

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS  
WESTCHASE COMMUNITY CHURCH, INC.  
DBA: OPENWATER CHURCH  
January 1, 20015 Revised**

**PREAMBLE**

For the preservation and security of our faith, and towards the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the accepted tenets of the Southern Baptist Denomination, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body with respect to other churches, we do declare and establish this Constitution.

**ARTICLE I – Name**

This church shall be known as Westchase Community Church dba Openwater Church, Incorporated, of Tampa, Florida, located in Hillsborough County.

**ARTICLE II – Purpose**

The purpose of the Church is to glorify God by fulfilling the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

1. To celebrate God's presence in worship
2. To demonstrate God's love through ministry
3. To communicate God's word by evangelism
4. To incorporate God's people into His family through baptism, which is fellowship
5. To educate God's people, which is discipleship

**ARTICLE III – Articles of Faith**

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God, and as the only basis for our beliefs. The Church also affirms our common faith in adopting the Baptist Faith and Message, a statement of Articles of Faith adopted by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, May 9, 1963.

- 1) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornications, adultery, transgenderism, polygamy, and pornography are sinful perversions of Gods gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter ones gender by surgery or appearance.
- 2) We believe that the term "marriage" has only one, legitimate meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, covenantal union, as delineated by Scripture. Marriage ceremonies performed in any facility owned, leased or rented by this church will only be those ceremonies sanctioned by God, joining one man with one woman as that gender was determined by birth. (Gen 2:24, Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10, Eph. 5:22-23)

**ARTICLE IV – Church Covenant**

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and having been baptized and being in agreement with Openwater Church's statements of faith, strategies and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Openwater Church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

1. I will protect the unity of my church
  - ...by acting in love toward other members
  - ...by refusing to gossip
  - ...by following the leaders (Pastor(s)/Director(s))
2. I will share the responsibility of my church
  - ...by praying for its growth
  - ...by inviting the unchurched to attend
  - ...by warmly welcoming those who visit
3. I will serve the ministry of my church
  - ...by discovering my gifts and talents
  - ...by being equipped to serve by my (Pastor(s)/Director(s))
  - ...by developing a servant's heart
4. I will support the testimony of my church
  - ...by attending faithfully
  - ...by living a godly life
  - ...by giving regularly

## **ARTICLE V – Charter**

### **A. POLICY**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation that are common among Southern Baptist churches.

### **B. DOCTRINE**

The church receives the scriptures and its authority in matters of faith and practice, its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein and in essential accord with the belief of the Southern Baptist churches, as indicated in the articles of faith.

It shall be the policy of this church, to the fullest extent possible, consistent with the independent character of a Southern Baptist church, to support the missionary and benevolent undertakings of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Florida Baptist Convention, and the Tampa Bay Baptist Association, to whose doctrinal and missionary beliefs we declare our allegiance.

Consistent with this position, all officers and teachers of this church and members of church councils or ministries shall be members in good standing, shall believe in and support the work of our church and denomination, shall adhere to the beliefs of Southern Baptists and be governed by this church constitution. Failure to measure up to these standards shall be sufficient grounds for removal from office.

## **BYLAWS**

### **ARTICLE I – Church Membership**

#### **Section 1. Admission of Statement of Faith**

A person presenting themselves for membership shall have made a public profession of faith through baptism by immersion (Believer's Baptism) and shall have completed the Openwater Church Members **Class 101-401** and abide by the membership covenant (Article IV).

#### **Section 2. Admission by Baptism**

A person may be admitted for membership by baptism by immersion (Believer's Baptism) and shall have completed the Openwater Church Members Class and abide by the membership covenant (Article IV).

#### **Section 3. Admission by Letter of Recommendation**

Members from other Baptist churches holding like faith may be received into membership by Openwater Church receiving a "letter of transfer" from such church and the person awaiting membership accepting the aims and ideals of Openwater Church and completing the New Members Class 101. If no letter of recommendation can be produced because of some misfortune (such as fire destroying church records), an applicant may be accepted on the basis of his or her personal statement that he or she has accepted Christ as their personal Savior, has been baptized by immersion (Believer's Baptism), and shall have completed the Openwater Church New Members Class 101 and abide by the membership covenant (Article IV).

#### **Section 4. Responsibilities of Membership**

The responsibilities of membership are described in the membership covenant (Article IV).

#### **Section 5. Voting Rights of Membership**

Every Active/Resident Member (16 years and older) shall have the right to vote on the following matters:

1. The annual budget
2. Election of the Financial Advisory Board
3. The acquisition of real property and related indebtedness
4. Amendments to the Articles or Bylaws of the Church
5. The calling and removing of a Senior Pastor

Voting by proxy is prohibited.

#### **Section 6. Dismissal of Members**

Members shall be removed from the Church roll for the following reasons:

1. By Death
2. By Transfer of membership to another church.
3. By personal request of the member.
4. Dismissal by the Pastor(s) according to the following conditions
  - a. The member's life and conduct is not in accordance with the membership covenant in such a way that the member hinders the ministry influence of the Church in the community.
  - b. Procedures for the dismissal of a member shall be according to Matthew 18:15-17.

Pastor(s) shall mean the Senior Pastor and the ordained pastors of the Pastor's Management Team, as determined and appointed by the Senior Pastor in his sole discretion from time to time.

#### **Section 7. Admission of Experience of Restoration**

The Pastor(s) according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2 shall restore members dismissed by the Pastor(s) and their lifestyles are judged to be in accordance with the membership covenant.

