

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WILSON

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

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CONSTITUTION OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WILSON, NY

In 1834 God called a group of Christians to unite themselves together under the name of First Baptist Church of Wilson, New York. The Lord has sustained this church to the present day for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We now recognize our need to organize ourselves in accordance with all New York State Requirements under this Constitution as our articles of governance so that this church can reflect God's character, and bringing glory to his name as we believe has been revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in our Statement of Faith and Church Covenant.

ARTICLE 1: NAME, PURPOSE, AND MISSION

Section 1: NAME

The name of this church shall be "First Baptist Church" of Wilson, New York.

Section 2: PURPOSE

This Church exists to glorify God in the town of Wilson, NY

Section 4: MISSION

This Church is to be a community of believers that seeks to make disciples of Jesus who know God through His Word, who will be known in church community with one another, and who will make known the gospel of Jesus Christ to this world.

ARTICLE 2: STATEMENT OF FAITH

Section 1: THE TRIUNE GOD

There is one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, yet they are equally and truly Deity. Each know, love and glorify one another, being co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal. This one true and living God is infinite, eternal, almighty, and perfect in holiness, truth and love. He is the creator of all things and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and praise. Eternally, He knows the end from the beginning, sovereignly ruling over all things, and providentially brings about His purpose to redeem a people to Himself and restore His fallen creation. This is the foundation of Christian faith and life.

Section 2: GOD THE FATHER

God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By His Word and for His glory, He freely and supernaturally created the world out of nothing. Through the same Word He daily sustains all His creatures. He rules over all and, together with the Son and the Spirit, is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He made all things for the praise of His glory and intends for man, in particular, to live in fellowship with Himself.

Section 3: GOD THE SON

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God became human: the Word made flesh. Supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He is one Person in two natures, fully God and fully man. He was always with God and is God. Through Him all things came into being and were created. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation and in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. We believe that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our only representative and substitute. He did this so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross He canceled sin, satisfied God's wrath, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, He intercedes for His people and rules as Lord over all, awaiting His return. He is the Head of His body, the church, and should be adored, loved, served and obeyed by all.

Section 4: GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Through the proclamation of the gospel He persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth, and dwells within the regenerate. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son, who in turn came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored, and worshiped as God the Third Person of the Trinity.

Section 5: REVELATION

God has graciously revealed His existence and power in the created order, and has supremely shown Himself to fallen human beings in the person of His Son. God by His Spirit has graciously

disclosed Himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the entire sixty- six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are means of His saving work in the world. These writings alone are the inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error, complete in its revelation of His will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that our sinfulness precludes the possibility of knowing God's truth extensively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

Section 6: CREATION

God created human beings, male and female, in His own image. Adam and Eve were part of the created order that God Himself declared to be very good. They served as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation. Men and women are equally made in the image of God and enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus. Both are called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to intentional private and public participation in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to join together in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God.

Section 7: THE FALL

Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited His original blessing by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being and condemned to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to Himself.

Section 8: GOD'S PLAN

God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end choose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those by grace who have faith in Jesus, and that He will one day glorify them. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set His saving love on those He has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

Section 9: THE GOSPEL

Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel; His resurrection is the power of the gospel and His ascension is the glory of the gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins. It satisfies God's holy justice and His holy wrath. It also demonstrates His love and reveals His amazing grace. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Christ and the infinite privilege that forgiven sinners have of glorifying God because of what He has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches, and ministries to proceed from and be related to the gospel.

Section 10: THE RESPONSE OF THE GOSPEL

The proper response to the gospel is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a faith that is naturally accompanied by repentance from sin. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross and follow Christ, he cannot become His Disciple.

Section 11: THE INHERITANCE IN AND THROUGH THE GOSPEL

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone turning from sin in repentance and looking to Christ and His substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. He is justified and fully accepted by God. Through Christ's atonement for sin an individual is reconciled to God as Father and becomes His child. The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and, via the miracle of regeneration, liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit.

Section 12: ETERNAL SECURITY & ASSURANCE

Once redeemed, the saved are kept by God's power and are secure in Christ forever. This is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word.

Section 13: THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification. He seeks to produce His fruit in us as our minds are renewed and we are molded to the image of Christ. Though sin remains a reality, as we are led by the Spirit, we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping His commandments and yearning to live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are charged to persevere in the faith knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word and deed. The believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve His people until the return of Christ the King.

Section 14: SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God is sovereign in the giving of spiritual gifts and it is the believer's responsibility to attempt to develop their sovereignly given spiritual gift(s). While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Our beliefs concerning Spiritual Gifts are shaped by [1 Corinthians 12 \(1 Cor. 12:4-7\)](#). The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts His gifts for the edification of the Body and for various works of ministry in the world. We recognize that God does hear and answer the prayer of the faithful, in accordance with His own will, for the sick and afflicted. We believe that it is the privilege and responsibility of every believer to minister according to the gift(s) and grace of God that is given to him.

