



# CHURCH CONSTITUTION

**Adopted March 12, 2023**

Lugoff Friendship Baptist Church  
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# Preamble

This document outlines the framework that Friendship Baptist Church employs in selecting key leadership and managing ongoing systems and procedures. In addition, this document provides accountability for ministry leaders and details key information for the church body. While impossible to anticipate all future contingencies, the intent of this document is to provide flexibility to meet long-term changing needs.

## Article 1. Name

The incorporated name of this church is Lugoff Friendship Baptist Church. This corporation will be further referred to in this Constitution as the "Church" and also may be referred to as "Friendship Baptist Church," "Friendship Church," or "Friendship."

## Article 2. Church Vision, Mission, and Doctrine

### Section 1. Vision

The vision of Friendship Baptist Church is to be a local church with global impact by reproducing disciples, leaders, and churches.

### Section 2. Mission

Friendship Baptist Church exists to help others find full life in Christ, community, and mission.

### Section 3. Doctrine

At the center of Christian faith and practice stands the belief that God has spoken to the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ, which is accurately and authoritatively revealed in the Christian Bible ("the Bible," "Scripture," or "the Scriptures"). The Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and sufficient Word of God and is thus the ultimate authority for life, faith, and morals. Therefore, the Holy Scripture is our primary governing document, and we look to it as our guide in all things.

This Church accepts as its Articles of Faith, *The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000ed.*, believing it to be a doctrinal statement in alignment with the teachings of Scripture.

## Article 3. Church Government

### Section 1. Structure

Friendship Church shall function as a Jesus-ruled, Elder-led, Congregationally-affirmed church.

- Elders guide and govern the Church
  - Lay Elders
  - Staff Elders (Lead Pastor, Staff Pastors)
- Deacons assist the Elders and serve the body
- Ministry Team Leaders and Church Staff assist the Elders and Deacons in carrying out the work of the ministry
- Partners share the vision and participate in the mission of the Church

### Section 2. Officers

The two Biblical offices in the Church are Elders (also called Pastors) and Deacons.

### Section 3. Elders

•**Definition.** The office of Elder (synonymous with Pastor and Overseer) is one of two biblical church offices, along with the office of Deacon. The Elders are entrusted with the spiritual guidance of the Church. Their oversight includes, but is not limited to, teaching, protecting, leading, disciplining, equipping, and caring for the corporate body and her individual members as well as oversight of the ministry of Friendship. The Elders are also responsible for being obedient to the Scriptures in the doctrine of the Church, establishing the overall vision of the Church, and recommending new Elders and Deacons for affirmation by the Church.

The Lead Pastor, Staff Pastors, Deacons, Ministry Staff and Ministry Team Leaders, or any Church employee shall be accountable to the Elders as a group.

•**Definition of Lay Elders and Staff Elders/Pastors.** Lay Elder is defined as an Elder who is not in the employ of the Church as a part-time or full-time Staff member, and does not receive compensation or salaries for their service. A Staff Elder/Pastor is defined as an Elder who is in the employ of the Church as a part-time or full-time staff member, and may receive reasonable compensation for fulfilling their vocational responsibilities as employees of the Church. The criteria to establish if a Staff Elder/Pastor is part-time or full-time will be determined by the Elders, while compensation will be determined by the Elders (excluding the Staff Elder/Pastor in question) in cooperation with the Stewardship Team.

When the term “Elder” is used in this Constitution, there should be no distinction between Lay Elders and Staff Elders/Pastors unless specifically stated.

•**Qualifications.** The minimum qualifications for Elders shall not be less than those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In addition to the minimum qualifications given in Scripture, Elders must be male Covenant Partners, as described in Article 4, who fully subscribe to the Baptist Faith and Message and are actively involved in the ministry of the Church. A Lay Elder candidate will have been a Covenant Partner of Friendship for at least two years prior to nomination.

