

Constitution and By-laws
of the
First Baptist Church Tallassee, Alabama
As Amended December 6, 2015

Preamble

That everything may be done “decently and in order,” according to the command of Scripture, that the mission and message of the church may be protected and preserved, that the responsibilities, rights, and privileges of each member shall be made clear, that the autonomy of this church may be plainly declared, we establish this constitution and by-laws.

I. Name

This body (congregation) shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Tallassee, Elmore County, Alabama.

II. Articles of Faith

Article 1 The Scriptures

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.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Article 2 God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all-powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

Article 3 Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Article 4 Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22;

3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Article 5 God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Article 6 The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Article 7 Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

Article 8 The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

Article 9 The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

Article 10 Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

Article 11 Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

Article 12 Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

Article 13 Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Article 14 Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

Article 15 The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

Article 16 Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

Article 17 Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

Article 18 The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

III. Purpose

First Baptist exists to experience, celebrate, and share God's grace. We affirm six main functions as the means of so doing: Christ-centered worship, Biblical instruction, prayer, world evangelization, nurturing fellowship, and caring acts.

First Baptist Church shall be organized in order to fulfill these six main functions.

Further, to fulfill our mission, this church is incorporated for the purpose of promoting the reading and study of the Holy Bible as the Word of God; spreading the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; teaching and defending the doctrines and principles of the Christian religion; promoting the distinctive beliefs and policies historically identified with those churches known as Southern Baptist; and to maintain, own, and have a place of religious worship.

IV. Church Principles

We are committed to the following principles in order to fulfill our purpose:

1. The Principle of Christ-Centered People in a Christ-Centered Church:

It's about Jesus. He is the Savior of the bride and the focus of her adoration. He is the Head of the church and its only owner. Let no member think that long service or large gifts impart tenure in an office or control over any part of the ministry.

* The first sentence of this principle may be used as a stand-alone principle.

2. The Principle of Grace:

Grace is when God gives us that which is undeserved. By grace, believers are forgiven of sin, transformed in life, sustained through trouble, and empowered for service. We are so dependent on God's grace, we have no room to look down on others. We see ourselves, in part, as a support group for recovering sinners. We want our church to be a haven of grace.

3. The Principle of Biblical Authority:

While cultures and traditions may change, God's Word is eternal and absolutely reliable in all it affirms. Therefore, the Bible shall have the final say in all the church believes, teaches, and practices. We will teach believers, from the Bible and in practical terms, how to live the Christian life, in Biblical doctrine, and for Christian service.

4. The Principle of Prayer:

No church rises above its prayer life. In the planning process, we will pray and make decisions at the leading of the Holy Spirit, instead of making our plans and then asking God to bless them. It shall be a priority to engage in intercessory prayer.

5. The Principle of Evangelism:

Evangelism is the main work of the whole church until Christ returns. We commit ourselves to intentionally and winsomely sharing the gospel. Further, we will identify affinity groups within our community and start new classes and entry points to reach them. We are here to reach the Tallahassee area for Jesus Christ.

6. The Principle of Missions:

Missions is evangelism and church planting which crosses cultural boundaries or language barriers. As a part of our commitment to world evangelization, we will support missions with our finances, our prayers, and by our participation in mission trips. In our own region, we will help plant new churches to reach people across cultural boundaries.

7. The Principle of Christian Growth:

The Christian life is a relationship with Jesus Christ and our goal is to grow closer to Him. We will "feed" our inner life, by spending time alone with God in prayer and in His Word. We will align our attitudes and actions with His holiness, refraining from anything that weakens our resolve for righteousness, such as pornography or the abuse of drugs or alcohol. We will nurture each other's spiritual growth through mutual encouragement and accountability.

8. The Principle of Unity:

In its normal state, the church exists in a unity produced by the Holy Spirit. Disunity results from our own selfish motives and actions. As those who live in covenant together, we purpose to preserve this unity by refraining from gossip, a critical spirit, and the misuse of social media.

9. The Principle of Every Member Ministry:

It is every member's responsibility to promote the mission, protect the reputation, and ensure the success of the church. The role of the ministerial staff is to equip church members for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12), as the whole church is the body of Christ, not just the pastor and staff. We are committed to helping members discover their spiritual gifts and mobilizing every member in service to Jesus Christ.

10. The Principle of Christian Worship:

Worship isn't about the style of music or the order of worship or a performance to be enjoyed. In worship, the church gathers to glorify God for His greatness, delight in His goodness, and acknowledge His righteousness. It is opening our hearts to God and surrendering ourselves to do the will of God. It adores God from one's spirit and with one's mind. Worship involves both joyful celebration and reverent contemplation; we will do both through Jesus Christ.

11. The Principle of the Christian Family:

We purpose to support and uphold the ideal of the Christian home. A Christian marriage involves a man and woman, both believers, living according to Biblical principles, committed to each other exclusively for life, and seeking to rear godly children.

12. The Principle of Stewardship:

The Bible teaches that everything in our lives belongs to the Lord and that we are to manage His resources in His way. These resources include our time, abilities, and finances. Foremost, we are stewards of the gospel. In regard to giving, the tithe is the starting place. We owe God a tithe; offerings are expressions of worship above the tithe. We believe in "storehouse tithing"—giving the first ten percent through the general church budget.

