

**Old Colony Baptist Association By-Laws  
March 2017**

**ARTICLE I - NAME:**

The name of this Association is: OLD COLONY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION (OCBA).

**ARTICLE II – PURPOSE:**

The purpose of the OCBA is to provide member churches fellowship, support and collective opportunities for promotion of the Gospel as each seeks to implement the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**ARTICLE III – RELATIONSHIPS**

The OCBA is in covenantal relationship with The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts (TABCOM) and consequently with the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA). \*Refer to attached copy.(page 11)

**ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP**

Membership shall consist of those Christian churches of Baptist polity within the contiguous region of the OCBA, which subscribe to and agree to support the intent of the Articles of Purpose and Relationships. Churches who are members of the OCBA as of the adoption of these by-laws are members without further action. Churches seeking to become members shall submit the request in writing with a copy of the recorded affirmative vote of the congregation attesting to their willingness to subscribe to the OCBA's by-laws together with documentation of organization, such as their covenant and by-laws. Admission shall be completed upon vote of the membership of the OCBA at the next called meeting.

To retain membership a church will:

- Affirm and promote the STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.
- Participate in the meetings of the OCBA.
- File annual report with the OCBA Clerk.
- Pay dues annually to the OCBA.
- Participate in the ABC mission offerings

Any church failing to fulfill these obligations may have its voting privileges suspended upon recommendation of the Executive Board and subsequent vote of the OCBA.

A member church desiring to separate from the OCBA is expected to so advise the Clerk of the OCBA of their intent, the reason for their action and a copy of the congregational vote regarding the action. The OCBA and Clerk shall immediately advise the Executive Board and the TABCOM Association Resource Coordinator and call meeting of same at which time, mindful of the admonitions of Scripture, seek to effect reconciliation. A report of the matter shall be made at the next called meeting of the OCBA together with recommendations for such actions as may be determined to be best for our mutual Christian witness.

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The OCBA may initiate dismissal if it is conclusively demonstrated that a member church has broken the covenant relationship of these By-laws. Such action on dismissal shall follow a procedure corresponding with those for voluntary dismissal, except that a special meeting shall be called for the purpose. A vote of two thirds of delegates present and voting is required.

**ARTICLE V – GOVERNANCE:**

The legal business of the OCBA shall be conducted by representation of the member churches determined as follows: One pastor of the church and two delegates. All persons in regular standing in a member church may participate without vote.

The stated Clerk and/or Pastor of each member church and the Clerk of the OCBA shall serve as the liaisons for all official communications. All communication from the OCBA shall also be directed to the clerk and/or serving pastor and all OCBA Executive Board Members.

**ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS:**

All regular meetings of the OCBA shall be called by the OCBA Clerk either by written form delivered by postal service or by electronic communication to the Clerk and/or Pastor of each member church and each OCBA Executive Board member not less than thirty days before the date of such call, stating the time and place and reason for the call to the meeting.

The Annual meeting shall be called by the Clerk in accordance with the standing rules. Other meetings shall be called by the Clerk at the direction of the Executive Board. A quorum shall require the presence at the called meeting of a minimum of ten member churches. A lesser number may adjourn the meeting from time to time.

A special meeting shall be called upon the request of five or more churches, given in writing, stating the purpose for such request. The clerk shall notify the executive Board and issue the call within sixty days.

All actions taken by the OCBA shall be determined by a simple majority of those delegates present and voting at the meeting unless otherwise provided for in these by-laws.

**ARTICLE VII – OFFICERS:** The Officers and Committees established by these by-laws shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the OCBA from a ballot presented by the Nominating Committee. They shall serve designated terms of office until their successors shall be elected. Nominees shall be resident members of a participating church.

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**MODERATOR:**

A moderator shall be elected to a term of two years and may be re-elected to one additional term only. Nominees shall have exhibited leadership skills in a local church. The duties of the office are those common to the office including presiding at all meetings of the OCBA and the Executive Board, and as an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating.

The Moderator shall serve as the principal liaison between the OCBA, the Association Resource Coordinator, and TABCOM.

The Moderator will keep the Vice Moderator informed of all essential matters; shall determine that adequate clerical and financial records are being maintained and that required reports are rendered in a timely fashion. He/she shall make a report to the OCBA at its Annual Meeting.

**VICE MODERATOR:**

A Vice Moderator shall be elected with the same qualifications and to the same term of office as the moderator. The Vice Moderator shall be ready to serve in the event of the Moderator's absence or incapacity.

He/she shall be a voting member of the Executive Board and shall have such other responsibilities and powers as may be voted by that Board. The Vice moderator may be nominated and expected to succeed the current moderator.

