

THE ROYAL PALM BAPTIST ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

(approved by messengers, Oct. 20, 2020)

BYLAW I – NAME

The name of this association shall be the ROYAL PALM BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, also known as ROYAL PALM ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES, SBC; (“RPAC”).

BYLAW II – PURPOSE

This association of autonomous Southern Baptist member churches exists to increase the effectiveness of member churches in fulfilling the Great Commission as described in Matthew 28:18-20. The Association provides a medium through which autonomous member Baptist churches in cooperation with the Florida Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, and their agencies and institutions may:

- a. Promote fellowship and cooperation among the member Southern Baptist churches in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- b. Promote the cause of missions generally and specifically, assist in the establishment of churches, Sunday Schools, missions, schools, community ministry centers, camps, assemblies, hospitals, and such other institutions and agencies for education, evangelism, benevolence and charity; and it shall seek to advance the cause of Christ in all of its cooperating churches and missions in the community.
- c. Promote and encourage partnership in the ministries, programs, and work fostered by the Royal Palm Baptist Association, the Florida Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention, particularly in the fields of evangelism, church planting, church growth, religious education, church and community ministries, chaplaincy, state, national, and international missions.
- d. We have a commitment to teaching and modeling Biblical doctrines, and a desire to cooperate with other Southern Baptist churches in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The commitment to participate financially and personally with the Association is the basis of fellowship and cooperation.

BYLAW III – DOCTRINES

We believe the Bible is the sole authority for determining doctrine. Our Statement of Faith, referred to as *The Baptist Faith and Message of the Southern Baptist Convention of 2000*, is the primary guide used by the association in doctrinal matters.

We believe that God ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man and a woman, and therefore, RPAC will only recognize marriages between one biological man and one biological woman. This Statement on Marriage and Sexuality specifically gives RPAC the right and authority to restrict the use of its facilities and property to uses consistent with the Bible, with its Statement of Faith and Statement on Marriage and Sexuality, as solely determined by RPAC.

Further, the Executive Director of Missions and staff of RPAC shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman, and the facilities and property of RPBA shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.

RPAC’s property and facilities may be used only for purposes consistent with the association’s doctrinal beliefs as reflected in the Bible and the association’s Statement of Faith, including its Statement on Marriage and Sexuality. Use of property and facilities will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with RPAC’s religious teachings as reflected in the Bible and the association’s Statement of Faith, including its Statement on Marriage and Sexuality. RPAC’s Executive Director of Missions

and officers of the corporation shall be the final decision-making authority regarding whether any proposed facility/property use is in conformity to the associations' doctrinal beliefs.

The association has the authority to refuse messengers from churches that are not in accord with the doctrine, principles, policies and practices of the association.

BYLAW IV – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. The association is composed of Southern Baptist churches that want to be more effective in: fulfilling the Great Commission as described in Matthew 28:18-20; sharing with and benefiting from a local caring fellowship of churches; and developing synergistic cooperative ministries with each other and other Southern Baptist associations, conventions, agencies and boards. Member churches demonstrate their commitment to the ministry of the association by their participation and financial contributions.

SECTION 2. Each church participates in the administrative and decision making process of the association through messengers. Each member church shall be entitled to five (5) messengers.

Pastors and other ministerial staff are automatically received as messengers. Laypersons may be selected to also serve as messengers. Each year these messengers should be listed in the churches annual report to the Association called the "Annual Church Profile." (ACP)

SECTION 3. Association membership is attained by submitting a completed membership application and supporting documents to the association. The Membership Team is responsible to assist the church in preparing this application, and to present their recommendation to the Voting Assembly. The church shall furnish evidence of its adherence to Biblical doctrine; its commitment to financial and voluntary support of the Association; its intention to participate in Southern Baptist cooperative missions and its desire to be in fellowship with the churches of the association.

Prior to becoming a new member, a church will be considered under watchcare for at least one year and may apply for full membership at any time during that year.