13. The Principle of Denominational Affiliation:

We are Southern Baptists because we hold the same biblical teachings in common. We cooperate on a voluntary basis with the Elmore Baptist Association, The Alabama Baptist State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. We are neither owned nor are we a franchise of any of the three. Insofar as is practical in fulfilling our mission and as long as these bodies hold to Biblical truth, we will work with them in voluntary cooperation. Our partnership reduces waste and duplication. We can do more together than we can apart.

Scripture References:

1. Colossians 1:16-18-8; Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 20:28
2. 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:7, 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Titus 2:11-12; 9:8; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 3:7; Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:23-24; Proverbs 27:17; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-18
3. 2 Peter 2:2; Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 2:2, 3:16-17, 4:2; Psalm 119:160; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35
4. Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 8; Luke 18:1; Matthew 7:7; Romans 8:14; Acts 10:19-20, 13:2, 16:6
- 5 and 6. Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 6:7, 10:45, 17:10-12; Psalm 96:3; 3 John 5-8
7. John 17:3; Galatians 4:9; 1 Chronicles 16:11; John 5:39; John 17:17; Psalm 5; Psalm 55:17; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:24; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2 Peter 3:11; Romans 13:14; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16
8. Ephesians 4:3-6; John 17:20-21; James 3:13-18; Philippians 1:27, 2:1-3
9. Also: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Luke 4:16; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21; Ephesians 4
10. Psalm 100:1-2, 47:1, 63:5, 66:1; Matthew 28:9; Revelation 5:8, 7:11
11. Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Nehemiah 13:23-27; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 6:4
12. 1 Corinthians 6:20; Psalms 24:1; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Peter 4:10; Deuteronomy 8:18; Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:8; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 6:19-20

V. Character

2. Polity

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is understood that they shall make decisions under the Lordship of Jesus Christ at the leading of the Holy Spirit, as directed by the Scriptures. This church is subject to no other ecclesiastical body. We affirm voluntary cooperation with other Southern Baptists in our common cause.

3. Doctrine

This congregation receives the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of the Christian truth as contained therein is in essential accord with the belief of Baptist churches as indicated in the Articles of Faith included in this constitution.

Article 1 Membership

1. The Principle of Church Membership

According to Jesus' commandment, Christians are to associate themselves together in local congregations. Such a fellowship is composed of Jesus' true disciples, who have experienced the new birth. It is evident by these person's profession and lifestyle that they have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

In joining a local church, believers unite with the rest of the congregation by covenant. Church members willingly commit to walk together, giving themselves to the Lord, and to one another. This covenant admits them to the privileges of the church, and in it they also place themselves under its discipline and government. The Lord Jesus is the head of the Church and each congregation is to operate according to His laws.

Until Jesus comes again, the local church is a "colony of heaven" (Philippians 3:20) and is a fellowship on a mission. The central purpose of the church is to honor and glorify God; the central task of the church is to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism and missions. Only those who have a relationship with Christ, sharing his message and mission for the church should join.

2. Qualifications

Both salvation and believer's baptism are required for church membership. Believer's baptism is defined as baptism by immersion, after conversion, as a pictorial testimony to the saving work of Christ.

In order to be accepted as a member of the First Baptist Church, one must subscribe to the faith and practices of the church. Therefore, persons desiring membership shall enter into covenant together with the congregation. This covenant shall be signed by prospective members to profess their faith in Christ, agreement with church doctrine and practice, and to promise to support the services and work of the church.

Persons may be received into the church upon the following conditions:

- A. Upon a profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus and as a candidate for believer's baptism.
- B. Upon transfer of letter. This means that a person is a member of another Baptist church (or another church of like faith and order) and wants to move his or her membership from that church to this one. The person's former church responds by mail, stating that such persons are members in good standing, granting their letter. One must already be a Christian and have been baptized by immersion to join in this manner.
- C. By Statement, wherein a person states that he or she has been saved, that he or she was baptized after salvation by immersion and has been a member of a Baptist church (or one of like faith and order). This includes persons who were Baptists, moved their membership to another denomination, and now want to join The First Baptist Church. This would also apply to a Baptist church whose membership records have been lost.

D. By Rededication and Transfer or Statement. A believer who has been out of fellowship with God and out of church (as a member of another Baptist church or one of like faith and order) and wants to renew his or her commitment may join in this manner.

3. Prerequisite to Full Privileges in the Church

Completion of a church membership class/mentoring process is mandatory to be eligible for the full privileges of membership, including speaking on the floor or voting in church conference and serving as a teacher or on a team or committee.

4. Watchcare

Those who enjoy the fellowship of this church, but who are unable or unwilling to meet the requirements of membership regarding believer's baptism and subscribing to the doctrine and practices of the First Baptist Church, may enter into the watchcare of the church. This person shall enjoy the love and ministry care of the church and receive communications from the church through mail-outs, etc. However, this person shall not be privileged to vote in church conference, hold an office, or participate in the observance of the Lord's Supper. A person must be under the discipline of a church to participate in the Lord's Supper together with us. This church allows visitors from other Christian churches to partake of the Lord's Supper, provided that they are active and in good standing in their own churches. A person under the watchcare of this church is neither a member here nor an active member of his or her church.