**CLERK:**

A clerk shall be elected for a term of one year and may serve consecutive terms. He/she shall perform all duties common to the office including the recording of the minutes of all OCBA and Executive Board meetings and the timely submission of such reports as may be requested by affiliated organizations.

The Clerk shall publish a written Annual report to the OCBA which shall include actions taken by vote of the OCBA. This will be available on the OCBA website and/or by electronic or written communication.

The Clerk's signature shall be on file with all depositories holding OCBA funds. He/she shall be authorized by the Executive Board to exercise this authority in the event of the Treasurer's absence or incapacity.

In the absence of the Clerk, the Moderator shall appoint a Clerk pro-tempore. Actions so recorded shall be transcribed and provided to the Clerk without delay.

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**TREASURER:**

A Treasurer shall be elected for a term of one year and may serve consecutive terms. He/she shall perform all duties common to the office including the receiving, distributing and accounting for all funds of the OCBA as authorized by vote of the OCBA or directed by the Executive Board. Written reports shall be presented to the Annual Meeting and periodic written reports to the Executive Board meetings. He/she shall be responsible for presenting a draft budget to the Executive Board.

**AUDITOR:**

The auditor shall be elected annually to term of one year, and may serve consecutive terms. He/she shall audit the accounts of the Treasurer and determine that the Clerk's records are complete and in good order. He/she shall file a written report with the clerk 21 days before the Annual Meeting.

**ARTICLE VIII – EXECUTIVE BOARD**

There shall be an Executive Board comprised of the Moderator, Vice- Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Chairpersons of all Committees and Task Forces, the Executive Officer or a designated member of any affiliated organization whose jurisdiction coincides with that of the OCBA, including other persons as may be elected or appointed to serve as OCBA representatives to TABCOM or ABCUSA functions. Two at large members will be elected from the constituency.

The TABCOM Association Resource Coordinator serving the OCBA shall be a member ex-officio.

The Board shall meet not less than four times in each fiscal year. It shall administer the work of the OCBA. A budget for the year following shall be presented for action at the Annual Meeting. It shall appoint persons to responsibilities as provided in the Standing Rules. The board shall appoint, for service until the next Annual Meeting, persons to fill any vacancies that may need filling.

**ARTICLE IX – COMMITTEES**

The Executive Board shall serve as the nominating committee and appoint two members to serve as representatives to the TABCOM Nominating Committee in accordance with our covenant relationship. Every effort will be made to bring in new members to the board each year.

There shall be a COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY consisting of at least six persons, the majority of whom shall be ordained ministers. They shall be elected annually for the term of one year and may serve as long as practicable. They shall act in collaboration with the TABCOM Commission on Ordained Ministry and be concerned with the welfare of all American Baptist persons within the OCBA who are preparing for ordained ministry. The ordaining church must be in good standing with the OCBA in order to present a candidate for ordination.

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The chairperson or one he/she shall appoint, shall also act as the Chairperson of the Ordination Council. (See Ordination Council attached to Standing Rules.)

OTHER COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES may be appointed by the Executive Board, in accordance with the Standing Rules to accomplish the spiritual ministry of The OCBA as stated in Articles II – PURPOSE.

**ARTICLE X – AMMENDMENTS:**

These By-laws may be amended at any regularly called meeting of the OCBA, or at any special meeting called for that purpose. Such amendments shall become effective upon an affirmative voted of a simple majority of the delegates present and voting, provided at least thirty days written notice of the proposed change has been sent by the Clerk of the OCBA to each constituent church and to the members of the Executive Board.

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**STANDING RULES**

The following standing rules are for the business and administration of OCBA and established by vote of the Executive Board. The majority vote of those present and entitled to vote shall be effective.

**Section 1 – GENERAL COUNCILS**

It is not the practice of the OCBA to rule on matters of faith, polity or procedure for its constituents. When the occasion arises requiring a consensus, a council comprised of the pastor and two delegates from each church in the OCBA shall be sought. This Council shall be called by the clerk of the OCBA or the Committee on Ordained Ministry. A report shall be made to the OCBA at the next called meeting of the association.

**Section 2 – NOMINATIONS**

In making nominations to fill the OCBA offices and committees, the Nominating Committee shall:

- A. Observe a general policy of alternating the office of moderator between clergy and laity if possible.
- B. Chose an ordained pastor to be chair of the Committee on Ministry.
- C. Nominate not more than one person from any church for the general offices of the OCBA when possible.
- D. Refer to job descriptions as prepared by the Executive Board and on file with the Clerk.
- E. Determine that each nominee is a member in good standing in a cooperating, constituent church.