•**Call/Selection.** The Elders will receive recommendations for Elder candidates from active Partners. Elder candidates will then be selected by unanimous approval of the Elders and recommended to the Church at least one month prior to any church meeting called by the Church. Any active Partner who believes a candidate is unqualified for the office of Elder should express such concerns to the Elders. Upon recommendation of the Elders, candidates shall be appointed by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting.

•**Number.** The Elders shall be comprised of no less than two men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth above. The Elders will determine the total number of Elders needed beyond the minimum. The Elder team shall be made up of Staff Elders and Lay Elders, while striving to maintain a balance of 50% staff to lay ratio.

•**Term.** Elders may serve indefinitely. After three years of service, Elders will be given a sabbatical for a time of rest and re-evaluation of their life and ministry. Lay Elders will receive three months of unpaid sabbatical, while Staff Elders will receive four weeks of paid

sabbatical. At the conclusion of the sabbatical, Staff Elders will resume their ministry role, while Lay Elders, in agreement with the Elder team, may decide to either continue or discontinue serving. After a Lay Elder has discontinued serving, he may be eligible for re-election to the office of Elder after a minimum of one year.

•**Meetings.** The Elders shall meet as necessary for prayer, shepherding, and ministry oversight. Meetings may be conducted in person, by telephone, or by video conference.

•**Definition of Quorum.** A proper quorum is defined as 100% of the Elders unless an Elder requests to be excused or is incapacitated, in which case a quorum will be 100% of the non-excused and non-incapacitated Elders. A quorum is required for voting matters. Elders may vote in person or by proxy.

•**Decision Making.** The Lord has charged the Elders with shepherding the flock of God and with ruling and managing well (Acts 20:28ff, 1 Timothy 3:5, 5:17, 1 Peter 5:1-3). There are many ministry decisions they make as a group and these decisions most naturally take place in regularly scheduled elders' meetings. Elders normally make decisions on a consensus basis that requires a simple majority of all Elders. Where there is a close vote or bare majority, the issue should be tabled until the next regular meeting before taking a final re-vote.

For a change of policy, doctrinal issues, or discipline, a two-thirds majority is required. In any event, a lack of unanimous decision should invoke a time of prayer and seeking the Lord for unanimity. If after one month, there is still no unanimity, a three month period will follow for more prayer and seeking the Lord's face together. At the end of this time, a two-thirds majority will carry the decision. The dissenting Elders should accept this as the Lord's leading and not work against the others in this matter. In this way, the whole group of Elders assumes responsibility for the decision. If this is not possible, then those dissenting parties should resign their position.

•**Ordination.** Upon election by the Church, newly appointed Elders who have not already been ordained will be presented and commissioned before the Church.

•**Removal.** Any Elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal. Discipline or dismissal of an Elder must be consistent with the standards set forth in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21. The Elders shall have the authority to recommend removal of another Elder. Any two active Partners with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the Elders and, if need be, to the Church. A written notice of proposed removal of any Elder shall be given to such Elder at least ten (10) days prior to the church meeting at which an action to affect such removal is to be taken to ensure that the Elder is given a reasonable opportunity to defend himself. The Elder shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers, but shall not be present during the discussion and vote on his removal. Such removal shall take place only upon and after passing an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting at the church meeting called for that purpose. The Elder under consideration for removal shall not have voting rights.

Should multiple Elders be in process of removal, the Elders in question may not participate in any votes on the removal of other Elders until their status as an Elder has been resolved.

If a Staff Elder is removed by the Church, he shall immediately cease from performing pulpit, pastoral, and administrative duties. The Elders shall determine the terms of severance, if any, in cooperation with the Stewardship Team.

### **Section 3.1. Elder / Lead Pastor**

•**Definition.** The Lead Pastor is responsible for leading the Church to function as a New Testament church. As one of the spiritual overseers of the Church, he shall preach and teach the Word of God, counsel and visit, lead the public Church services, administer the ordinances, be a godly example to the flock, and equip the saints for the work of ministry. He shall have primary responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

The Lead Pastor shall be an Elder and will be accountable to the other Elders. In the absence or incapacity of the Lead Pastor, the Elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

•**Qualifications.** See Article 3, Section 3 “Qualifications” above.

