous church stating they were a member in good standing is preferred, and a subsequent vote of acceptance by the church at large will officially enter said person into membership. Persons presenting themselves for membership from any other denomination shall be accepted by statement of faith (no letter required if not feasible, as we recognize some denominations do not have same membership functions & requirements).

Rule 3. TLBC shall issue letters of dismission / release to members who have specifically requested to be moved into membership of other Baptist churches.

Rule 4. In the event of extreme church discipline as specified in Matthew 18:15-20, if a person has refused church discipline for an extended period of time (situationally decided on by the pastor and deacon body, but only after faithfully following the specific steps laid out in Scripture), and have therefore disqualified themselves from church membership, the person shall be removed from the church roll. In such event, the pastor and the church commits to continued prayer over the repentance and restoration of the person, recognizing that any bonds can be destroyed by the Gospel.

*Section B: Expectations of Church Members*

Every member of TLBC is encouraged to regularly attend the services of this church unless providentially hindered, as we recognize the truth contained in the words of Hebrews 10:25 (ESV): **“Do not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near**.” We see from this relatively simple verse that our *focus on eternity* and our *building up of one another in the faith* is directly tied to how seriously we take meeting together. We must take this seriously, as our impact on the world is inherently connected to these issues.

Section B, rule 1. As an extension of the above statement, any member that fails to attend for an extended period (3+ months), will be contacted and hopefully visited by the church. Valid reasons for the lack of attendance will certainly be taken into consideration before any membership status action is taken; if said person simply doesn’t attend and refuses to after said actions, their status shall be henceforth considered inactive. Inactive member can be received back into the fold of the church by recommittal by the person and consideration by the pastor and deacon body. (\*\* Inactive members and removal of membership shall be specified under “*Section C:* *Quorum Policy*” below.)

Every member of TLBC is encouraged to give monetarily in support of this church’s role in Kingdom work, to the extent that each member is able. We recognize that while the church militant still exists in this pre-final world, financial concerns will always be with us. We do not ask any member to give more than they are able, and consign each member’s giving to the leading of the Spirit in every matter.

*Section C: Quorum Policy*

Rule 1. A quorum for the express purpose of conducting church business shall be constituted by the presence of the congregation.

Termination of membership shall be handled in the following ways:

* Death of the church member, in which we recognize in gratitude and praise that the person’s membership has been transferred from the church militant on earth into the church eternal in heaven
* Release of membership into another Baptist church, as specified above
* Membership in a church of a different denomination
* In the event of church discipline, whereas the steps in *Section B, Rule 1* and / or *Rule 4 of Article 1* have been followed and for whatever reason not produced reconciliation between the member and the church, that member will be presented to a church vote for removal of membership. (Note: This is an extreme last step, which the pastor does not foresee coming to fruition, but we must recognize it is not impossible.)

**Article II: Church Officers**

*Rule 1: Head Pastor*. In the event of the vacancy of the pulpit, the next pastor is to be voted on for approval by the church, needing an 90% minimum approval vote to be installed. The preceding steps before that should be as follows: the church shall establish a Pastor Search Committee, consisting of at least (5) members in good standing which shall include at least (1) deacon, to seek out a suitable pastor. Once said committee has been formed, they shall be entrusted by the church body to find and present possible candidates for the role of pastor. Any member in good standing has the right to make nominations for the role of pastor. Once a specific candidate has been determined to be the recommendation of the search committee, he shall be presented to the church for above vote. Only (1) candidate shall be brought before the church for consideration at a time. This entire process must be saturated in prayer as the committee and the church body recognizes the Lord is sovereign over all events, and He has a plan long before we even realize we need a new plan. The new pastor shall serve in this role until the relationship is terminated by either or both parties.

*Rule 2: Staff Members*. Staff members shall be elected by the church upon nomination by a duly appointed committee, the pastor and head of deacons shall determine the specifics of each position situationally. Duties and compensation shall be specified and agreed to by the committee and the church body for each individual position, under the general direction of the pastor.

