

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
Starling Avenue Baptist Church
Martinsville, Virginia

PREAMBLE

That all things may be done decently and in order, consistent with the New Testament model of the church of Jesus Christ, and that the liberties of each individual member of this local church and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches of like faith be preserved, we adopt the following constitution and by-laws as a flexible instrument to provide guidance and basic procedures for our work.

ARTICLE I

Name and Purpose

Section I—Name

The name of this body shall be the Starling Avenue Baptist Church of Martinsville, Virginia.

Section 2—Purpose

This church, acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus Christ and accepting the Bible as the authority for faith and practice, declares its purpose is to glorify God through the following practices:

- A. To maintain regular services of public worship, devotion and prayers.
- B. To proclaim earnestly the Gospel message and urge its personal acceptance.
- C. To promote systematic Bible study and training for Christian service and to encourage the fullest stewardship of life and possessions.
- D. To cooperate through prayer, gifts, and service with the churches of the Henry County Baptist Association, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and/or other Baptist associations as the church may choose in an effort to carry the Gospel of Christ throughout the world.
- E. To promote fellowship and cooperation among all Christians.

This is a sovereign and democratic church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the rights of exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

ARTICLE II

Membership

The membership of this church shall consist of persons who have made a profession of their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord; who desire to be numbered among His disciples; who have been baptized and who are in sympathy with the faith and practices of this church.

ARTICLE III

Officers

Section 1—Officers

The officers of the church shall be the pastor; and other paid ministerial staff; trustees; deacons; clerk; treasurer; assistant treasurer; and Sunday School director.

Section 2—Election of Officers

The election of the officers shall be prescribed in the by-laws.

Section 3—Terms and Duties of Officers

Terms of officers and duties of officers shall be as prescribed in the by-laws.

ARTICLE IV

Organizations, Councils, Committees, Teams

The organizations shall be those that the church deems necessary for the spiritual growth of its members and the furtherance of the Gospel.

Section 1—Missionary Organizations

- A. The Woman's Missionary Union

Section 2—Councils

- A. The Church Council
- B. The Christian Education Council
- C. The Mission Development Council

Section 3—Standing Committees

The Standing Committees of the church shall be:

- A. The Church History Committee
- B. The Church Nominating Committee
- C. The Church Personnel Committee
- D. The Church Stewardship Committee
- E. The Church Worship Planning Committee

Section 4—Teams

The church may form or dissolve teams in response to changing ministry needs or mission opportunities as led by the Holy Spirit. For a list of the teams, see the Policies and Procedures Handbook.

Section 5—Membership, Terms of Office and Duties

The membership, election, and terms of office of these organizations, boards, councils, committees, and teams shall be as prescribed in the by-laws. The duties and function of other teams or committees created by the church shall be described in the Policies and Procedures Handbook.

ARTICLE V

Meetings

Section 1—The Lord’s Day

This church shall meet regularly on each Lord’s Day for public worship. The Lord’s Supper shall be observed as often as desired but at least once each month. The church shall meet regularly for teaching, training, fellowship and ministry.

Section 2—Regular Business Meetings

Once a quarter the church shall hold a business meeting after the last worship service on Sunday morning at which the clerk’s minutes shall be read and approved; a financial statement shall be given of receipts and expenditures, recommendations of the deacons, committees, teams, and councils shall be presented and discussed; and the reports of church organizations shall be given. At least two weeks’ notice shall be given of this meeting during the regular Sunday worship services and in the church bulletin. Three weeks before the meeting, a phone tree notice and an email notice shall be sent to all who have signed up for those communications methods.

A printed financial report for the chair of the Stewardship Committee and the pastor shall be prepared and given to them each month by the church secretary. Monthly financial reports will be available to church members upon request.