5. Duties and Expectations of Church Members

- A. To have a relationship with Jesus Christ
- B. To have followed Jesus in believer's baptism
- C. To live for Jesus and to grow spiritually
- D. To be faithful in Christian fellowship, faithfully supporting the services of the church
- E. To serve Jesus through His church
- F. To share the doctrine, mission, and vision of the First Baptist Church
- G. To support the work of First Baptist Church with tithes and offerings
- H. To help win Tallassee to Jesus Christ

6. Privileges

Members of the church in good standing may partake of the Lord's Supper and speak in church conferences. Those members eighteen (18) and older may hold church office and vote in church conferences. [See Article VI., Section 9]

7. Non Resident and Inactive Membership

- A. When a member moves out of reasonable driving distance from the church, where he or she can no longer reasonably commute to services, and ceases to attend services on any kind of regular basis, then he or she has become a non-resident member. No member who is in regular attendance at church services shall be considered non-resident or inactive. No member may reasonably expect to remain a non-resident and/or inactive member and retain the full privileges of membership.
- B. The Pastor and Deacon leader shall form a Membership Team for the purpose of contacting inactive and non-resident members. The goal of the team at all times is to encourage and minister

to those members whose presence is sorely missed by the congregation, not simply to clean up the membership role.

- C. Non-Resident Members: Once having moved out of the Tallassee area and out of reasonable commuting distance, members are expected to move their membership to a church in their new place of residence and to serve the Lord there. If such a member has not transferred his or her membership within a period of six months, the member shall be contacted by the team (B. above) and encouraged to seek a new church home and place of service. If the member fails to do so within an additional six months, the person's name shall be erased from the membership roll. However, a person may secure a three-month extension by requesting it from the team. Those serving in the armed forces, those serving on the mission field, homebound members, and college/graduate students are excepted from such erasures.
- D. Inactive members: When members become inactive, or have not attended worship service in the past 6 months, the member shall be contacted by the team (B. above) and encouraged to attend worship services regularly. If, after being contacted by the team, the member remains inactive for 3 additional months, the team will contact the member again and encourage them to become active once again. If the member fails to do so within an additional three months (total time: one year), the person's name shall be erased from the membership roll. However, if a member is actively seeking another church, he may secure a three-month extension by requesting it from the team.
- E. Inactive and non-resident members, no longer being in a position to be knowledgeable of the ministries and needs of the church, and thus, able to contribute to an informed decision, are no longer eligible to vote in church conference. It is their personal responsibility – and it is a matter of honor for them – to voluntarily decline to enter discussion in conference or cast votes under these circumstances.

8. Transfer and Termination of Membership

Members in good standing retain the right to have their letter granted to another church of like faith and order. First Baptist Church shall grant letters of membership to other churches only, not to individuals. A member may be removed from the roll and released from the covenant upon his or her request.

ARTICLE II Staff and Deacons

1. Pastor

Three terms describe the New Testament pastor. The first, “pastor” signifies a shepherd, and illustrates his role as one who leads, feeds, and guides the flock committed to his care. The term “overseer” indicates his administrative role. “Elder” describes the respect he should merit. These synonymous terms and the biblical qualifications of a pastor are found in 1st Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1st Peter 5:1-3, and Acts 20:17-32.

A. Call of the Pastor

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given. The deacons shall nominate a pastor search committee of five to seven members for approval by the church. It shall be the duty of the pastor search committee to seek out a suitable pastor, and its recommendation will constitute a nomination. Prior to beginning their search, this committee shall meet with the personnel committee, the leader of the deacon body, and any other relevant groups to gather the job description, personnel policies, and compensation package information to prepare them to represent the church. After this, the search committee will have authority to negotiate on behalf of the church and will report directly to the congregation. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one name at a time. Election shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present and voting being necessary for a call. The pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request.

B. Duties of the Pastor

The duties of the pastor are pre-eminently spiritual. The pastor is expected to devote himself to "Prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:3-4). He is, first and foremost, a preacher and teacher of the Word of God (1st Timothy 4:1-4). He is to lead the church in evangelism (1st Timothy 4:5). He is to be an equipper for lay ministry, seeking out and training leaders (Ephesians 4:11-16, 2nd Timothy 2:2). He is to seek God's direction for the church and to communicate it to the Body (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

The pastor shall conduct the worship services and oversee the two ordinances of the church. He shall preside at meetings of this church, and may serve as moderator in all business meetings in keeping with the rules of order authorized in these bylaws. He is the leader and supervisor of the church staff. He shall serve as an ex-officio member of the administrative council, all committees, and all teams.

C. Resignation of the Pastor

The pastor may relinquish the office of pastor by giving at least two weeks' notice to the church at the time of resignation. The pastor and church may, by mutual agreement, waive the requirement for notice. Such agreement shall be in writing and shall be signed by the pastor and presented to the church.

D. Termination of the Pastor

In the event it is necessary to remove the pastor from his position, the Personnel Committee, in conjunction with the Body of Deacons shall confer concerning the situation and then make recommendations to the Church for action. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's notice has been given. The moderator for this meeting shall be an outside person (the director of missions or a representative of the Office of LeaderCare and Church Administration of the State Board of Missions) or failing that, a person designated by the members present by majority vote, and he shall be someone other than the pastor. The vote to declare the office vacant shall be by secret ballot; an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting being necessary to declare the office vacant. Except in instances of gross misconduct by the pastor to be removed from office, the Church will pay the pastor severance pay, said severance pay to be ¼ of the pastor's total annual compensation. Severance pay may be made either in a lump sum or in monthly payments, as approved by the Church. The term "gross misconduct" shall include, but not be limited to, any act or omission on the part of the pastor not in accord with the word or spirit of the scriptures or which act or

omission interferes with or impedes the ability of the pastor to minister to the needs of the membership of First Baptist Church. Any situation where it becomes necessary to remove the pastor shall be handled as constructively and redemptively as justice and the purity of the Church will allow. In all circumstances, the family of the pastor shall be taken into consideration.