*Rule 3: Deacons*. A minimum of (2) deacons shall be maintained until the active membership reaches (75) people. Thereafter a rule of thumb should be (2) deacons shall be installed for every 50 active members. As the church grows, it should maintain an average of (2) deacons for every (50) people. Each deacon is to serve on rotating 3-year terms, after which he is free to rotate off for at least (1) year, or continue serving as deacon (upon approval of pastor and the remaining deacon body).

*Rule 3a: Roles and Responsibilities of Deacons*. The word **deacon** is derived from the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning ‘servant’. To be a deacon is to serve, and that idea must saturate the ministry of each deacon. Every deacon will be responsible for specific people in the church, to care for them and ensure a strong bond between the person and the church is maintained. Much of this will be situation-specific; i.e. it may be periodic phone calls to check on them, or in-person visits. Each deacon shall use their own judgment and wisdom in how best to serve each individual they are responsible for, all the while being accountable to the pastor and the rest of the deacon body. Once monthly deacon meetings are established in the future, each deacon shall give monthly reports regarding the folks on their respective lists. Other possible deacon responsibilities shall be determined by the pastor and head of deacons as the church grows and time goes on.

*Rule 3b: Qualifications for Deacons*. We find the Biblical criteria for deacons most clearly in **1 Timothy 3:1-13**, in which Paul discusses the qualifications for both elders and deacons. This shall be our guide in matters of new deacon nominations and ordinations, as we acknowledge the heart beneath Paul’s words – elders and deacons shall be “**the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money**…” In other words, a man who is faithful to his marriage vows, not given to being out of control in any aspect of his life, and one who genuinely has an empathetic heart for people rooted in his relationship with the Lord. This is simply a general guideline; a place to start – each man nominated to be a deacon shall be carefully evaluated and considered by the pastor and head of deacons, and voted on by the church for approval. (We also recognize that the deacons are the de facto elders of the church at Thixton Lane, until the point is reached where the church wants to also install separate elders as well.) In the interest of holding ourselves to a higher standard, each deacon will be expected to agree to and sign the Leadership Covenant (attachment #1 to this document).

*Rule 3c: Further Responsibilities of Deacons*. A) In the event of the head pastor leaving, and it is decided that an interim pastor is the best course of short-term action for the church, the deacon body shall be responsible for securing an interim pastor. This shall not in any way prejudice the church regarding the nomination of a new pastor, or the methods by which that occurs. B) The deacon body shall be responsible for securing pulpit supply in the event of the unexpected absence or inability of the pastor to preach for any reason, upon conference and agreement with him.

*Rule 4: Trustees*. Optimally, there shall be a board of trustees consisting of (3) members of good standing, rotating on a 3-year basis (lapse of 1 year being optional upon completion of the 3-year term). The trustees shall be elected by the church by order of normal procedure (recommendation by pastor / head of deacons + church vote). The duties of the board of trustees shall be oversight, maintenance, and administration of duties regarding physical property and equipment owned by the church. (They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property or equipment of the church without a specially held vote by the church body to authorize such action.) The responsibilities of the board of trustees shall fall under Building & Maintenance section of the normal financial report.

*Rule 5: Moderator*. Ideally, the church will maintain a moderator to be elected annually by church vote. The duties of the moderator shall be to preside and keep order of all business meetings, to keep order therein, to take motions on all actions during said meetings. (Until a moderator is put in place, the pastor shall be responsible for these duties.) Upon installing a new moderator, said moderator shall serve 1-year terms, and can be re-elected upon completion of 1 year; the head of deacons shall serve as assistant moderator.

*Rule 6: Clerk*. The clerk shall be elected annually by church vote, and serve 1-year terms. It shall be the duty of the clerk to keep correct and faithful records of all business transacted at each business meeting, keep a list of all participating members, and make reports of each meeting available for each church member.

*Rule 7: Treasurer*. The treasurer shall be elected annually by church vote, and serve 3-year terms (upon completion of which, can be re-elected). The treasurer shall receive and disburse all money received for church expenses – including all bills and payroll of the church. Treasurer shall present updated financial reports to church at each regularly scheduled meeting.