Section 15: THE CHURCH

God by His Word and Spirit creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body. The church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, the universal Church is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on the earth. This involves a commitment to see the gospel preached and churches planted in the entire world. The ultimate mission of the Church is worship and the means by which this is accomplished is in making disciples through the preaching and embracing of the gospel. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer. All members of the Church universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. The ascended Christ has given prophets, priests and kingly leadership for the equipping of Christ's body that it might mature and grow. Through these ministries, all members of the church are to be nurtured and equipped for the work of ministry.

Section 16: BAPTISM & THE LORD'S SUPPER

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The ordinances are connected with entrance into the new covenant.

Water baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become His disciple. In obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the church and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin.

The Lord's Supper is also to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the giving of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life in remembrance to, and as a sign of, continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. We should partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith, remembrance, self-examination, we

receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with the members of Christ's body.

Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

Section 17: THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with His holy angels, when He will exercise His role as final Judge, and His kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust— the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord Himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of Him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its devastating effects forever banished. God will be in all and His people will be enthralled by His ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of His glorious grace.

ARTICLE 3: CHURCH COVENANT

Since we have been brought by Divine Grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

- We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit and to live in peaceful harmony with one another in our church.
- We will walk together in brotherly love, as the members of Wilson First Baptist Church; exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.
- We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.
- We will commit to build up others around us that are under our care, in the nurture and instruction of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.
- We will rejoice at each other's happiness, and seek with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.
- We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.
- We will work together to continue a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.
- We will, when we move away from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.

Sign: _____ Date: _____

ARTICLE 4: BYLAWS

Section 1: MEMBERSHIP

1.1: Member Qualifications

- A. Members of this church shall be believers in Jesus Christ who give evidence of regeneration;
- B. Who have been baptized as believers in obedience to Christ;
- C. Who hold without mental reservation the doctrines of our church as expressed in the statement of faith; and
- D. Who promise to keep the commitments expressed in the church Bylaws and church Covenant.

1.2: Member Installation

- A. An applicant shall be received as a member of the church upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.
- B. No member of this church shall retain membership in any other church.

1.3: Expectations of Members

- A. Members shall be expected to participate actively in the life of the church by regularly attending its Sunday morning gatherings; neglecting to attend for at least 6 months will automatically begin the process of church discipline laid out in [section 1.4](#).
- B. By faithfully observing its ordinances, namely baptism and the Lord's supper;
- C. By submitting to its discipline and instruction; and
- D. By attending, as frequently as possible, its members' meetings.
- E. No person who is not a member shall lead any ministry or hold any office of the church.

1.4: Membership Termination

- A. The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, and may do so following his or her voluntary resignation or joining with another church.
- B. The church shall have authority to exercise discipline over its members, which may involve excluding from its membership any member consistently neglectful of the duties enumerated in [sections 1.1](#) and [1.3](#) or guilty of scandalous conduct by which the reputation of Christ or His church is dishonored. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in [Matthew 18:15-17](#) and those of the Apostle Paul in [1 Corinthians 5:1-5](#) and [2 Corinthians 2:6-8](#).

- C. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other reason the church deems necessary or prudent.
- D. A member shall be removed from membership as a matter of church discipline upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Section 2: MEETINGS

2.1: Main Meeting The church shall meet together for public worship each Sunday morning, and at other times throughout the week as the church may determine.

2.2: Members' Meetings

- A. The church shall hold a regular members' meeting at least four times a year, which shall not be held in place of the regular Sunday morning meeting, but at some other time.
- B. The Elders, whenever they deem it necessary, or within thirty days of receiving a written request signed by ten percent of the voting membership, shall call a special members' meeting.
- C. Members' meetings must be announced at every public meeting of the church for at least one week immediately prior to the members' meeting in question, except as described in [section 4.2:B.3](#) of these bylaws.
- D. The Chairman of the elders or his representative shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings.
- E. Members' meetings shall proceed according to a reasonable order, and the members present shall constitute a quorum to do business, a quorum is 25% of the members. Motions shall be adopted upon the agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question, except on matters otherwise provided for in these bylaws.
- F. Members must be physically present in order to vote. For the purposes of these bylaws, "present" shall be defined as physically present.
- G. In the event that legal orders by local, state, or federal officials would prevent the church from holding at least bi-yearly members' meetings as required by these bylaws, and the elders agree to abide by those orders, the moderator shall declare duly-called meetings to be "virtual." In that case, all requirements in these bylaws for physical presence at members' meetings shall be waived, and the church shall gather and conduct business by any technological means available to the majority of the church. No other rule shall be affected by a virtual meeting.