2. Ministerial Staff

A. Calling

Other ministerial staff positions shall be created as needed to fulfill the mission and ministry of the church. A search committee shall be nominated by the deacons and elected by the church to seek out a suitable person for the position. Prior to beginning their search, this committee shall meet with the personnel committee, the leader of the deacon body, and any other relevant groups to gather the job description, personnel policies, and compensation package information to develop as guidelines and to prepare themselves to represent the church. After this, the search committee will have authority to negotiate on behalf of the church and will report directly to the congregation. The Search Committee's recommendation will constitute a nomination. The election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one name at a time. Election shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present and voting being necessary for a call.

B. Resignation of a Staff Member

Staff members may relinquish their office by giving at least two weeks' notice to the church at the time of resignation. The staff member and church may, by mutual agreement, waive the requirement for notice. Such agreement shall be in writing and shall be signed by the staff member and presented to the church.

C. Termination

In the event it is necessary to remove a ministerial staff member from his position, the Personnel Committee, in conjunction with the Body of Deacons and pastor shall confer concerning the situation and then make recommendations to the Church for action. Except in instances of gross misconduct by the pastor to be removed from office, the Church will pay the minister severance pay, said severance pay to be $\frac{1}{4}$ of the minister's total annual compensation. Severance pay may be made either in a lump sum or in monthly payments, as approved by the Church. The term "gross misconduct" shall include, but not be limited to, any act or omission on the part of the ministerial staff member not in accord with the word or spirit of the scriptures or which act or omission interferes with or impedes the ability of the ministerial staff member to minister to the needs of the membership of First Baptist Church. Any situation where it becomes necessary to remove a ministerial staff member shall be handled as constructively and redemptively as justice and the purity of the Church will allow. In all circumstances, the family of the pastor shall be taken into consideration.

D. Personnel Agreements and Policies

Staff members shall be employed on written agreement specifically covering questions such as responsibilities, immediate supervisor, salary, benefits, vacation, etc. All personnel policies, job descriptions, and agreements negotiated in the calling or hiring of the Pastor, Ministerial Staff, and Support Staff shall be kept in a Policy Manual kept in the church office. All members of the Personnel Committee and the Deacons shall receive a copy. Each employee shall be given a copy of the documents relevant to his/her employment.

3. Deacons

A. Role of Deacons

The deacons shall function as servants in the church in accordance with the meaning of the word and the practice of the New Testament. Their purpose is to serve the Lord by conducting the caring ministry of the church – doing the work of benevolence, visiting the sick, and being alert to the spiritual needs of the congregation. They shall be the principal administrators of the benevolence ministry. They are to be zealous to guard the unity of the Spirit and peace, being responsible for overseeing steps of correction, discipline, and restoration in the church. They are to heighten the spiritual tone in the church by example and word. They shall assist in serving the Lord's Supper. The deacons shall help free the pastor (and other ministerial staff) to focus on prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the equipping ministry. Their service should facilitate the spread of the gospel and promote unity within the church.

B. Qualifications

1. The core qualifications for deacons are enumerated in Acts 6, emphasizing that such men be full of the Holy Spirit, full of faith, and full of wisdom. They should be men of good reputation (verses 3 & 5). These core qualifications are further elaborated in 1st Timothy 3:8-13.
2. To be eligible to serve as deacon, a man must be supportive of the overall church program and staff. He shall demonstrate his faithfulness through his lifestyle, attendance and participation. Deacons shall be tithers. Each man shall be at least 21 years old and have been a member of the church for at least one year.
3. In order to be eligible for selection as a deacon, an unordained man must first complete yoke fellow training. Those already ordained are exempted from this requirement. Yoke Fellow Training, combined with mentoring, shall be made available to all men of the church in the following areas: doctrine, church health & growth, conflict resolution & church discipline, personal evangelism and decision counseling, hospital visitation, and in sharing a personal testimony. Upon selection as deacons, unordained men shall be provided orientation covering the following areas: the Biblical role of deacons, an introduction to the church bylaws, the basics of parliamentary procedure, and the responsibilities of deacon officers and trustees.

C. Rotation System

There shall be two classifications of deacons, active and inactive. Deacons shall serve three-year terms, rotating off the active body at the end of their terms, remaining ineligible for at least one year thereafter. The number of deacons shall be fixed so that one-third of the deacons rotates off of the active body each year. Their terms of service shall begin in January of each year.

D. Number

There shall be a minimum of 15 active deacons. The goal is to provide one deacon for every 25 people (rounding up to the nearest 3) in the average Sunday school attendance for the previous year (ending in August). Should increased attendance call for the addition of deacons, they shall be added over a period of three years in order to balance the rotation system, not by adding all three at once. If at any time, the formula calls for a decrease in

the number of active deacons, all active deacons at that time shall fulfill their terms of office and the decrease shall take place as deacons rotate off of active status.

E. Calling

The congregation shall consider the selection of deacons more a matter of the church “calling out the called” than of electing representative government.