•**Call/Selection.** In the event that the position of Lead Pastor is vacated, the Elders shall appoint, with representation from the Elders and Deacons, a Pastoral Search Team that shall work with the Elders to find, nominate, and secure a qualified candidate to serve as Lead Pastor. In addition, special attention should be given to the evaluation of his teaching gifts, allowing for hearing and evaluation. The Church shall have an opportunity to hear the recommended candidate on a specific weekend at all worship gatherings. The candidate for Lead Pastor shall require an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting at a church meeting to constitute a call. If called from outside the Church body, a vote to call a Lead Pastor also affirms his Covenant Partnership and that of his wife if he is married. Should the recommended candidate fail to receive an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds, the Elders will seek out another candidate for Lead Pastor.

•**Removal.** See Article 3, Section 3 “Removal” above.

### **Section 3.2. Elder / Staff Pastors**

•**Definition.** The job description of the Elder/Staff Pastor will be determined by the Elders. Any Staff Pastor will be an Elder and accountable to the other Elders.

•**Qualifications.** See Article 3, Section 3 “Qualifications” above.

•**Call/Selection.** It shall be the responsibility of the Elders to recommend vocational ministerial staff (Staff Pastors) to the Church. Upon the unanimous recommendation of the Elders, a church meeting will be established to vote on the placement of a potential Staff Pastor. However, no Staff Pastor may be hired and placed into service immediately as a Staff Pastor. All Staff Pastor candidates may be hired only as Ministry Team Leaders (see Article 3, Section 5 below). After a six-month training process as set forth by the Elders, the candidate may become eligible to be added as a permanent Elder/Staff Pastor (see Article 3, Section 3 “Call/Selection” above).

•**Removal.** See Article 3, Section 3 “Removal” above.

## Section 4. Deacons

•**Definition.** The office of Deacon is one of two biblical church offices, along with the office of Elder. In accordance with New Testament teaching, Deacons are godly servants of the Church (Acts 6:1-7). Specific duties of Deacons are set forth in the Deacon Handbook and may be revised as deemed necessary by the Elders. The Deacons are accountable to the Elders.

•**Qualifications.** Deacons must be male Covenant Partners of this Church. A Deacon shall faithfully and actively support the activities of this Church and shall possess the Scriptural qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. A Deacon candidate will have been a Covenant Partner of Friendship for at least one year prior to nomination.

•**Call/Selection.** At times determined by the Elders, active Partners of the Church will be given the opportunity to nominate any man, who is an active Partner of the Church, as a candidate for Deacon. Candidates will then be selected by unanimous approval of the Elders and presented to active Partners at least one month prior to any church meeting called by the Church. Any active Partner with reason to believe a candidate is unqualified for the office of Deacon should express such concern to the Elders. At the scheduled meeting, Deacon candidates will be appointed by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting.

•**Number.** The Elders shall appoint the number of Deacons required to meet permanent and short-term needs of the Church.

•**Term.** Deacons will serve one term of three years and must rotate off for one year before becoming eligible for another term.

•**Meetings.** Deacons shall meet as deemed appropriate by the Elders, or as necessary. Meetings may be conducted in person, by telephone, or by video conference.

•**Ordination.** Upon election by the Church, newly appointed Deacons who have not already been ordained will be presented and commissioned before the Church.

•**Removal.** Any Deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal. Discipline or dismissal of a Deacon must be consistent with the standards set forth in Matthew 18:15–20. The Elders shall have the authority to recommend removal of a Deacon. A written notice of proposed removal of any Deacon shall be given to such Deacon at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which an action to affect such removal is to be taken to ensure that the Deacon is given a reasonable opportunity for defense. The Deacon shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers, but shall not be present during the discussion and vote on removal. Such removal shall take place only upon and after passing an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting at a church meeting. The Deacon under consideration for removal shall not have voting rights.