SECTION 4. The association has no power or control regarding the decisions and actions of their member churches or churches under watchcare. We fully respect the scripturally taught autonomy of the local member churches. This association exists to encourage, support, and offer consultation in such things as strategic planning and crisis intervention. Should internal or inter-church conflicts arise, these churches shall be encouraged to make every possible effort to resolve the conflict through diligent prayer and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The Executive Director of Missions, and/or other associational leadership under his direction, may offer to assist or respond to a request for assistance from the church through its pastor, deacon representative, or another church leader. The Executive Director of Missions and/or those under his direction may moderate or participate in meetings with the appropriate parties involved to assist in resolving the difficulties and seeking reconciliation in the Spirit of Christ.

SECTION 5. REMOVAL OF MEMBERSHIP

The association is authorized to refuse seats to messengers from any church that is found to be unsound in faith or practice as described in this document.

While Southern Baptist churches need not adopt any particular statement of faith, any church that intentionally operates in any manner demonstrating opposition or disagreement with the Biblical doctrines and Christian principles expressed in *The Baptist Faith and Message of the*

Southern Baptist Convention of 2000, is in jeopardy of suspension or termination of membership in the association.

The association, through the Voting Assembly is authorized through its appropriate officers and teams, to take reconciliatory actions, to suspend membership, and/or to remove association membership from churches not in compliance with the basis for fellowship and cooperation.

Any remedial actions will be preceded by accurate gathering of information, interviews with the church leadership, and an honest attempt to reconcile the church.

Any membership removal action shall require a 30 day notification, two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of those present and voting in a regular or special meeting of the Voting Assembly, and two-thirds (2/3) vote at the next Annual Celebration of the association. All membership privileges are to be suspended immediately following the Voting Assembly action.

This provision shall not be used to force uniformity in worship styles, require conformity to a specific creed, or to advance a particular political or cultural position.

Any church that fails to submit the information requested in the Annual Church Profile; does not financially support the RPAC and the Cooperative Program; and/or fails to be represented at the Annual Celebration may be asked to confirm their desire for continued fellowship and membership in the association.

Should the association vote to remove a local member church, this act will be reported to the Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention for them to consider the removal of the church from their rolls as well.

SECTION 6. WITHDRAWAL

Any church wishing to voluntarily withdraw its membership from the association should submit a written notification. This act will be reported to the Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention for them to consider the removal of the church from their rolls as well.

BYLAW V – ASSOCIATIONAL GATHERINGS

SECTION 1. ANNUAL CELEBRATION (formally known as Annual Meeting)

The association shall schedule an Annual Celebration in the Fall of each year, at such time and place as it may select. If it should be necessary or desirable to change the time or place, the Administrative Team is authorized to make the changes.

SECTION 2. VOTING ASSEMBLY (formally known as Executive Committee)

The association may schedule meetings of the Voting Assembly as needed. The Voting Assembly assists in the overall administration of the work of the association with such guidance as may be given by the Constitution and the Bylaws including the confirmation/approval of new association memberships. Any messenger may introduce business at any meeting. The messenger may make a motion at the time of the meeting and give a written copy of the motion to the Executive Director of Missions and the Moderator. Or the messenger may submit a motion in advance of the meeting. Written previous notice of any pending motion requiring Voting Assembly action may be given in its entirety at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting. If the Voting Assembly determines that an emergency exists which requires action, then new business may be acted upon at the time it is introduced.

SECTION 3. MESSENGERS

1. Messengers: Pastors and other ministerial staff are automatically received as messengers of the Voting Assembly. Churches are encouraged to elect at least one layperson to serve as a messenger to the Voting Assembly. No church shall have more than five (5) Voting Assembly

messengers. RPAC officers and team leaders shall be viewed as automatic messengers to the Voting Assembly.