Section 3—Special Business Meetings

Special meetings shall be called to consider matters of a significant nature, such as sale or purchase of property; assumption of major financial responsibility by the church; and calling of staff members and ministerial staff. Notice of the meeting and its purpose shall be given during the regular Sunday worship services and in the church bulletin at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Three weeks before the meeting, a phone tree notice and an email notice shall be sent to all who have signed up for those communications methods. This section shall not supersede Article VII.

Section 4—Emergency Business Meetings

Emergency meetings shall be called in a true emergency situation, such as a significant water leak or a circumstance that, if not taken care of within two weeks, will cause physical, financial, or potential major hardship on the church that could be avoided by immediate action. Such meeting can be called by the pastor, the chair of deacons, or the chair of trustees. Notice of the meeting and its purpose shall be given during the next regular Sunday worship service and included in the church bulletin, if possible. In some emergencies it may be necessary to meet within a week prior to a Sunday worship service. In that case, a phone tree notice and an email notice shall be sent to all who have signed up for those communications methods. This section shall not supersede Article VII.

Section 5—Quorum

In all business meetings the quorum shall consist of at least fifteen (15) members except in special meetings for important business, such as calling a staff member, sale or purchase of property, or assumption of new financial responsibility by the church for which one-fourth of the resident membership shall be required for a quorum.

Section 6—Moderator and Vice-Moderator

The pastor shall serve as moderator of the church and the associate minister as the vice-moderator. In the absence of both these persons, or upon the resignation of the pastor, the moderator shall be the chair of the deacons.

ARTICLE VI

Licensing and Ordaining

Any member who in the judgment of the church gives evidence of a call of God to the work of the ministry may be granted a license providing a three-fourths majority of the members present at a special business meeting shall agree thereto. Licensing grants a provisional and probationary status which allows the candidate to explore a call to the ministry. The licensee then has formal permission to carry on certain ministerial functions at the church which does the licensing under the direction and supervision of the pastor, or in the absence of a pastor, other ordained ministers. Licensing should not, however, be understood as a necessary step before

ordination. If the church decides that one of its ministers possesses the scriptural qualifications for full ordination, it shall invite a council of ordained ministers and deacons to examine the candidate. Upon the recommendation of the council, the church shall ordain the candidate. No candidate shall be ordained who has not been called to a position in the field of Christian service.

ARTICLE VII

Amendment

These articles may be amended at a regular Sunday morning service of the church by three-fourths vote of all members present, provided that three weeks' notice of the meeting for the vote shall have been given during the regular Sunday worship services of the church and in the church bulletin, and a copy of the proposed change shall have been submitted to the membership at that same time, and that such changes shall have been discussed at a business meeting prior to the vote.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I

Church Covenant

The church covenant (2000) summarizes functions of the congregation:

Rejoicing in the grace of God and surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ, we are led by the Holy Spirit to joyfully and reverently covenant with God and one another.

As a member of this body of believers,

- I will glorify God through worship, prayer and the study of scripture.
- I will live in Christian love and forgiveness in my family and in this congregation. I will encourage and support others and lift them to God in prayer.
- I will be a faithful steward of all God's gifts, joyfully using all that I am and all that I have in sacrificial service to the glory of God.
- I will affirm and celebrate the Christian growth and service of others.
- I will demonstrate God's love and mercy through words and actions to everyone whose life I touch. Working with others, I will provide the resources to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

ARTICLE II

Membership

Section 1—Reception of Members

A. Regular Membership

Any person may offer himself or herself as a candidate for membership in this church in the following ways:

- 1) Upon profession of faith in Christ followed by baptism by immersion
- 2) By transfer of membership from another Christian church
- 3) Upon statement of prior profession of faith and church membership when no letter is obtainable.

All such persons shall be presented for reception into membership at any church worship service.

B. Exception

Any exception to the above stated processes of receiving persons into the membership of this church shall be considered and voted upon by the congregation in business session upon the recommendation of the pastor and the deacons.

C. Classes

Persons presenting themselves for membership according to any of the above processes are urged to attend the pastor's class on the meaning of church membership.