F. Means of Selection

1. In August of each year, the pastor will prepare and publish a list of qualifications of deacons.
2. During August, inactive deacons may contact the church office to remove their names from consideration.
3. During August, any church member may nominate ordained and/or unordained men for consideration for the office of deacon. Church members may nominate as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled. A deacon candidate must be nominated by 3 or more church members to be eligible to be placed on the ballot.
4. The outgoing deacons shall inquire of the nominee if he has any questions about the biblical qualifications of the office of deacon. The outgoing deacons will also explain the expectations of service as a deacon at First Baptist Church. They will then verify that the nominee is willing to serve if elected. Those willing shall be included on the Deacon Selection Ballot that will go to the congregation. The selection ballot will include a brief biography of the candidates, including their involvement in the ministries of the church, compiled by the outgoing deacons
5. On the first and second Sundays in October, the Deacon Selection Ballot will be presented to the congregation. Each member of the church may complete one selection ballot for those they believe would be God’s choice for the office of deacon. Members may vote for as many men as there are vacancies. They may vote for less. The person receiving the highest number of votes shall be selected, then the person receiving the next highest votes, etc., until enough men are selected to fill all vacancies. The deacons shall settle a tie vote, if there is one, for the last selection.
6. The ballots for deacon selection shall be counted by a committee of members composed of outgoing deacons and two members from the church at large, as appointed by the deacon leader.
7. Each newly elected deacon shall be contacted and notified of his selection. After all positions are filled, the process ends and the list is sealed in an envelope and placed in the care of the pastor. The names shall be presented to the church, by the first Sunday in October, as the selected deacons.
8. After the selection process, the pastor will arrange for an ordination service for any unordained men selected by the church.
9. The Church will provide training as required for newly ordained deacons and as needed for the deacon body.

G. Unexpired Terms

Should a vacancy occur in the deacon body for any reason, the deacons shall select an inactive deacon to complete the unexpired term. Any deacon filling such an unexpired term, having served less than 18 months, shall be eligible to appear on the next deacon selection ballot.

H. Organization

After their selection, but before January 1, the new deacon body shall elect a deacon leader, a deacon administrative council leader, a secretary, and one trustee to serve as one of three in a rotating system of trustees. In the absence of the deacon leader, the deacon administrative council leader shall preside over deacon meetings.

I. Administrative Council

The function of the administrative council is to oversee the administrative work of the church. The deacon administrative council leader, the chairman of the personnel committee, the chairman of the stewardship committee, deacon leader and the pastor shall be members of the Administrative Council. Persons elected to these positions shall be ministry minded in addition to being gifted in administration. They shall work in respectful cooperation with the ministerial staff to oversee the day-to-day operations of the church and to research recommendations for the deacon body. They shall report to the rest of the deacon body in an executive committee-like arrangement, freeing the rest of the deacons to concentrate on deacon ministry.

J. Quorum

Two thirds of the active deacon body shall constitute a quorum.

Article III Church Committees, Officers and Teams.

All organizations, classes, committees, and teams will support the Mission Statement and Church Principles of First Baptist Church, being accountable to the church body. It is understood that the pastor is ex-officio leader of church organizations; his leadership shall be recognized by all. Church Officers and Committee members shall serve two-year terms, rotating off at the end of their terms, remaining ineligible for at least one year thereafter. Their terms of service shall begin September 1 of each year.

1. Committees

The church shall have two standing committees, the Personnel Committee and the Stewardship Committee. These committees shall be nominated annually by the Pastor and the Deacon Leader and their terms shall begin on September 1. Committee members shall serve four-year terms, rotating off the end of their terms, remaining ineligible for at least one year thereafter. The number of committee members shall be fixed so that one fourth of the committee rotates off of the committee each year. They shall also nominate the chairperson of each committee. The proposed committees will be presented to the deacons and then to the church body for approval. Nominations may be made from the floor following the most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order. Each committee shall have at least one deacon and shall consist of four members. The pastor and deacon leader shall serve as ex officio members.

A. Personnel Committee

This committee shall represent the needs of church to the staff and the needs of the staff to the church. During the annual budget making process, the personnel committee shall recommend adjustments to salary, expenses, and protection coverage for all employees. These recommendations shall be based on individual performance. They shall utilize resources from LeaderCare department of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The committee shall:

1. Recommend additional church staff positions.
2. Prepare and update job descriptions and the organization chart.
3. Recruit, interview, and hire budgeted or approved non-ministerial employees.
4. Develop and recommend a salary program for the annual budget.
5. Develop, recommend and maintain personnel policies and procedures.
6. Keep staff and church informed on legal and government requirements.

7. Provide for and encourage staff participation in local, state, and national development conferences.

B. Stewardship Committee

The purpose of the stewardship committee is to develop a program that includes formulating a ministry minded annual budget, budget administration, and stewardship development.

The duties of the committee are as follows:

1. Develop the budget.

The stewardship committee has responsibility for formulating a sound operating budget that is ministry and missions-focused. Once a church has established its annual program of work, a budget can be planned and adopted to implement this program.

In budget development, the Stewardship Committee shall:

- a) Analyze current strengths and weaknesses in the budget.
- b) Evaluate budget requests from the personnel committee, the church staff, and all ministry and service teams.
- c) Direct the annual budget preparation.
- d) Present the budget to the deacons for review.
- e) Present the budget to the church for adoption.

2. Administer the budget.

Once a budget has been planned and adopted, the committee is responsible for administering the budget. Budget administration shall involve the following:

- a) Working with the treasurer, assistant treasurer and financial secretary.
- b) Comparing expenditures with budget allocations.
- c) Recommending needed adjustments to the budget.
- d) Securing outside audits of the church books a minimum of once per year.