2. Method of selection: Messengers elected by member churches to serve on the Voting Assembly may be presented to the association during its Annual Celebration or at any Voting Assembly.

3. Term of Office: Pastors and ministerial staff shall continue as messengers as long as they remain in their position with the church. Lay persons should be elected annually.

SECTION 4. A quorum

Ten (10) messengers shall constitute a quorum at all Annual Celebration and Voting Assembly meetings.

SECTION 5. Special Called Meetings

In the event of extremely important or emergency situations, the Executive Director of Missions and Moderator in consultation with the Administrative Team may call a special meeting of the Voting Assembly. Ten (10) days prior notice of the meeting shall be given to all member churches.

BYLAW VI – OFFICERS

SECTION 1. General Information

The elected officers of the association shall also serve as the officers of the corporation, as referred to in the Constitution.

1. Method of Selection: The officers of the association are recommended by the Nominating Team and elected by the association. The method of selecting the Executive Director of Missions is described in Article VIII. All officers shall come from member churches exhibiting full cooperation (filed their annual church profile, and are financially supporting RPAC and the Cooperative Program).

2. Term of Office: Officers shall have terms of two (2) years. All officers except the Moderator and Vice -Moderator may succeed themselves.

3. Accountability: Officers are accountable to the association and the Voting Assembly and are to provide at least one report for the Annual Celebration. They are expected to be active and ready to report at all Voting Assembly meetings.

4. Duties: Specific duties of officers are detailed in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

SECTION 2. Moderator

Main Function: To plan and conduct the business sessions of the Annual Celebration and Voting Assembly in consultation with the Executive Director of Missions and his staff.

SECTION 3. Vice Moderator

Main Function: To assist the Moderator in the performance of his duties as called upon and to perform the duties of the Moderator when he is unavailable. The Vice-Moderator becomes Moderator in the event of a Moderator vacancy, and a replacement Vice-Moderator shall be recommended by the Nominating Team and presented at the next Voting Assembly.

SECTION 4. Clerk

Main Function: To be responsible for the accurate recording, filing and preservation of all important activities and transactions of the association and to make this information available upon request to member churches. This officer may be the Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director of Missions.

SECTION 5. Treasurer

Main Function: To be responsible for overseeing the appropriate receiving, accounting and disbursing of all the association's moneys in coordination with the Finance and Stewardship Team, the Executive Director of Missions, and his staff.

SECTION 6. Executive Director of Missions

Main Function: To serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the association, overseeing office operations, supervising staff and ministries, and serving as an ex-officio member of all teams and organizations, except the Administrative Team where he serves as the team leader. He represents the association in denominational, religious, civic, and social events.

SECTION 7. Additional Officers

The Voting Assembly may add other officers as needed for the effective operation of the Association.

BYLAW VII – MINISTRY TEAMS

General Information

1. Method of Selection: The Nominating Team nominates potential members of all teams, except itself, for election by the Association. Nominating team members are appointed by the Administrative Team (see section 1 below). All team members shall come from member churches exhibiting full cooperation (filed their annual church profile, and are financially supporting RPAC and the Cooperative Program).

2. Membership: Teams shall have six (6) members, and when advisable, may be increased at the discretion of the team leaders in consultation with the Executive Director of Missions.

3. Term of office: With the exception of the Administrative Team, members teams shall serve two (2) year terms, with one-third (1/3) of the members' terms expiring each year. In special circumstances, re-election of a team member to an immediate additional term may be allowed when approved by the association at the time of election.

4. Frequency of meetings: Teams shall meet as needed to fulfill their responsibilities, at least once per calendar year.

5. Team Leaders: Teams shall have at least a team leader and a recording secretary. The team leader may be recommended by the Nominating Team.

6. Administration: Teams shall work in cooperation with the Executive Director of Missions. Written minutes of all team meetings shall be recorded and filed with the Executive Director of Missions.

