

BYLAWS

of

BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

403 Church Street

Walterboro, South Carolina

Charleston Atlantic Presbytery

Synod of the South Atlantic

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Adopted February 2014

HISTORY

Bethel Presbyterian Church, organized in 1728, has survived the monarchs of England, the hardships of the American Revolution, the trials of the Civil War, the problems of the twentieth century, and six houses of worship. The history reflects “an intimate portrait of the changing manners and customs of a people through one of the most eventful periods of human history.”

Bethel was established by Archibald Stobo on the old stagecoach road (Highway 64) leading from Charleston to Savannah. The first building was used until 1746 when a “more handsome and adequate structure was erected.” Charles Fraser, the Charleston artist, preserved in his Sketchbook a likeness of that building, which was destroyed by a forest fire in 1886. Easter sunrise services have been held periodically on the historic site.

In the early 1800s the area surrounding Bethel became unhealthful in the summer because of malaria; therefore, many of the inhabitants moved to the summer colony of Hickory Valley, which later became Walterborough. In 1821 the trustees and minister obtained a subscription for building a church at Walterborough to be an appendage to the Bethel church at Jacksonborough. The rental of a church pew was \$10 per year and “all persons who held pews in the Bethel church were entitled to a bench in the Walterborough church without an extra expense.” This building lasted until 1860 when a “handsome structure with a portico, tower, and a gallery for colored communicants” was built near the site of the original building. It had a short life because a tornado in 1879 destroyed it and all other churches in town.

Almost immediately a beautiful new church was constructed and dedicated in 1880. This white clapboard building made of heart pine went up in flames in 1966 from unknown causes. By 1969 the fourth sanctuary on this lot was a brick structure erected with materials as fireproof as possible.

In 1976 Douglas Hall, the educational building completed in 1951, was totally renovated, and a fine Moller pipe organ was built for the sanctuary. The 1890 Bethel Bell, which had fallen during the 1966 fire, was placed on a permanent structure in the side garden in 1997.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the church and grounds were refurbished. The sanctuary was given new carpeting, church pew cushions, and structural repairs. Douglas Hall received wallpaper, painting, carpeting, and new window treatments. The facilities-enhancement plan including handicap accessibility, paved road and side parking, landscaping, and sanctuary roof repair was completed in time for the 275th Anniversary of Bethel.

The continuing growth of the congregation is evidence of Bethel’s mission to witness to the abundance of life in Jesus Christ through worship, fellowship, and service to others. Today, the sixth church building is testimony that the “rugged determination and humble reliance on the providence of Almighty God” have enabled the congregation to survive and prosper through every single era of American history.

*--Laura Lynn Hughes, church historian
1999- 2013*

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ARTICLE I Mission Statement

Our mission is to glorify God in everything we do. We proclaim the good news that God saves us through Jesus Christ. We provide for spiritual growth and the development of individual gifts and personal ministries through teaching, learning, and caring for one another. We witness to the abundance of life in Jesus Christ through worship, fellowship, and service to others.

ARTICLE II Relation to the PC (USA)

The Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member church of the Presbytery of Charleston Atlantic in the Synod of the South Atlantic of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

ARTICLE III Membership

The Session Council shall receive and nurture members of the church in accordance with *Book of Order*, G-1.03.

The Session Council shall create rolls for all baptized members, active members, and affiliate members. The Session Council shall delete names from the roll of the congregation upon the member's death, admission to membership in another congregation or presbytery, or renunciation of jurisdiction. The Session Council may delete names from the roll of the congregation when a member so requests, or has moved, or otherwise ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. The Session Council shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names because of inactivity.

All members shall carry out the ministries of proclamation, sharing the sacraments, and living in covenant life with God and each other in accordance with *Book of Order*, G-101.

ARTICLE IV Worship and Sacraments

The Session Council shall ensure that services of worship of God are regularly and reverently held in accordance with *Book of Order*, Directory of Worship.

The Sacrament to the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated every first Sunday of the month, except for July and September when it will be held the second Sunday, and at other special times as the Session Council may decide in accordance with *Book of Order* W-2.4009, 2.4010.

The Sacrament of Baptism shall be celebrated in accordance with the principles of *Book of Order*, W-2.3000.

ARTICLE V Governance of the Church

The church shall be governed in accordance with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. Consistent with that *Constitution*, these bylaws shall provide specific guidance for this church. *Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised)* shall be used for parliamentary guidance.

ARTICLE VI Meetings of the Church

There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation and special meetings as necessary at which at least the following business shall be presented: financial report for the preceding year, budget for the current year (information only), changes in the terms of call for the pastor, election of a Nominating Committee, report of the Nominating Committee for church officers and election of members to serve on the Nominating Committee. Other business to be transacted at special meetings of the congregation is delineated in *Book of Order*, G-1.0503.

Meetings shall be called by the Session Council, by the Presbytery, or by the Session Council when requested in writing by one-fourth of the active members on the roll of the congregation.

The business to be transacted at meetings of the congregation shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the meeting.

All active members of the congregation present at either the annual or special meetings are entitled to vote. Voting by proxy is not allowed.

ARTICLE VII Notice of Meetings

Adequate notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at least two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE VIII Moderator

The pastor shall moderate the meetings. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator appointed by Presbytery shall preside. If it is impractical for the pastor to preside, he or she shall invite another teaching elder who is a member of Presbytery or a person authorized by Presbytery to serve as moderator.

ARTICLE IX Secretary

The clerk of Session Council shall serve as secretary for all meetings of the congregation. If the clerk is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary for that meeting. The secretary shall record the actions of the congregation in minutes of the meeting to be recorded in the Minutes book of Session Council.

ARTICLE X Quorum for the Meeting

The quorum for a meeting of the congregation shall be the moderator, the secretary, and ten percent of active members. The secretary shall determine that a quorum is present.

ARTICLE XI Nominating Committee

Ruling elders shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation. The Nominating Committee shall consist of five active members, which shall include two ruling elders serving in the current class of Session Council and three members-at-large from the congregation. One of the two serving ruling elders shall be named chair of the committee. The pastor shall serve ex officio and without vote. Full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nominations from the floor at the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation. A majority of all active members present and voting shall be required to elect.

ARTICLE XII Ruling Elders

The congregation shall elect nine ruling elders divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year for a three-year term at the annual congregational meeting or at a special congregational meeting. After serving one three-year term, an elder shall be ineligible for re-election to the Session Council for a period of one year.

Once ordained and while they are active members of any congregation of this denomination, ruling elders not in active service on a Session Council continue to bear the responsibilities of the ministry to which have been ordained.

ARTICLE XIII Vacancies

Vacancies on the Session Council may be filled at a special meeting of the congregation or at the annual meeting as determined by Session Council.

ARTICLE XIV Amendments

They bylaws may be amended subject to the laws of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided that the proposed changes in printed or electronic form shall have been distributed at the same time as the call of the meeting at which the changes are to be voted.