3. Promote stewardship education.

The Stewardship Committee shall implement a continuing program of stewardship education. The stewardship committee shall co-labor with the teaching ministry leadership team in educational projects that include topics such as Christian money management and estate planning seminars. The stewardship education program should also keep church members informed regarding the Cooperative Program and associational mission support.

2. Trustees

Three trustees shall serve three-year terms on a rotating basis, one being named each year by the body of deacons. Their terms shall begin on January 1. When a vacancy occurs, the deacons shall name a person to fill the unexpired term. The trustees shall be charged with the duty of executing such legal documents as may be required by law and other documents as empowered and directed by the church. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. They shall be responsible for the safe keeping of the deeds of church property. They shall serve as an insurance purchase

committee, seeing that church properties are adequately insured, policies are properly shopped, and that policies are renewed in a timely manner.

3. Other Officers

A. Nomination

In October of each year, the Deacons shall nominate for church approval, those church officers who have fulfilled their terms. Terms for church officers shall be for three years and shall begin on January 1.

B. Officers

1. Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer/Financial Secretary

The treasurer shall be a member of the stewardship committee. The treasurer shall be authorized to co-sign checks. All checks shall be signed and co-signed by authorized persons selected by the Stewardship Committee. The Treasurer is the main line of communication between the Stewardship Committee, the ministerial staff and the financial secretary. The treasurer will work with the Financial Secretary in accordance with the budget and policies established by the church and as directed by the Stewardship Committee. The treasurer and financial secretary will prepare regular financial reports to be presented at church business meetings.

The assistant treasurer will share the duties of the treasurer and will act as treasurer in the treasurer's absence.

The financial secretary shall be responsible for recording all financial transactions of the church, keeping an itemized record of all receipts and disbursements. The treasurer, assistant treasurer and financial secretary shall be bonded, the church paying the bond.

The financial secretary shall report directly to the pastor and functionally to the Stewardship Committee.

Should the church not have a financial secretary, the treasurer and assistant treasurer shall share both areas of responsibility.

2. Church Clerk

The clerk shall be responsible for taking minutes in church business meetings and keeping records of all official actions of the church. At the end of each calendar year, the clerk shall see that the minutes for the year are bound. This person shall also maintain the church membership roll.

This membership roll will include names, dates of admission, dismissal, death, and erasure, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall correspond with other congregations on behalf of First Baptist Church in requesting and granting church letters, as directed by the church. This person shall be responsible for preparing the annual church profile of the church and transmitting it to the Elmore Baptist Association. The church may delegate some or all of the clerical responsibilities to a church secretary who will assist the elected clerk. All church records are church property and shall be kept in the church office.

3. Church Representative(s) - Executive Committee of the Elmore Baptist Association. Church Representatives are responsible for attending and voting at Executive Committee meetings of the Elmore Baptist Association.

4. Teams

A. Establishment

The church may establish teams, as needed, to lead and oversee ministries of the church. A simple majority vote of those present and voting in church conference shall be required to establish a team and approve its Team Task Directive. When an individual can do the job alone, a team shall not be used.

B. By the end of April, the Pastor and Deacon Leader shall name one Team Leader for each team.

C. By job description or by assignment by the pastor and deacon leader, paid staff members may be assigned to teams as Team Leaders or as staff liaison to serve as advisors, resource persons, and equippers (Ephesians 4:11).

D. Each team shall have three to five members, the number being determined by the team leader.

E. By May 31, Team Leaders shall, in consultation with the Pastor (and other ministerial staff members whom the pastor may deem appropriate), select and enlist members for their teams. The Team Leader shall personally enlist each team member. When enlisting Team Members, the Team Leader will provide a copy of the Team's Task Directive and discuss it with potential team members. Their terms of service shall begin on September 1.

F. Each team shall have three to five members, the number being determined by the team leader.

G. By May 31, Team Leaders shall, in consultation with the Pastor (and other ministerial staff members whom the pastor may deem appropriate), select and enlist members for their teams. The Team Leader shall personally enlist each team member. When enlisting Team Members, the Team Leader will provide a copy of the Team's Task Directive and discuss it with potential team members. Their terms of service shall begin on September 1.

H. Team membership is for a term of one year. Terms are renewable, though renewal is not automatic.

I. Teams are responsible for their areas of ministry but they may involve others in the church body in the ministry.

J. Within the scope of the Team Task Directive and co-laboring with the ministerial staff and other teams, each Team shall plan its own work as the Holy Spirit leads. Each team shall produce its own action plan.

K. Teams are expected to seek training and to continually hone their skills.

L. Teams will regularly gather to evaluate the effectiveness of their work and to measure their progress. Teams shall report their progress to the church.

Article IV Finances

1. Church finances shall be under the ultimate direction of the congregation. The Stewardship Committee shall make regular reports to the church.
2. This church shall be wholly supported by the voluntary tithes and offerings of members and friends of the church.
3. The church shall operate with a unified budget with one treasury. All funds received for any and all purposes must be accounted for by the Stewardship Committee (financial secretary). Financial statements will be made available to members each month.
4. The fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.
5. During October of each year, Stewardship Committee shall begin the budget making process, drawing on the input of all the ministries and teams of the church. The Personnel Committee shall make recommendations concerning paid employees of the church. The Stewardship Committee shall present the budget to the Deacons and then to the church. The budget shall be presented to the church for approval by the last Sunday in November. Copies shall be distributed to the church at least one week prior to its adoption.
6. Once an expenditure is approved by inclusion into the church budget, no other approval is needed – unless due to the church being in a tight economy, the Stewardship Committee has announced a need for prior approval of expenses.
7. No one may establish a “designated fund” simply by the giving. Requests for creating a new fund must first be submitted to the Stewardship Committee. If the proffered gift is within the current budget or ministry of the church, the Stewardship Committee may accept the gift and apply to the budget. If the proffered gift is outside the scope of the current budget or ministry of the church, they shall bring recommendations concerning the offer to the congregation for approval.
8. No tangible property may be received by the church without first being accepted by the Stewardship Committee.
9. Separate persons shall be responsible for having custody of church monies (the collecting, counting, and depositing of funds to be done by a service team), authorizing transactions (the Stewardship Committee), and recording transactions (treasurer/financial secretary). No one person shall have custody of church monies at any time. A minimum of two church members is required to collect, count and deposit funds.