*Rule 7a: Use of Funds for Church Needs*. Any expense that totals $500 or less shall be at the discretion of the pastor without need of church vote; any expense that either exceeds $500 or will be an ongoing, monthly expense shall be presented for church vote either at regularly scheduled meeting or special called business meeting.

*Rule 8: Pianists & Musicians*. A pianist (and other musicians) shall be a regular part of the musical worship of the church, insofar as is feasible / available. The pastor is seeking a pianist as these bylaws are being written. Upon securing a pianist, they shall work in conjunction with the worship leader in order to most effectively lead the church in God-glorifying worship. As the church grows, a choir and other musicians shall be added as is feasible and led by the Lord. These decisions shall be under the purview of the pastor and head of deacons.

*Rule 9: Ushers & Greeters*. Ideally, ushers and greeters will be posted each Sunday for greeting folks arriving to the building, handing out bulletins, and seating and comfort of the congregation. Once the church gets to this point, the ushers and greeters shall be responsible for the attendance count each week, as well as other needs as they arise.

*Rule 9a: Security*. The church shall maintain habit of locking the main entrance approximately 10 minutes after the service begins (to allow for folks arriving late). The door will be unlocked before the singing of the invitation song near the end of service.

*Rule 10: Organizations and Officers of Church Organizations*. Any additional organizations and officers of said organizations shall be under guidance and purview of the pastor and deacon body, each to be added as is necessary for the health of the church. Each organization shall be clearly presented to the church body with explanation for the necessity thereof, with officers being nominated by the deacon body and voted on by the church.

*Rule 11: Sunday School / Bible Studies*. Guidelines for Sunday School classes and any other Bible studies or small groups shall be as follows.

* Teachers in any capacity shall be approved by the pastor and head of deacons after thorough evaluation and prayer.
* Any Bible study shall be under the direction and purview of the church, using curriculum approved of by the pastor, with the ongoing intention of drawing people closer to the Lord.
* The act of adding SS classes as time goes on will be up to the direction and guidance of the pastor in conjunction with the deacon body.
* Each teacher shall be expected to agree to and sign the Leadership Covenant (attachment #1 to this document).

*Rule 12: Nursery Protocol*. The nursery shall be maintained and ready each week so as to be prepared for any children that attend. Nursery workers shall pass background checks and be persons who have the desire and calling to work with children. We recognize the nursery serves two vital functions: 1) to give parents the chance to fully engage in worship and focus on the proclamation of Scripture, and 2) to implant the truths of God’s word into the hearts of children, even at a very young age.

**Article III: Church Meetings**.

*Section 1: Regular Meetings*

*Rule 1: Sunday morning worship*. Regular meetings for worship shall be each Sunday morning. The point of these meetings shall be expressly to worship God Almighty through song and the proclamation of Scripture.

*Rule 2: Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting*. Beginning again on September 14th, 2022, the church reinstitutes Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting each week, beginning at 6:00 p.m. The goal of these meetings is to join together in prayer for our church, our community, our culture at large, and the world in general. Each week will also consist of a lesson given by the pastor or someone approved by the pastor.

*Rule 3: Communion*. We shall partake in the Lord’s Supper monthly going forward – this shall be typically the first Sunday of each month, but can be adjusted for special events / circumstances. We recognize the tremendous privilege it is for us to partake in communion as given by our Savior, and the inherent value it holds for us to observe it regularly.

*Section 2: Business Meetings*

*Rule 1*: Regular business meetings shall be held at least quarterly (4 times per year), or more frequently as is feasible / necessary. For the time being, business meetings will be held at the conclusion of Sunday morning service, and handled as expediently as is warranted. Each meeting for the conducting of business shall be opened with prayer, followed by the following protocol:

* The minutes of the previous meeting shall be gone over and approved, any necessary references called for and discussed
* New business of any kind called for
* All new business shall be presented to the church by motion by one member, and seconded by another member
* Any member desiring to speak on any subject shall rise to their feet, if possible, and present said subject in respectful language, as concisely as possible
* The transaction of all business of the church shall be decided on by a *majority* of the members present, taken by silent vote for any new transaction (exception to this shall be calling a new pastor, which is covered in Article II, Rule 1)

**Article IV: General Church Polity and Rules**

*Rule 1: Amendments & changes*. Any amendment, addition, or alteration of this document shall be presented to the church body for consideration and approval by vote. In this event, it is recommended that the church is presented with said changes at least 2 weeks before the scheduled vote, allowing for a time of prayer and pondering. Any amendment or change must be ratified by a 2/3 vote of the congregation.