7. Duties: The duties of these teams are described in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

SECTION 1. Administrative Team

1. Main Function: To ensure the overall effectiveness of the association regarding the Annual Celebration and Voting Assemblies, ministry teams, events, property issues, revisions to the legal documents and all issues related to the Constitution, Bylaws and the Policy and Procedures Manual.

2. Membership: The Administrative Team members are: Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Executive Director of Missions, and Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director of Missions,; as well as the Team Leaders of the Finance and Stewardship Team, Personnel Team, and the Missional Projects & Church Planting Team. The Executive Director of Missions shall serve as the team leader of the Administrative Team.

SECTION 2. Membership Team

Main Function: To accept and review applications from churches who wish to become members of the Association, in consultation with the Executive Director of Missions and staff.

SECTION 3. Finance and Stewardship Team

Main Function: To work with the Executive Director of Missions and staff, to secure, administer, and report the Association's finances, promote giving to the Association, and lead in the preparation of the annual budget.

SECTION 4. Personnel Team

Main Function: To work with the Executive Director of Missions and staff regarding all matters relating to paid staff.

SECTION 5. Nominating Team

Main Function: To work with the Executive Director of Missions and staff to nominate elected officers and team members for approval by the Association.

SECTION 6. Children's Home Team

Main Function: To work with the Executive Director of Missions and staff to promote the work of the Florida Baptist Children's Home in southwest Florida and oversee the facility needs.

SECTION 7. Missional Projects and Church Planting Team

Main Function: To work with the Executive Director of Missions and staff in planning, promoting, and coordinating mission projects and church planting in the Association.

SECTION 8. Additional Ministry Teams

The Voting Assembly shall add other ministry teams as needed for the effective operation of the Association.

BYLAW VIII – ASSOCIATIONAL STAFF

The association shall employ an Executive Director of Missions to function as the Chief Executive Officer. In the event of a vacancy in this position, the Personnel Team shall serve as a search team who shall prayerfully seek out, interview, and act with due diligence in recommending a qualified individual in the Lord to fill the position. This recommendation shall be presented at a Voting Assembly or the Annual Celebration for messenger approval. The association shall employ additional staff as it deems wise and appropriate. Ministerial, administrative, and support staff shall be employed in keeping with the association budget and supervised by the Executive Director of Missions. All staff shall abide by the provisions listed in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

BYLAW IX – PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

SECTION 1. The latest revised edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be the final parliamentary authority for all association gatherings as needed.

SECTION 2. The association may adopt special rules, if desired, not in conflict with these Bylaws and/or the Constitution or generally accepted parliamentary procedure, and in keeping with Christian values and principles.

BYLAW X – FORMAL DOCUMENTS AND AMENDMENTS

SECTION 1. ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

The purpose of the Articles of Incorporation is to serve as a legal document for the State of Florida. Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation require a two-thirds 2/3 vote of the messengers at an Annual Celebration. Ten (10) messengers shall constitute a quorum.

SECTION 2. CONSTITUTION

The Constitution is the foundational document of the association. It determines the purpose and membership of the organization. As such, it is the most authoritative document for the association's organization. Amendments to the Constitution will require two-thirds (2/3) vote of the messengers at an Annual Celebration. Ten (10) messengers shall constitute a quorum.

SECTION 3. BYLAWS

The Bylaws indicate how the association will operate as an organization. The Bylaws give further details and specify matters not mentioned in the Constitution. Amendments to the Bylaws will require two-thirds (2/3) vote of the messengers in regular or called meeting of the Voting Assembly or at an Annual Celebration. Ten (10) messengers shall constitute a quorum.

SECTION 4. POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

The Administrative Team will maintain a Policy and Procedures Manual to ensure the effective compliance of the provisions listed in the Constitution and Bylaws. The manual's approval and amendments require a majority vote of the Administrative Team, however in some cases approval by the Voting Assembly may be sought by the Administrative Team or the Executive Director of Missions.