## Section 5. Ministry Team Leaders and Church Staff

•**Definition of Ministry Team Leaders.** Ministry Team Leaders shall assist the Elders and Deacons in carrying out the work of the ministry. Team Leaders may be employed by the Church or serve without remuneration. They provide oversight to particular areas of ministry as determined by the Elders, such as Hospitality, Prayer, Worship, Kids, Youth, etc. Their job

description will be determined by the Elders. All Team Leaders will be committed indefinitely to the position and accountable to the Elders.

Ministry Team Leaders may or may not be classified as Staff members.

•**Definition of Church Staff.** All other Church staff, such as facility custodian, administrative assistant, etc. shall be employed to the Church by the Elders with the concurrence of the Stewardship Team. These job descriptions will be written by the Elders. Church staff members will be committed indefinitely to the position and accountable to the Elders.

•**Qualifications.** Ministry Team Leaders and Church staff shall be Covenant Partners. They shall faithfully and actively support the activities of this Church and shall possess the Scriptural qualifications for Deacons (“servants”) found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; however, they may be either male or female.

•**Call/Selection.** It shall be the responsibility of the Elders to determine ministry needs and to select or employ Team Leaders and Church staff to support those needs. Paid Church staff members will be hired in accordance with the church’s ministries and annual budget with the concurrence of the Stewardship Team (see Article 7).

•**Removal.** Any non-Elder Ministry Team Leaders or Church staff may be removed or dismissed from their role by resignation or by unanimous vote of the Elders. For Staff Elders, see Article 3, Section 3 “Removal.”

## **Section 6. Church Trustees**

The Stewardship Team (see Article 7, Section 1) shall appoint three (3) active Deacons as Trustees to serve as legal officers for the Church. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote of the Church, authorizing each action, they shall be authorized to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property. When the signatures of Trustees are required, at least two of the three shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal documents related to approved matters. Each Trustee shall serve as long as he is an active Deacon.

## **Section 7. Ordination, Licensing, and Commissioning**

Friendship Baptist Church reserves the right to ordain, license, or commission individuals as ministers of the gospel to perform the ordinances and ceremonies of the church including, but not limited to, marriage, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and funerals.

# **Article 4. Covenant Partnership**

## **Section 1. Definition**

The Church shall have one class of membership, hereby referred to as Partnership. Those who enter into Partnership will be referred to as “Covenant Partners” or “Partners.”

An “active Partner” is one who: 1) has met the qualifications for Partnership as described in Article 4, Section 2 below, and 2) is regularly contributing his/her time (attendance), talent (service, work, etc), and treasure (financial giving) to the Church — which qualification shall be determined solely by the Elders. This Section of the Constitution defining active Partners shall

be read by the moderator at the church meeting whenever it is necessary as deemed by the Elders (e.g., if Partners have been actively recruited to influence a particular vote).

## **Section 2. Qualifications for Partnership**

The following constitute the qualifications for Partnership:

- A personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ, accompanied by evidence of regeneration
- Baptism by immersion in water following salvation
- Completion of the Partnership Class
- A commitment to abide by a then-current, Elder-approved Partnership Covenant
- Completion of a personal meeting with an Elder or Elders
- At least 18 years old

The Elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualifications for Partnership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the Elders deem appropriate.

## **Section 3. Discipline of Partners**

The Church is responsible for exercising discipline among its Partnership. The purpose of church discipline is to affect the repentance, restoration, and return of the erring Christian to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine, to deter sin in other believers, to maintain the purity of the church and its corporate witness, and to glorify God by reflecting His holy character. Therefore, this Church will, in a spirit of gentleness, lovingly and biblically confront any professing believer (Partner or regular attendee) who is in sin or error. Church discipline can include admonition by the Elders or congregation, removal from ministry role, and excommunication. Disciplinary guidelines are found in the following passages of Scripture: Matthew 18:15-17, Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11, 13:1; Galatians 6:1-5, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20, 6:3-5; Titus 3:10-11; and James 5:19-20.