Article V Worship Services

1. Worship Services shall be held each Lord’s Day, both morning and evening unless otherwise announced.
2. The Lord’s Supper shall be observed on the first Sunday of each new quarter, or at such other time as the church may determine.
3. Occasional special services may be held at the discretion of the pastor or by vote of the church.
4. The pastor, at his discretion, shall arrange evangelistic services and events, and revival services.

Article VI
Church Business Meetings

1. A regular business meeting of the church shall be held quarterly in the months of January, April, July, and October. Meetings for specific purposes – deacon selection and adoption of the church budget – are described elsewhere in these bylaws.
2. The pastor or the deacon leader may call additional business meetings. There must be a letter sent to the congregation in advance or one week’s notice given to the church by public announcement.
3. The pastor shall serve as moderator. He may appoint another ordained ministerial staff member to moderate or ask the deacon leader to serve as moderator. Provisions for moderators when discussing the termination of a ministerial staff member are elsewhere described in the by-laws.
4. The moderator may appoint parliamentarians for the meeting.
5. Quorum shall be those church members present and voting.
6. Church business meetings shall be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order, most recent edition, unless otherwise specified in these by-laws.
7. At any regular service of the church, the church may vote to receive new members, or elect messengers to associational, state convention, or Southern Baptist Convention meetings. The pastor shall stand as automatically elected to serve as a messenger to these meetings.
8. Except for the three-quarters majority required by the church to call staff members, no larger majority than two-thirds shall be required.
9. Church members must be at least 12 years old to vote on church business.
[See Article I., Section 6]

Article VII.
Denominational Affiliation and Representation

1. The congregation may elect messengers to attend annual business meetings of the Baptist bodies with which the church cooperates to advance the Kingdom of Christ: the Elmore Baptist Association, the Alabama Baptist State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.
2. The pastor shall be automatically, by virtue of his office, an appointed messenger to these denominational meetings.

Article VIII.
Church Discipline

It is expected that if a member sins against another, he will go to the person seeking forgiveness and reconciliation and offering restitution, as required in Matthew 5:23-24. Any member having a complaint against another must seek to resolve the conflict as directed in Matthew 18:15-17. The aim is to secure

repentance and full reconciliation. If one is not able to effect reconciliation, then he should go to the deacons for counsel and assistance. They shall follow the principles in Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-2, 1st Corinthians 5, 2nd Corinthians 2, 2nd Thessalonians 3, James 3; 5:19-20, and Jude 22-23. Church discipline has the purpose of protecting the purity, unity, and message of the church. All discipline shall be carried out in the spirit of Christ, in humility and godly fear, and with caution so as to avoid being caught in the temptation. It is understood that when a person joins the church, he or she is voluntarily giving fellow members the right to hold them accountable in their walk with Christ.

Article IX

Licensing and Ordaining Ministers and Deacons

1. License to Preach

A male member, who, in the judgment of the church, gives evidence by his life, spiritual zeal, spiritual gifts, and ability to teach that God has called him to the work of the Gospel ministry, may be licensed to Preach. This license shall constitute a statement of the church's affirmation of God's calling upon his life. This person shall have first preached before this church and shall be well known by the congregation. A two-thirds vote in a regular business meeting shall be required.

2. Certificate of Christian Vocational Calling

If a member of First Baptist Church is called to vocational Christian service – other than pulpit ministry or other ministry that would violate the principles found in such passages as 1st Timothy 2:12 – then the church may grant a Certificate of Christian Vocational Calling. When a college or seminary requires a license to preach or ordination to verify a congregation's affirmation of person's call to vocational ministry, this shall represent the full equivalent for that purpose. This person shall give evidence by their life, zeal, and spiritual gifts that God has called them to a Christian vocation. This person shall be well known by the congregation. A two-thirds vote in a regular business meeting shall be required.

3. Ordination of Ministers

A. If a sister Baptist church should call as pastor (or ministerial staff member) one of the ministers licensed by this church, and should request his ordination, the pastor shall call together a council of ministers and ordained brethren from associated churches to examine the qualifications of the candidate. Upon the recommendation of this council, the church may proceed to ordain the candidate.

B. Should a ministerial staff member serving this congregation request ordination by this church, regardless of whether he was licensed here, first the pastor and then the deacons shall make recommendations to the congregation concerning the action the church should take. The pastor may take the initiative to recommend ordination after consulting with the staff member. In such a case, the pastor shall bring the recommendation to the deacons. The pastor shall call together a council of ministers and ordained brethren from associated churches to examine the qualifications of the candidate. Upon the recommendation of this council, the church may proceed to ordain the candidate.

4. Ordination of Deacons

Selected deacons, who have not been previously ordained, shall be ordained before January 1, when they begin their service. The pastor shall arrange the ordination service.