Section 2—General Responsibilities of Membership

The responsibilities of membership in Starling Avenue Baptist Church are articulated in the church covenant. (See By-laws Article I)

Section 3—Removal from the Church Roll

A member's name shall be removed from the church roll as follows:

- A. Upon death of the member;
- B. Upon letter granted to another church of like faith requesting such in writing for any member in good standing;
- C. Upon uniting with another church;
- D. Upon personal written request submitted to the church clerk.

Section 4—Watch-Care

Members of other churches who do not wish to transfer their active membership to this church, but wish to share our fellowship in the worship of God and promotion of His kingdom may be received under the watch-care of the church. Participants in the life of the congregation who have watch-care status will be assigned deacons and may serve on teams. Persons with watch-care status may not, however, be an officer, serve as a deacon, or be on the nominating, personnel, stewardship, or worship committees.

ARTICLE III

Officers

Section 1—Election of Officers

- A. The election of the pastor and other employed ministers shall be upon the recommendation of the Personnel Committee. The committee shall bring only one name at a time for consideration of the church and no nomination shall be made except that of the committee. Election shall be by secret ballot at regular Sunday worship services; two weeks' notice of the meeting for the vote shall have been given at regular Sunday worship services and in the church bulletin. Three weeks before the meeting, a phone tree notice and an email notice shall be sent to all who have signed up for those communications methods. An affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present and voting is necessary for a call. Should the one recommended by the committee fail to receive a three-fourths vote, the committee will be instructed to seek out another minister and the meeting shall be adjourned without debate.
- B. All other church officers are nominated by the Nominating Committee and presented to the church in regular business meeting. A vote on the slate shall take place at regular Sunday worship services; two weeks' notice shall have been given in regular Sunday worship services and in the church bulletin. Three weeks before the meeting, a phone tree notice and an email notice shall be sent to all who have signed up for those communications methods.

Section 2—Tenure of Office

- A. The pastor and other employed persons are elected for an indefinite period and will serve until they decide to resign or retire or until the church, upon the recommendation of the Personnel Committee in consultation with the deacons, votes to withdraw employment. The severance of church-minister relationships shall require at least thirty days' notice on the part of either party.
- B. All other church officers are elected for a term of three years with the exception of the trustees, who are elected for six year terms. All terms of office are to begin and conclude with the organizational year. General officers such as Sunday School director, WMU director, treasurer, and the like shall be eligible to succeed themselves, if in the view of

the Nominating Committee removal of a person will hinder an ongoing program of the church.

- C. Any officer of this church who becomes a non-resident member or becomes permanently disabled (unable to carry out his or her function) shall automatically vacate his or her office. In the case of a vacancy a successor to fill out the unexpired term of office may be nominated by the Nominating Committee and presented to the church in a business meeting. A vote shall take place at regular Sunday worship services; two weeks' notice shall have been given in regular Sunday worship services and in the church bulletin. Three weeks before the meeting, a phone tree notice and an email notice shall be sent to all who have signed up for those communications. Except for paid staff members, each officer shall hold his or her position until a successor is elected and qualified.

Section 3—Duties of Officers

A. The Pastor and other Ministers

The Personnel Committee shall present a detailed job description with the recommendation to call a minister. All full-time ministers employed by the church are ex-officio (but non-voting) members of all committees, councils, and boards except for the Personnel Committee.

B. Deacons

1. Composition

The diaconate shall consist of one person for each twenty resident church members and those with watch-care status. Adjustments to the number of deacons serving may be made upon request of the deacons, approval of the pastor, and vote of the church at the first regular business meeting each year.

- 2. Any church member eighteen years of age or older, of genuine integrity, spiritual dedication, and devotion to the church as evidenced by active involvement in its life, programs, and financial support shall be eligible for deacon if such person manifests the beginnings of the Biblical qualities described in I Timothy 3: 8-13, a deep concern for people and a commitment to minister to them.