## **Section 4. Termination of Partnership**

Partners shall be removed from Partnership for any of the following reasons:

- Personal request of the Partner
- Transfer of membership to another church
- It has been verified that the individual has united with another church
- Those who are no longer "active Partners" for one year or longer (see Section 1 above)
- As an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the Elders) upon an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting at any church meeting
- Death of Partner

## **Section 5. Voting of Partners**

Regarding any matter coming before the Church for its determination, each active Partner that is at least 18 years of age shall be entitled to one vote, exercised in person and not by proxy. Such matters shall be determined at a meeting of this Church held in accordance with the Constitution. Unless otherwise stated in this Constitution, an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting (assuming a quorum) is needed for the approval of any measure or policy that is brought before the Church for a vote.



## **Section 6. Powers**

For purposes of clarity, none of the following events will be final until affirmed by a vote of active Partners at a church meeting:

- Placement of Elders, Deacons, Lead Pastor, and Staff Pastors
- Removal for disciplinary reasons of Elders, Deacons, and Partners
- Determination of annual budget and increases to a previously approved budget
- Any real property transactions (purchase, sale, lease)
- Major financial commitments (increase indebtedness)
- A change in denominational affiliation of Friendship Baptist Church
- Merger or dissolution of the Church
- Changes to the Articles of Incorporation or the Constitution

## **Article 5. Meetings**

### **Section 1. Worship Gatherings**

The Church shall hold regular public gatherings for worship, teaching, training, outreach, fellowship, and the general work of the gospel. Gatherings shall be held at such occasion as are deemed best for the advancement of the gospel by direction of the Elders.

### **Section 2. Partner Gatherings**

Regular Partner Gatherings shall be held throughout the year, no less than three times annually. The purpose of these gatherings is a time of worship, fellowship, Church business, and vision for future ministry. There will be a public announcement concerning the time and place of the gathering made at least two regular Church worship gatherings prior to a Partner Gathering.

### **Section 3. Special Family Meetings**

The Elders may call a Special Family Meeting at any time for any purpose by providing a public announcement concerning the time and place of the meeting at least two regular Church worship gatherings prior to that meeting.

### **Section 4. Procedure**

In all questions of procedure, the Church shall follow Robert's Rules of Order. An Elder shall be moderator in all church meetings, unless he requests that a moderator be elected from the Partnership. A Stewardship Team member must moderate discussions regarding the budget or any compensation issues that are brought before the Church.

### **Section 5. Quorum of Partners**

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those active Partners present and voting. All issues voted on in a church meeting require an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting.

## **Article 6. Ordinances**

### **Section 1. Baptism**

The Church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith and who has indicated a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord. Baptism shall

be by immersion in water by the Elders or whomever the Elders authorize to administer baptism.

## Section 2. The Lord's Supper

The Church shall observe the Lord's Supper as often as the Elders deem appropriate. The Lord's Supper shall be served by the Elders and Deacons or by whomever the Elders authorize.

## Article 7. Church Finances

### Section 1. Stewardship Team

•**Definition.** The Elders are ultimately accountable to the Lord for their stewardship of all the resources He has entrusted to the Church, including personnel and finances. To assist them in this stewardship, the Elders will appoint a Stewardship Team comprised of Covenant Partners. The purpose of this Team is to help steward the finances of the Church with a spirit of wisdom, faith, and generosity, in order to facilitate gospel ministry for the glory of God. The Stewardship Team is accountable to the Elders.