Article X
Adoption of and Amendments to Constitution and By-laws

1. The rules of this constitution and by-laws shall be considered adopted if two-thirds (2/3) of the members present and voting in business meeting vote in favor of adoption. They shall go into effect immediately. Their adoption shall make effective the repeal of all previously adopted rules. Upon passage, all committee, team, or officers, elected under the old rules, shall continue to carry out their duties until their term of office is expired.
2. Any article in this constitution and by-laws, or any subdivision thereof, may be amended or repealed with a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and voting in any regular church business meeting. However, the proposed change shall be laid before the church, in writing, no less than one month before the time of the proposed change. Any proposed amendments shall receive wide circulation.
3. A copy of this Constitution and By-laws shall be kept at all times in the church office and with the church clerk.

Article XI.
Distribution

1. A copy of this constitution and by-laws shall be made available to every member of the church.
2. As additional members join this church, they shall be provided a copy of this document and urged to familiarize themselves with its contents.

This Constitution and By-laws is built upon the foundation of two previous revisions:

Adopted in church conference, December 12, 1965
W. S. Ingram, Chairman
Fred B. Murphy
Clyde W. Clower
C. E. Langston, Pastor
C. E. Langston, Moderator
Miss Mary Lackey, Clerk
Bureon Ledbetter

Adopted in church conference, October 1, 1996
Louis Achimon, Chairman
Shirley Moncrief

Russell Chandler
Phyllis Chandler
Carlton Mason

This submitted October 19, 2003:
Tom Crawford, Chairman
Danny Chandler
Patsy Hale
Al Harris
Billy McKenzie
Steve Rogers
Derek Gentle, Pastor

Church Dates at a Glance

January

- The budget year begins January 1 (page 23 in Bylaws).
- The deacon year begins January 1 (page 21).
- Trustee year begins January 1 (page 20).

April

- By April 30, the pastor and deacon leader shall name one leader for each team (page 22).

May

- By May 31, Team Leaders shall have enlisted their team members (as described on page 22).

August

- Establish the average Sunday School attendance for the previous 12 months and calculates the number of deacons needed on the basis of one deacon for every 20 people in attendance (Page 17).
- The pastor prepares and published a list of qualifications for the office of deacon (page 17 – F, number 1).
- The congregation is given the opportunity to nominate men for deacon – each member may nominate as many men as there the number of vacancies to be filled. For a man to go onto the ballot, three or more members must nominate him (page 18, number 3). Men may remove their names from the ballot and consideration (page 17 – F., 2)
- In August and early September, the deacons rotating off as an active deacon, contact the nominated men (as described on page 18, number 5).

September

- The new Sunday School year begins September 1.
- Officers, Committee, and Ministry and Service Team year begins on September 1 (page 22)
- Outgoing deacons continue to contact men nominated for deacon to prepare deacon selection ballot for the third Sunday in September (as described on page 18, number 5).
- On the third and fourth Sundays of September, the congregation selects deacons (as described on page 18).

October

- The Stewardship Committee begins budget-making process (as described on page 23).
- The Deacons shall send to the church for approval their nominations for church offices: treasurer, assistant treasurer, church clerk, and associational representatives (Page 21).

November

- Budget is presented to the deacons and then to the church for approval by the last Sunday in the month (as described on page 23).

Conflict Resolution by the Book

Matthew 5:23-24 “So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Matthew 18:15-17 “If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he won’t listen, take one or two more with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. If he pays no attention to them, tell the church. But if he doesn’t pay attention even to the church, let him be like an unbeliever and a tax collector to you.”

Galatians 6:1-2 “Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you won’t be tempted also. Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

1st Corinthians 5:1-13 “I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— by no means referring to this world’s immoral people, or to the greedy and swindlers, or to idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave the world. But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a reviler, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. For what is it to me to judge outsiders? Do you not judge those who are inside? But God judges outsiders. Put away the evil person from among yourselves.”

2nd Corinthians 2:5-11 “If anyone has caused pain, he has not caused pain to me, but in some degree—not to exaggerate—to all of you. The punishment by the majority is sufficient for such a person, so now you should forgive and comfort him instead; otherwise, this one may be overwhelmed by excessive grief. Therefore I urge you to confirm your love to him. It was for this purpose I wrote: so I may know your proven character, if you are obedient in everything. Now to whom you forgive anything, I do too. For what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for you in the presence of Christ, so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his intentions.”

2nd Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 “Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother who walks irresponsibly and not according to the tradition received from us... And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take note of that person; don’t associate with him, so that he may be ashamed. Yet don’t treat him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

James 3:13-18 “Who is wise and understanding among you? He should show his works by good conduct with wisdom’s gentleness. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don’t brag and lie in defiance of the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

James 5:19-20 “My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, he should know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

Jude 1:22-23 “Have mercy on some who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; on others have mercy in fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

Luke 6:42 “First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck in your brother’s eye.”

Titus 3:10-11 “Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, knowing that such a person is perverted and sins, being self-condemned.”

First Timothy 5:19 “Don’t accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses.”

Relevant sections in the bylaws are: *Church Discipline*, pages 24-25; *The Role of Deacons*, page 17; and *The Principle of Church Membership*, page 12.

Resolving conflict with a staff member begins the same as for any member, one goes to the person. If that doesn’t resolve the problem, one goes to the pastor; then if necessary, the Personnel Committee; and finally, the Deacons.

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