3. Election

- i. One-third of the membership shall retire each year and an equal number shall be elected for a three-year term.
- ii. A deacon shall not be eligible to succeed himself or herself, or be eligible for nomination, until one year has elapsed after retirement as a deacon.

- iii. On the first Sunday in May church members shall be asked to select names for deacons. The names selected on each ballot shall not exceed the specified number required to fill the vacancies.
- iv. Members who will be absent on the first Sunday in May may sign for and obtain an absentee ballot from the church office. To be counted these ballots must be returned to the church office by noon on the Friday preceding the first Sunday in May.
- v. The Church Nominating Committee shall rank those selected according to number of votes received. If it is the consensus of the Church Nominating Committee and the ministerial staff that a person who received enough votes to be deacon nonetheless is not qualified to be a deacon according to those guidelines in Section 3B, part 2, they shall be allowed to remove that person's name from consideration for that year.
- vi. Nominees shall be contacted by the pastor or, in his absence, the chair of the deacons to determine the nominee's willingness to serve.

4. Ordination

Deacons will be ordained according to the New Testament practice as set forth in Acts 6:6.

5. Officers

The officers of the deacons shall be a chair, vice-chair, secretary, group leaders, and assistant group leaders. The election of officers shall be held each year at the regular October meeting.

6. Vacancies

The Nominating Committee may nominate from the original list of nominees in the prior election a member to fill a vacancy. The nominee shall be eligible for re-election if the unexpired term is less than eighteen months. If the unexpired term is more than eighteen months, the nominee must await the normal lapse of one year for re-election.

7. Duties

It shall be the duty of the deacons to cooperate with the pastor and other staff ministers in overseeing the work of the church. They shall be especially charged with the spiritual advancement and interest of the church and ministry to its members. They shall be responsible for the distribution of the Lord's Supper. They shall meet regularly each month and when called by the pastor or the chair. It is suggested that all committees bring preliminary reports to the diaconate.

8. Removal of a Deacon

If a deacon does not perform normal responsibilities or if his or her personal life seems offensive to the church, the deacon can be removed by a three-fourths vote of the church.

C. Trustees

1. Membership

The board of trustees shall be composed of six (6) members of the congregation in active membership of good standing and possessing informed senses of sound business principles, legal matters, and Christian stewardship. If no active deacon is already a member of the trustees, then one may be appointed and added thereto for a term of one year by the chair of the deacons at the outset of a new church year (for the sake of communication and coordination of the deacons and trustees). The term of office shall be six (6) years with one elected each church year; a previous term shall not disqualify a member for re-election.

2. Duties

- (a) They shall hold all church property in trust for the congregation according to the laws of Virginia and execute legal documents as instructed by the church.
- (b) They shall see that all properties are properly insured.
- (c) They shall anticipate future property (land) needs and with the deacons shall bring appropriate recommendations to the church.

D. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The church shall use the unified budget and the treasurer or assistant treasurer shall disburse all funds for local expenses, and missions. The treasurer shall hold all money belonging to the church and shall without special vote or authority pay out monies for all items specified in the budget. Under his or her direction a record of all disbursements shall be kept with proper vouchers. All bills shall be paid by check. The treasurer shall present a summary of the financial condition of the church at each quarterly business meeting and a complete record at the end of the year. Under his or her direction a record of all offerings shall be kept and proper credit shall be recorded and annual reports made available to members.

E. Clerk

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special business meetings of the church; to keep an accurate roll of the membership; to prepare an annual letter concerning

the work of the church; and to perform such duties as may lie within the scope of the office. Copies of the clerk's records shall be stored at the church.

F. Sunday School Director

The Sunday School Director shall have oversight of the Sunday School program. He or she will coordinate with the appropriate staff person and Christian Education Council in establishing curriculum, creating the needed classes, recruiting teachers and general officers, and keeping records. Sunday School curriculum and literature must be approved by the Sunday School director and minister of education or pastor.