*Rule 2: Leadership positions*. No one shall hold office or leadership position in the church in any capacity unless he or she is a member in good standing of the church.

*Rule 3: Newly elected officers*. The pastor and head of deacons shall jointly have the responsibility to explain and teach the bylaws to any new officers upon election.

*Rule 4: Church building use*. Every church building usage application shall be approved by the pastor and / or head of deacons, and be restricted to the boundaries that follow.

* A church member must be present at any activity that is held on church property, even if the event is held / hosted by non-members.
* There shall be no alcohol present at any event held on church property.
* All preparation / cleanup of each event will be the responsibility of the individual(s) hosting the event.
* All the above rules apply to both the main church building and to the gym building.

*Rule 4a: Weddings*. As we appeal to the Scriptures for God’s revealed truth, we also refer to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, which expresses our fundamental Biblical conviction that Christian marriage is defined as “the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime” (Section 18 of *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*). We believe that Scripture teaches that sexual intimacy should only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other and that a man and woman should not engage in intimate sexual activity outside of marriage. We believe that Scripture also teaches that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, incest, any attempt to change one’s sex, disagreement with one’s biological sex, or pornography is sinful and offensive to God. However, we believe that Scripture requires that every person should be shown compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. As a local church, we believe that wedding ceremonies on church property are spiritual acts of worship of the God who created this divine institution. As such, weddings on church property shall be officiated by one or more ordained ministers of the Gospel. The church may decline to make its facilities or ministers available for any wedding if it is determined that one or both of the parties are not biblically and/or legally qualified to marry. Such determinations may be made by the pastor, church council, or wedding committee subject to the direction of the church. No minister or employee of the Church shall officiate at any marriage ceremony unless such marriage is consistent with this policy.

*Attachment #1*

**Leadership Covenant**

1. I believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God Almighty, and “***useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness***” so that we are “***competent and equipped for every good work***” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*THEREFORE*

1. I pledge to be in the Word each day because I know if I am not, my spiritual life will suffer, and as a result my relationship with the Lord and with others will suffer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. IF I miss a day, I pledge to repent and make sure I am in the Word the following day. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*BECAUSE*

1. I know my prayer life is most effective when I am immersed in the Word and suffers when I am not. Therefore I pledge to have designated prayer time set aside each day to spend in commune with God. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. I pledge to invite and allow the Spirit to ***convict, shape, mold,*** and ***change*** me through my personal Bible study and in turn transform my prayer life. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. I pledge to be in Sunday morning worship service each Sunday unless providentially prevented from doing so because I believe corporate worship is crucial to our church and know I am setting an example as a leader. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. I pledge to tithe under the Holy Spirit’s leading and guidance as we recognize the financial needs of the church. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. I pledge to be a part of deeper Bible study with my fellow members every chance I get as is feasible, recognizing this is crucial to the life and unity of the church. \_\_\_\_\_\_
6. I pledge to hold myself to a higher standard in personal conduct because I believe in the truth of James 3:1, that we will “***be judged with a higher strictness***”. Therefore I pledge to give no room in my personal conduct for even the perception of evil; I will weigh my decisions by God’s standard and not my own. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. I will pray for the church staff because I know God has put them in their current position for a reason, and Romans 8:28 is our guiding principle. If I have an internal church issue, either corporately or personally, I will seek out the appropriate person in love and seek to resolve it rather than letting things fester and therefore allow a molehill to become a mountain. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. I know whatever my role may be, that I am part of a Gospel-spreading team at Thixton Lane, and as iron sharpens iron, we will each help encourage and build each other up. Accordingly, I pledge to pray for my fellow brothers and sisters on a consistent basis, knowing they are lifting me up as well. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_