•**Responsibilities.** Some responsibilities of the Team include, but are not limited to:

- Give recommendations on the annual budget to help allocate money appropriately and make accommodations for any ministries that were substantially under/over budgeted
- Review and assess what changes should be made to the financial procedures and policies of the church, and provide recommendation to the Elders
- Give recommendations on salary packages for any new Church Staff members, or salary increases for current Staff members, to be approved by the Elders

•**Qualifications.** Team members shall faithfully and actively support the activities of this Church and shall possess the Scriptural qualifications for Deacons ("servants") found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; however, they may be either male or female. They shall be Covenant Partners.

•**Call/Selection.** The Elders will appoint the members of the Stewardship Team. The Team shall consist of one or more Elders, one or more Deacons, and qualified Partners from the congregation.

•**Number.** The Stewardship Team shall consist of three (3) to five (5) active Covenant Partners, including Elder and Deacon representation as described above.

•**Term.** Team members will serve one term of three years and must rotate off for one year before becoming eligible for another term.

•**Meetings.** The Stewardship Team will meet regularly as needed, no less than quarterly, and cannot exclude any Elder from any meetings, except in matters dealing with his own salary if a paid Staff member.

•**Removal.** Any Stewardship Team member's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal by unanimous vote of the Elders.

### Section 2. Budget

•**Establishment.** An itemized budget shall be prepared annually by the Ministry Staff in cooperation with the Stewardship Team. Upon unanimous approval of the Elders, the proposed

budget shall be presented to the Church at least two weeks prior to a church meeting in which the budget will be presented for approval. Approval will require an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting. Prior to this vote, the Elders will establish a budget discussion meeting to give the congregation an opportunity to ask questions and become educated on the proposed budget and spending.

- Management.** The budget is to be managed by the Church-authorized leader of the ministry area and the various Team Leaders according to their area of responsibility. Modifications to the budget are normative but material alterations beyond established guidelines by the Elders will require additional Elder approval. If extenuating circumstances in the life of the Church mandate such a change (for example, if a budgeted item is not needed, or if expenses in a particular area are less than expected), the Elders and/or Staff can reallocate those resources as needed. The budget should, however, be the normative guide for the financial operation of the Church.

- Annual Audit.** As long as the Church finances are managed by an independent bookkeeper, the Stewardship Team shall organize an internal audit of funds or policies annually. Should the Church manage the finances internally, an annual, external audit shall be required.

### Section 3. Check Signing

For internal control, two persons shall sign all checks. All current Deacons shall be authorized to be check signers for the Church.

### Section 4. Financial Support

- Support.** The Church's primary means of support will be through the free-will offerings and ongoing generosity of the congregation.

- Special Offerings.** Special offerings, in addition to regular Sunday offerings, may be collected during any church meeting with the approval of the Elders.

- Designated Giving.** All designated gifts shall be used for the purpose for which they were originally designated, subject to the review and approval of the Stewardship Team and Elders.

### Section 5. Fiscal Year

The financial and ministry year shall begin January 1 and end December 31 of each year.

### Section 6. Inspection of Records

Every active Partner in good standing has the right to request any of these documents for inspection: one's own giving records, Church's annual budget (less personnel details), balance sheet, statement of cash flows, and profit & loss statement. The requesting Partner will give the Staff ten (10) days as ample time to gather the requested information.

## Article 8. Affiliations

The Church shall have full power and authority to associate itself with and participate in organizations in keeping with the vision and mission of the Church. The Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational control. Recognizing the benefits of cooperation with other churches in local and worldwide missions,

Friendship voluntarily affiliates with the Kershaw Baptist Association, the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

## **Article 9. Amendments**

The Elders shall make recommendations to the congregation for any and all proposed changes or amendments to this Constitution. The Constitution of Friendship Baptist Church may be amended, altered, or repealed at any church meeting by means of an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of active Partners present and voting, provided that any proposed amendment, alteration, or repeal be provided in writing (digital or printed) to the congregation at least one month in advance of the church vote. During that time period, the Elders will ensure that ample opportunities are available for the congregation to ask questions and become educated on the recommendation.