ARTICLE IV

Councils, Committees, Teams, and Organizations

Section 1—Election, term of service

Members of committees, at-large members of councils, and team leaders are nominated by the Nominating Committee and presented to the church in regular business meeting for approval. Committee members are elected for a term of three years, after which they must be off the committee one year before being re-elected. Team leaders are elected to serve one year and may be elected to serve successive years. Other team members volunteer and are not elected. All terms of office are to begin and conclude with the organization year.

Section 2—Councils

A. The Church Council

The Church Council shall be composed of the pastor and other paid ministerial staff, the Sunday School director, the WMU director, the chair of the deacons, the clerk, and all team leaders and chairmen of committees concerned with the program of the church: Flowers and Decorations, Food Services, Library, Mission, Nursery, Recreation, Transportation, Adult Fellowship and Youth Committees. Ex-officio members shall include all other team leaders and committee chairmen: Baptismal, Building and Grounds, History, Nominating, Personnel, Stewardship, and Tellers Committees. The council will lead the church to state its objectives. It will identify priority needs, formulate and recommend a plan of work for one to three years, coordinate the efforts of committees and organizations in meeting those needs, and evaluate the success of these programs.

B. The Christian Education Council

The Christian Education Council shall be composed of the Sunday School officers and teachers, age-level workers in WMU, the VBS director, and staff members charged with Christian education responsibilities. The council shall be responsible for maintaining clear educational objectives for all age groups, designing ways of reaching those goals, coordinating the efforts of the church organizations, and evaluating the effectiveness of the total Christian education program.

C. The Mission Council

This council shall be composed of the WMU director, and three church members at large. The council shall take initiative in making studies of local mission needs, recommend plans to the Church Council for meeting those needs, and administer the work assigned to it.

Section 3—Standing Committees

A. The Church History Committee

The membership of this committee shall be determined by its need. The committee shall collect and safeguard all records that can be found, insure the church makes and keeps adequate records of its progress, help members appreciate the church through understanding the past, and develop and recommend any policies and procedures regarding its historical material.

B. The Church Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall be composed of nine (9) persons (at least four women and four men). The committee serves to help members identify their gifts and facilitate their employment. The committee is to nominate persons for team coordinators, all officers and committees except paid workers and is to secure their commitment to serve upon election by the church. They may confer with the Team Coordinators in completing teams. The committee shall present its annual report in written form to the church on the third Sunday in May. The report shall be discussed on the following Wednesday night. Any amendments to that report shall be voted on the first Sunday in June.

C. The Church Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee shall be composed of six (6) persons (three men and three women) and the chair of deacons. The duties of the committee are to nominate and present to the church for vote the pastor and other staff personnel; to employ after consultation with involved persons and committees the secretarial and custodial workers; to provide each person called or employed with a complete job description (in the case of pastor and other staff workers, this shall be a part of the recommendation to call); to maintain an employee handbook; to review and to recommend to the Stewardship Committee staff salaries and allowances; to deal with grievances of staff members and grievances against them and, if necessary, to discharge secretarial, childcare and custodial workers and to recommend to the deacons actions concerning the pastor and other staff personnel. No staff member including the pastor shall meet with the committee unless requested to do so. However, any staff or church member can request a meeting with the committee.

D. The Church Stewardship Committee

The committee shall be composed of the treasurer, chair of deacons, Sunday School director, WMU director, and at least six members at large. It shall be the duty of this committee to lead in the stewardship education of the church; to prepare an annual budget for recommendation to the church; to present the budget proposal; to secure the budget's subscription; and to administer it when adopted. The budget proposal will be presented

on a Sunday, and discussed at a special business meeting. If the proposal is amended at the business meeting, then the amended budget must be presented to the congregation on Sunday, and discussed again at a business meeting, before it is brought to the church for a vote. The vote on the adoption of a budget shall be on a Sunday morning. After the budget has been approved, any request for expenditures beyond the approved budget must be referred to the Stewardship Committee for their recommendation. The committee will bring their recommendation to a business meeting.

