

GENERAL CHURCH POLICY

The following are statements of General Church Policy that form the foundation for specific policies and procedures and organically proceed from our Constitution and Bylaws.

1 - STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AS IT RELATES TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* (II Timothy 3:16-17)

Further to the church at Corinth Paul wrote, *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”* (I Corinthians 14:40)

This statement on Biblical authority seeks to apply the teachings of scripture to our day-to-day operations as a church of Jesus Christ.

We accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and as the ultimate authority in matters of faith, doctrine and Christian living. The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

The Bible is God's instruction manual for followers of Jesus Christ, as well as leaders in His Church. Our church, related policies and personal conduct must be consistent with the authority of Scripture.

The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* statement does not exhaust the extent of our faith. For purposes of church doctrine, practice, policies and procedures, and discipline, our Senior Pastor and Active Deacons are the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

It is upon this premise that the following policies and procedures are based.

2 - STATEMENT ON THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition of life from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Psalm 139)

3 - POLICY RELATING TO BALLOT VOTES

When an issue comes before the church that requires a ballot vote, only active members age 18 and over will be allowed to vote.

4 – STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE AND FACILITIES USE: ESPECIALLY FOR WEDDINGS

Marriage

Marriage is a biblical institution established by God as clearly described in the scriptures. Marriage is a union ordained by God. It was first instituted by God in the early chapters of Genesis, codified in the Levitical law.

We believe, based on the teaching of the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, that marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world, and intended as a lifelong union of one biological man and one biological woman, determined by their God-given sex at birth. This idea is supported by the account of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Genesis 1:26-28 provides that God created man in His own image, both male and female. The passage implies that a unity of one man and one woman is necessary to fully represent the image of God in mankind. Genesis chapter 2 provides a more detailed account in which God created the first man, Adam, and decided that it was not good for him to be alone. (Genesis 2:18). God indicated that He would make a suitable helper or help mate for him. So, God then created Eve, the first woman, from part of Adam himself. God did not create a second man to be Adam's helpmate, or an assortment of multiple women, but rather one woman. Together they were man and wife and had no shame or sin in their union with each other (Genesis 2:15-25).

Jesus Christ reaffirmed the teaching of the Old Testament when He said, as recorded in Matthew 19:4-6, *"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."* Jesus states that marriage is a sacred, lifelong bond between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4-6).

The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 5:22-32 that marriage is not merely a human institution but is a special divine metaphor that illustrates the union of Christ and the church. For this reason, also, only a union between a man and a woman can be a proper marriage because a union between two men, two women, or one man and multiple women or any collection of people could not properly illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church.

Activities Inconsistent with Accepted Biblical Teachings

"Given our religious beliefs as described above, we believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (I Corinthians 3:16 & 6:12-20; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and a woman."

As a result, in order to maintain our consistent Christian witness, we cannot sanction, approve, or promote in any way adultery, fornication (a sexual relationship between a man and woman who are not married, i.e., "living together"), pornography, pedophilia, polygamy, bisexual or homosexual conduct or any other acts biblically construed as sexually immoral. This is made clear also by countless other verses throughout the Old Testament as well as by these and other passages in the New Testament.

Our church follows what the Bible reveals as the sure foundation of the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles (Matthew 7:24-29 and I Corinthians 14:37). The church is called to teach and practice these teachings and is not at liberty to depart from them for a different authority if it is to authentically bear the name "Christian."

In instances involving matters as foundational as marriage we must ultimately obey God rather than man if the two come into conflict (Acts 4:18-22). A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage found in this policy statement as based on our interpretation of the Word of God.

Accordingly, this Church, its pastors, staff, members and visiting clergy, will not be involved in same sex unions or same sex marriages, nor shall its property or resources be used for such purposes.

Clergy and staff assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage Policy may, at their discretion, decline to provide church facilities for, and/or decline to officiate at a ceremony when in his judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral or legal reasons.

Every pastor, staff member, and church member by virtue of their membership and/or employment affirms their agreement with the statements contained herein and agrees to conduct themselves in a manner with which it is consistent.

5 – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE IN THE USE OF EBC FACILITIES

The church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and always to God's glory. Although the facilities are not generally open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-member persons and groups as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.

However, facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs, or advancing, advocating, or engaging in practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the church's Constitution & By-Laws. Nor may facilities be used for activities that contradict or are deemed by the Senior Pastor and Active Deacons as inconsistent with, or contrary to the church's faith or moral teachings. The Senior Pastor, or his official designee, is the final decision-maker on whether a person or group is allowed to use church facilities.

This restricted facility use policy is necessary for two important reasons. First, the church may not in good conscience materially cooperate in activities or beliefs that are contrary to its faith. Allowing its facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice. See II Corinthians 6:14; I Thessalonians 5:22.

Second, it is very important to the church that it presents a consistent message to the community, which the church staff and members conscientiously maintain as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To allow facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the church's faith would have a severe negative impact on the message that the church strives to promote. It could also be a source of confusion and scandal to church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the church is in agreement with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using church facilities.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church's faith. This policy applies to all church facilities, regardless of whether the facilities are connected to the church's sanctuary, because the church sees all of its property as holy and set apart to worship God. See Colossians 3:17.

Approved Users and Priority of Use

The Senior Pastor or his official designee must approve all uses of church facilities. Priority shall be given to active members of the church and organized groups that are part of the ministry, organization, or sponsored activities of the church. Church facilities and equipment will be made available to non-members or outside groups meeting the following qualifications:

1. Groups or persons requesting facility use must affirm that their beliefs and practices and planned uses of the facilities are in harmony with the church's faith and practice.
2. The group or person seeking facility use must submit a signed "Request for Use of Facilities" form.
3. The group or person seeking facility use must be willing to take responsibility for the facilities and equipment used and must agree to abide by the church's rules of conduct for facility use and as described in any additional instructions by church staff.
4. The group or person seeking facility use must complete a notarized hold harmless agreement.

6 - STATEMENT OF FAITH AND CODE OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

All of our ministers, staff and employees are considered in ministerial roles, in that they all are called upon from time to time to engage in benevolence, Christian care, sharing their faith, giving their testimony, and sharing the Gospel of Christ in keeping with the mission of Ebenezer Baptist Church of Toccoa, GA.

Therefore, it will be the policy for all paid employees of Ebenezer Baptist Church of Toccoa, GA that they annually sign a statement affirming that they agree with our statement of faith and covenant, and that they are willing to comply with the standards of conduct expressed and implied.