**Section 3 – TERM OF OFFICE AND VACANCIES:**

Officers and committees shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the OCBA, shall assume office on January 1st, and serve until their respective successors are installed.

The termination of membership of an officer or committee member in a constituent church, or the withdrawal or removal of such officer or committee member from the jurisdiction of the OCBA or church which he/she represents, shall constitute a vacating of office.

The Executive Board shall be empowered to replace inactive officers or representatives who fail to take an active part in the work of the OCBA.

The Nominating Committee shall submit the names of persons to replace such temporary appointments at the next Annual meeting.

The Executive Board shall develop and maintain statements of responsibilities and job descriptions for each office and committee. The clerk shall ascertain that the job descriptions are current and provide them in writing to the Nominating Committee as needed for their use.

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**Section 4 - ANNUAL/FISCAL YEAR AND ANNUAL MEETING**

The Annual/Fiscal year of the OCBA shall be January 1 through December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**Section 6 – ORDINATION COUNCIL:**

The attached document titled “Steps in the Ordination Process within the Old Colony Baptist OCBA,” adopted in 1994, shall govern this council.

**Section 7 – CONTRIBUTION/ASSESSMENTS**

Each member church shall contribute a set amount annually for each resident church member. The amount shall be recommended by the Executive Board and acted on at the Annual Meeting of the OCBA. This voluntary contribution by the churches should be sent to the Treasurer of the OCBA upon receipt of a communication from that person.

The church shall ascertain whether to use average attendance or # of active resident members in calculating their assessment. If the church is unable to contribute that amount to the work of the OCBA some kind of financial support should be given annually.

**Section 8 – COMMITTEES/TASK FORCES**

**A. NOMINATING COMMITTEE and ORDAINED MINISTRY COMMITTEE**

These are permanent committees provided in the By-laws.

**B. BUDGET COMMITTEE**

The Treasurer and the Executive Board shall act as the budget committee. They shall prepare a budget for the ensuing fiscal year and submit it for review and action at the Annual Meeting. The Executive Board shall make recommendations regarding the amount of annual assessments for each church.

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**Steps in the Ordination Process  
Within the Old Colony Baptist Association**

**Before the Ordination Council**

1. Within three months of the granting of a pre-ordination licenses, the Chairperson of the OCBA Committee on the Ministry (COM) or a designee will arrange a meeting with the licensee and local church pastor for the following purposes:
  - A. To become acquainted with the licensee.
  - B. To explore ways for the candidate to become involved with the OCBA.

A summary of the interview will be mailed by the interviewer to the licensee with a copy to the local church, TABCOM Committee on Ministerial Preparation Secretary (for licensee's file), and COM file. Should the licensee wish to respond to the summary, a copy of the response should be mailed to these same places.

2. The OCBA COM will appoint an advisor to maintain regular (or annual) contact with the licensee to provide guidance in the process, in cooperation with the local church pastor. This advisor will find ways to include the licensee in the life of the OCBA. This will include, but not be limited to, the licensee attending an annual meeting to be introduced and make a brief statement, followed by attendance and participation at least once each year at OCBA functions.
3. When OCBA COM chairperson has received written confirmation that the candidate has met Ministerial Preparation Committee requirements and that Commission on the Ministry (TABCOM) has voted that he or she should proceed toward ordination, the chairperson will arrange a time for the presentation of the candidate's Ordination paper to COM. The candidate shall see that the COM chairperson is given a current copy of the paper.
4. The chairperson will mail a copy of the paper to each member of COM with a cover letter stating the date, place and time for the examination of the candidate (cost of mailing will be covered by OCBA.) This notice should be mailed *at least* two weeks in advance of the meeting.
5. The candidate will meet with COM at the appointed time and present his or her paper. It is expected that the candidate will appear by her or himself. The paper should include the following elements:

A The candidate's faith journey and Christian experience, and call to the ministry

B The candidate's theological understanding of:

1. God
2. Jesus Christ
3. Holy Spirit
4. Humanity



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5. Salvation
6. Scripture
7. The Church (and its role in society and the world)
8. The ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper)
9. The candidate's attitude toward the American Baptist Churches USA, its ecumenical witness, and Code of Ethics
10. Other issues –a narrative of other issues which are not included in the above, for which the candidate may have compassion as a minister of the gospel.