E. The Church Worship Planning Committee

The Worship Committee shall be composed of at least six members whose duties shall be to assist the staff in evaluating and planning the order of worship and music for all services, regular and special, and in planning and promoting music education for all ages.

Section 4—Standing Teams

Information about the composition of teams and their duties may be found in the Policies and Procedures Handbook.

Section 5—Organizations

A. WMU

The Woman’s Missionary Union is a self-governing organization consisting of members of the Women on Mission (WOM), Acteens, Children in Action, and Mission Friends (MF). The WMU leads the church and the WMU membership to pray for and give to missions, to do missions, to learn about missions, to develop spiritually toward a missions lifestyle, and to participate in the work of the church locally and globally.

ARTICLE V

General Provisions

Section 1—Church Year

The organizational church year shall run from September 1 to August 31. The fiscal church year shall run concurrently with the calendar year (January 1 through December 31).

Section 2—Property Holding

It is agreed that the securing and maintaining of real property, buildings, and equipment by this church shall be for the express purpose of providing facilities for public worship and for the engagement upon the missionary, educational and benevolent interests of this church.

Such properties shall be held in trust for the congregation by the trustees according to the statutes of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

If at any time this church shall determine to alter the quality of its beliefs and practices so as in important aspects to be at variance with the character described in this constitution, and if the decision is by less than three-fourths vote of the resident membership, it is understood that the rights of the property of the church shall inhere in that part of the congregation which shall agree

to use the property for the purpose for which it was purchased and has been to that time maintained.

Section 3—Parliamentary Proceedings

Robert's Rules of Order or another generally recognized parliamentarian's guide shall be the authority on matters of parliamentary procedure in conducting the business of the church.

Section 4—Interpretation and Intent

It shall not be the intent of this constitution and by-laws that the interpretation thereof shall be so definitive and legalistic that they preclude good judgment, Christian love, compassion and understanding. In all things, the church will be guided by the pledge made in the church covenant to live in Christian love and forgiveness in this congregation.

Section 5—Adoption

This constitution and by-laws shall be considered adopted and immediately in effect if and when three-fourths of the adult members present at the business meeting at which vote is taken shall vote in favor of the same.

Section 6—Amendments to the By-Laws

These articles may be amended at a regular Sunday morning service of the church by three-fourths vote of all members present, provided that three weeks' notice of the meeting for the vote shall have been given at a regular Sunday worship services of the church and in the church bulletin; and a copy of the proposed change shall have been submitted to the membership at that time; and that such changes shall have been discussed at a business meeting prior to the vote. Three weeks before the vote, a phone tree notice and an email notice shall be sent to all who have signed up for those communications methods.

Section 7—Review of the Constitution

At least every five years the deacons shall nominate and the church elect a Constitution Committee to review this constitution and recommend changes to the church.

First Constitution Committee - 1979: 1981
John Woody, Claude Minter, Wade Lawrence, David Adkins
Adopted by Church - December 12, 1981

Second Constitution Committee - 1986
Wade Lawrence, Berenice Minter, Marcella Minter, Warren Robertson, David Adkins
Amended by Church - May 25, 1986

Third Constitution Committee - 1992
Marcella Minter, Diane Adkins, Warren Robertson, Jim Wagoner, David Adkins
Amended by Church - July 19, 1992

Fourth Constitution Committee - 1997
Lynn Fitzgibbons, John Hance, Lois Johnson, Ronnie Prillaman, Dwight Stultz, David Dickerson, David Adkins
Amended by church - November 2, 1997

Fifth Constitution Committee - 2002
Amy Clemons, Harry Dalton, Lynn Fitzgibbons, Midge Huddle, Marshall Stowe, David Adkins

Sixth Constitution Committee -2010
Harry Dalton, John Hance, Midge Huddle, Martha Lee, Kathy Long, Eric Monday, David Adkins

Seventh Constitution Committee—2015
Diane Adkins, Amy Clemons, David Dickerson, Sarah Fain, Patsy Hobson, Darryl Martin