

# **Old Fort Baptist Church**

## **Annual Church Conference Minutes**

### **12-1-24 / 5:00 pm**

Dr. Hal West welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer. He introduced Tommy Richardson, the Screven Baptist Association Director of Missions, and explained that Tommy would be moderating the meeting since he is well versed in Roberts Rules of Order procedure.

Tommy then called the meeting to order and explained the ground rules of the meeting including the exclusion of “cross talk”, use of microphones, speaking in a Godly manner and the fact that only Covenant members could vote. Staff reports followed.

Pastor Jason – Music Ministry. He noted that next Sunday night would be the Christmas Musical and he expressed appreciation to all who served in the music ministry this past year.

Adriana Melendez – Media Ministry. She shared many of her experiences during the past year through media and missions. She spoke of her team and their excellent service to Old Fort.

Carl Casterlin – Men’s Ministry. He spoke of the Men’s Breakfast and the Braveheart Bible Study.

Pastor Jason – Senior Adult and Women’s Ministries. He talked about the Senior program led capably by Susan Dack and the details of the Women’s Ministry.

Pastor Bronson – Family Ministry. He said the youth Bible study was the same weekly topic as the adults so that families could talk about the subjects together. He discussed the Fall Retreat, the Puerto Rico Youth Mission trip and baptisms. He asked that we consider how we can partner with this ministry in 2025, specifically asking for consideration of the positions of Children’s Director and VBS Coordinator.

Sydney Masten – Pre School Ministry. Sydney shared how she felt trained and led by God to serve in this ministry. She mentioned the need for a few volunteers.

Angie Tyler – Child’s Day Out. Angie shared her experiences that brought her to be the new director of this ministry serving 150 children and their families. She mentioned that they were looking for volunteers, substitutes and additional staff.

Susan McDonald – Greater Things. Susan reported that a pilot Home School hybrid program began last year with 5 students. Its success led to a full program this year capped at 12 students. In addition, the regular ministry included library, farm and parks partnerships. She said that with growth in the program comes the need for more help.

Kim McAlhaney – 5+2 Food Pantry. Kim shared how this ministry touches our neighbors lives in a caring, sharing community means. 5334 people were served this year! Donations came from

the local high school and students volunteered to serve. We are partnering with Low Country Food Bank to purchase meats and fresh vegetables at a greatly reduced cost. Approximately 40 people from the church regularly volunteer in this ministry.

John Williams – Elder updates. John mentioned the recent changes in staff and named each current staff member, thanking them for their dedicated service to Old Fort and our God. John also addressed Pastor Eric Lethco's retirement in July after 29 years of faithful service.

Dr. Hal West – Transitional Report. Dr. West shared initial results from the church health assessment noting that there was 1 healthy and 1 unhealthy category with the remainder as marginal. A more detailed report will follow once the specifics are tabulated and reviewed. There will be a Task Force formed after the new year which will break down into teams to address the individual categories.

Mike Creighton (personnel committee chair) – Senior Pastor Search. Mike said that he has been pleased with the decision to work with a Transitional Pastor and the wealth of knowledge and experience that Pastor Hal brings. He stated the plan is to have a Pastor Search Committee created and brought before the church for vote in January. Please contact him if you are interested in being on the committee or have a suggestion for a possible committee member.

Pastor Jason – Personnel Committee Nominations. It was recommended by the Elders that Mike Creighton continue on this committee for one more year due to his heavy involvement with the Transitional Pastor and New Pastor Search process. David McDonald joined the committee to fill a 2024 vacancy and Jared Lethco was nominated to serve a three year term. These nominations were approved by the congregation.

Stewardship Committee Nominations. Pastor Jason noted that Mike Montei and Robin Brittain were added to the committee during the year and were affirmed by the committee and the Elders to fill vacancies. James Monk, Justin Caldwell and Skylar Gann were nominated to serve a three year term. All were approved by congregational vote.

Deacons. Pastor Bronson reported that Geoff Brittain, Les Dial and David McDonald have been nominated to the Deacon Team. All were approved by congregational vote.

Budget – Pastor Jason and Mike Montei (stewardship committee chair) discussed our 2025 proposed budget noting changes in staff, opportunities, and challenges. Special attention was given to Building Insurance, Health Insurance, Senior Pastor start date and other issues which are unknown at this time. Tommy Richardson then returned as moderator for the discussion.

Question? Is there provision in the budget for the AC units replacement? Answer: No, we could put in a number but since the income is not there, it would be of little value.

Question? Do we have a plan for Capital expenditures, 1 year, 3 year, 5 year plan?

Answer: No but we agree that we should have one. Funding continues to be the concern.

Question? What is the Security budget? Answer: Access control on doors campus wide, off duty officer, background checks on those working with the children.

Question? Would you consider cutting the off duty officer? Answer: We have considered that.

Question? If we are not meeting the budget now how do we expect to do so in the future? Answer: We may need to differentiate between paying fixed costs vs soft costs. Prayer is key to this also.

Question? Do we need an emergency fund? Answer: Yes, but funding it is our issue.

Question? We changed how we report our financial picture mid year but our giving is still well below our budget needs. Answer: Again we have not spent monies that were soft costs in the budget. While income is well below our budget, our actual expenses are also well below the budget and much closer to the income figure.

Question? Are we still supporting Lottie Moon? Answer: Yes, designated funds always go to where they are designated.

Comment. We are always short on funds until December but December is usually our biggest giving month and we hope this year is no different.

Tommy then called for a vote on the budget. It was approved with 2 opposed.

Tommy called for any unfinished or new business.

A comment was made that we have previously promoted Lottie Moon and that we should continue to do so.

Tommy closed the meeting in prayer at 6:31 pm.