After presentation of the paper, Committee members will ask questions and enter into dialogue with the candidate concerning the paper. Following a suitable period of discussion, the COM will excuse the candidate in order to vote on its recommendation. It may vote in one of the following ways:

- A. The candidate and local church should proceed with the ordination process.
- B. The candidate should be delayed in the process until certain conditions are met e.g. revision or refinement of the paper, Center for Career Development evaluation.
- C. The candidate and local church should not proceed in the ordination process for some specified reasons.

The candidate will be invited back into the COM. The recommendation will be shared and explained with the candidate by the chairperson. It should be understood that this process may take one or more **meetings** between the candidate and the COM.

6. A letter stating the recommendation of the COM will be sent to the local church, with copies to the candidate, Area Minister, OCBA Moderator, Clerk and COM files. This letter will include the next steps in the process. Should the COM recommend proceeding toward ordination, the procedure is as follows:
  - A. The candidate send COM chair a finalized copy of the Ordination paper.
  - B. The COM chair contacts the local church to set a date for the Ordination Council. This date must be at least 30 days after the date of the notification to be sent to constituent churches.
  - C. The Ordination paper will be posted on the OCBA website and will be available from the OCBA clerk. The clerk will notify all constituent churches of the call to an Ordination Council.

**At the Ordination Council**

1. The Council will be called to order by the OCBA Moderator who will open the gathering in prayer.
2. The Clerk of the OCBA will read the call for the Council.

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3. The Clerk of the OCBA will read the roll of constituent churches, noting the number of delegates and pastors in attendance. Those delegates present will constitute a quorum.
4. The Moderator of the OCBA will introduce the Chairperson or designated member COM who will preside over the Council.
5. Chair COM/designee will confirm that the candidate has met all requirements and standards for ordination and explain the purpose and procedure for the Ordination Council:
  - a. To hear the candidate's statement of faith and practice as contained in the paper.
  - b. To examine the candidate relative to that statement, with the purpose of discerning the candidate's fitness for ordained ministry. Questions should seek clarification and understanding of the candidate's statement and theology, and the Chair/designee will have the authority to rule on the appropriateness of all questions or seek clarification from the questioner.
  - c. To excuse the candidate and all non-delegates from the room for the discussion and vote upon a recommendation. Following the vote, the candidate and others will be invited back into the room and informed of the action taken. The possible recommendations to the local church are as follows:
    - .To proceed with ordination
    - .To delay ordination for some specific reason (e.g. pending a call to service or clarification of some issue.)
    - .To not ordain (specific reason or reasons given)
  - d. The Council will be closed with a prayer, a devotional moment, or other appropriate act of worship.

**Following the Ordination Council**

The clerk of the OCBA will mail official notification of the action taken by the Council to the local church, with copies to the candidate, Moderator of OCBA, Area Minister, Office of the Executive Minister (TABCOM), and the Chair of Committee on Ministry for file.

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**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF THE ABCUSA<sup>1</sup>**

ABCUSA as a manifestation of the church universal bears witness to God's intention to bring redemption and wholeness to all creation. American Baptists believe that God's intention can be sought and followed in local congregations and other gatherings of Christians in regional and national and world bodies as they receive from one another mutual counsel and correction. Since Jesus Christ is the head of the church, each body of Christians, seeking to order its life in accordance with the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has a proper responsibility under God for maintaining its life of worship, witness and ministry.

In every area of their common life, American Baptists, acknowledging the importance of creative diversity, seek such a balance of freedom and order as will keep all parts of ABCUSA open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and at the same time enable them to work responsibly to carry out the common task of mission and ministry in our time.

ABCUSA acknowledges that it shares common faith in Christ with churches which may be quite different from it in history, polity and practice. Consequently, it seeks to share with them a common ministry and to express it faithfully.

ABCUSA acknowledges that God's will is manifested in movements outside the formal structures of Christ's church, and that, therefore, it must respond faithfully to such disclosures.

ABCUSA further acknowledges and confirms its commitment to the objects stated in its act of incorporation as follows: "to give expression to the opinions of its constituency upon moral, religious and denominational matters and to promote denominational unity and efficiency in efforts for the evangelization of the world.

**STANDING RULES 5.1.1 – COMMON CRITERIA FOR COOPERATING CHURCHES**

The following criteria shall serve as the minimal qualifications for a cooperating church:

1. Accept and publicize the purpose statement of the ABCUSA and of the regional mission organization in which the church is located.
2. Participate regularly in the programs and the ministries of the ABCUSA at both the national and regional levels.
3. Utilize ABCUSA resources appropriate to the congregation's need.
4. Support the mission of ABCUSA by contributing a fair share of the congregation's income exclusive of building payments to the AB mission support.
5. Provide reports on the forms supplied by the regional mission organization and/or ABCUSA