### **ARTICLE II – Financial Advisory Board**

#### **Section 1. Number and Term**

The Directors shall, from time to time, designate the authorized number of **Financial Advisory Board Members** of the Church. **Financial Advisory Board** shall be voted in, by the members, at the annual membership meeting based upon the recommendations of the Directors. **Financial Advisory Board** may only be removed by a vote of the members or resignation thereof.

#### **Section 2. Powers**

The **Financial Advisory Board** shall have the following powers and duties:

1. To provide financial counsel to the Directors.
2. To determine the compensation of the licensed and/or ordained ministers of the Church.
3. To conduct such other duties and activities as the Directors may designate from time to time.

### **ARTICLE III – Directors**

### **Section 1. Number and Term**

The authorized Directors shall be the Senior Pastor, Administrative Pastor, and Executive Pastor until changed by amendment of the Articles of Incorporation duly adopted by the members. The Directors shall be Pastor(s) as defined in Article IV section 6. The Director of Finance and Operations shall be an authorized director in the event an Administrative Pastor position is not filled. The Minister of Worship shall be an Authorized Director in the event an Executive Pastor position is not filled. Each Director may serve and hold office until a successor has been designated and qualified or until earlier resignation.

### **Section 2. Powers**

1. General corporate powers. Subject to the provisions and limitations of the Florida Nonprofit Religious corporation Law and any limitations in the Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws, the activities and business of the Church shall be conducted and all corporate powers shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Directors
2. Specific Powers. Without prejudice to the general powers set forth above, and subject to same the Directors shall have the power to:
  - a. Select and remove all officers, agents and employees of the Church except for the Senior Pastor and prescribe any powers and duties for them that are consistent with law, with the Articles of Incorporation and with these Bylaws; and
  - b. Adopt, make and use a corporate seal and alter the form of the seal: and
  - c. Borrow money and incur indebtedness on behalf of the Church and cause to be executed and delivered for the Church's purposes and in the Church's name, promissory notes and other evidences of debt and securities; and
  - d. Exercise all other powers conferred by the Florida Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law or applicable laws.

## **ARTICLE IV– General Church Officer(s)**

### **Section 1. Senior Pastor**

The Senior Pastor shall be the spiritual leader of this church pursuant to the New Testament teachings with particular reference to 1 Timothy 3. The general operations of the church ministry shall be under the supervision of the Senior Pastor.

### **Section 2. Call of a Senior Pastor**

A Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called by the members of the church at a membership meeting whenever a vacancy occurs. The Directors shall choose all other staff positions, and each shall serve at the pleasure of the Directors subject to if any, contract of employment.

### **Section 3. Dismissal of the Senior Pastor**

The Senior Pastor may only be removed, with or without cause, by the members at any Church Petitioned Business Meeting. Subject to the rights, if any, of an officer under any contract of employment, all other officers can be removed, with or without cause, by the Directors, at any regular or special meeting of the Directors.

### **Section 4. Officers**

In addition to the Senior Pastor, the officers that are deemed necessary to maintain the ministry of the church.

### **Section 5. Other Positions/Staff**

The Senior Pastor will approve all other positions in the church.

### **Section 6. Pastors**

Pastors shall be under the supervision of the Senior Pastor and shall be the spiritual leaders of the church pursuant to the New Testament teaching with particular reference to 1 Timothy 3. Pastors shall help the Senior Pastor with the general operations of the church ministry.

## **ARTICLE IV – Records and Reports**

The Church shall maintain the following records and reports:

1. Adequate and correct books and records of accounts (financial records); and
2. Written minutes of the proceedings of its members and Directors; and
3. A record of the members of the Church, setting forth the members' names and addresses; and
4. Contribution statements for contributors. All such records shall be kept at the Church's principal office.

## **ARTICLE V-Unrelated Trade or Business**

As stated previously in its charter and by-laws, Openwater Church is organized and operated exclusively for religious, evangelical and charitable purposes, as described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, and are therefore exempt from Federal income tax. It is the church's goal to maintain this status and avoid any "unrelated trade or business" operated for the primary purpose of producing a profit. Therefore, Openwater Church cannot engage in partnerships, affiliations or other endeavors not substantially related to the organization's religious purpose. Determination of whether an activity falls within this arena shall be made by the Directors with the recommendation of the Financial Advisory Board acting under this fundamental principle.

## **ARTICLE VI – Amendments to the Bylaws**

The Bylaws in this constitution may be altered, amended, or repealed, and new Bylaws may be adopted by recommendation of the Directors and by vote of the members present at any special or regular membership meeting at which a quorum is present.

## **ARTICLE VI I– Church Meetings**

### **Section 1. Sunday Services**

The church shall maintain Sunday morning services and other worship services as deemed necessary by the Director(s)

### **Section 2. Business Meetings**

- A. Any business meeting shall be made public to the church membership at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.
- B. There shall be at least one business meeting per year in which the annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year shall be voted on for approval. This meeting must be held prior to the start of the fiscal year.

### **Section 3. Called Business Meetings**

The quorum for a business meeting provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called, shall consist of those church members that are present at the meeting.

### **Section 5. Church Petitioned Business Meeting**

A church member may petition the Pastor(s) to call a special business meeting to consider matters to be brought before the church membership, provided the petition has been signed by a minimum of fifty percent of the church members. If a properly executed petition is brought before the Pastor, it shall be mandatory that a two weeks' notice be given and a special business meeting called to address the petition.

### **Section 6. Voting at Business Meetings**

Eligibility to vote at all business meetings will be limited to members 16 years of age or older, due to the adult knowledge and wisdom necessary. All voting shall be by those physically present at the business meeting. No proxy votes are allowed. A simple majority of eligible members present and voting shall constitute church action.