2.3: What Members Vote on in Members Meetings

- A. The church, duly assembled in a members' meeting, shall be responsible to elect elders and deacons;

- B. To receive applicants into church membership;
- C. To recognize termination of membership due to death, transfer of membership, or voluntary resignation;
- D. To exercise church discipline;
- E. To approve, once in every year, a church budget;
- F. Any other business they deem necessary.

Section 3: GOVERNMENT

3.1: Authority The biblical offices in the church shall be Elders and Deacons, but final earthly authority is vested in the assembled congregation.

3.2: Elders

A. Role and Qualifications:

1. Oversight of the ministry, the facilities, the resources, and the personnel of the church shall be vested in a council of elders, which shall be comprised of men who satisfy the qualifications set forth in [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#) and [Titus 1:6-9](#).
2. In accordance with [1 Timothy 2:12 and 3:2](#), women shall not serve as elders.
3. The Elders shall, in keeping with the principles set forth in the Scriptures, especially [Acts 6:1-6](#); [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#); [5:17](#); [Titus 1:5-9](#); [James 5:14](#); and [1 Peter 5:1-4](#), undertake the responsibility of shepherding God's flock by devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.
4. To have particular authority to plan and oversee worship services;
5. To oversee the ordinances, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper;
6. To examine and instruct prospective members;
7. To oversee the process of church discipline;
8. To examine and recommend candidates for all offices and positions;
9. To oversee the work of the deacons/deaconesses and all other agents of the church;
10. To hire, oversee, evaluate the performance of, and when necessary terminate paid church staff;
11. To take any other action which shall be necessary and proper for faithfully overseeing and shepherding the church in accordance with biblical standards.

B. Installation: Elders shall be selected as follows:

1. The Council of Elders shall at any regular members' meeting present to the church a list of nominees to the office of elder.
2. For a period of at least one month, the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders, who may on the basis of that advice remove names

from the list of nominees. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list.

3. When a period of one month has elapsed, the elders shall at the next regular members' meeting present a final list of nominees to the church, who shall vote "yea" or "nay" on each of the nominees in turn by a private ballot.
4. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on his nomination shall be an elder, which means the church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.

C. Term:

1. With the exceptions of the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors, as defined in [sections 3.3 and 3.4](#) of these bylaws, elders shall be reaffirmed by the church every two years, in accordance with the process described in [section 3.2:B](#) of these bylaws, and after each two year term every elder is required to take a 3 month Sabbatical before being eligible for re-election. A Sabbatical is to cease from all ministry obligations for a time whether they are elder related or not. Neither the senior pastor nor associate pastors shall be subject to a reaffirmation vote, nor to any term limit.
2. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

D. Organization:

1. The Council of Elders shall choose their chairman and shall adopt their own bylaws. In compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of New York State, the Council of Elders shall serve as the Board of Directors of the corporation, and the Chairman of the Elders shall serve as the president of the corporation.
2. Every elder shall be expected to abide by the bylaws of the Elder Board of First Baptist Church, and every elder shall have a right to attend the entirety of every meeting of the board, except as described in the bylaws of the Elder Board of First Baptist Church in Wilson.

E. Removal: An Elder shall be removed from office upon the vote of three quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in [Matthew 18:15-17](#) and those of the Apostle Paul in [1 Timothy 5:17-21](#).

F. In the event that the Church has no Elders, the Church shall at the next regular members' meeting elect an interim moderator, who shall at each subsequent regular members' meeting nominate one or more men to serve as elders, pursuant to [section 3.2:B](#) of these bylaws, until an elder is elected. The office of Interim Moderator shall dissolve immediately upon the election of an elder.

3.3: Senior Pastor

A. Role and Qualifications:

1. Primary responsibility for preaching and teaching the Scriptures in public meetings of the church may be vested in a senior pastor. Only one Senior Pastor may be recognized at a time.
2. The senior pastor shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a member of the church. He shall satisfy all the qualifications and hold all the duties and responsibilities of an elder. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an elder and the senior pastor.

B. Installation: The senior pastor shall be selected as follows:

1. The elders shall at any regular members' meeting present to the church the name of one nominee to the position of senior pastor.
2. For a period of at least two weeks, the church shall consider the nominee's gifts in preaching and teaching, and his commitment to minister personally to the members of this church. If any member believes the nominee to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders.
3. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the elders shall at the next members' meeting present the nominee for senior pastor to the church, who shall vote "yea" or "nay" on his selection as such by a private ballot.
4. The Moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and if the nominee receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question, he shall be a member of the church, an elder, and the senior pastor, whom the church shall in due haste publicly recognize as such.

C. Term: The senior pastor shall not be subject to a reaffirmation vote, nor to any term limit.

D. Removal: The senior pastor shall be removed from office and his employment terminated upon the vote of three quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in [Matthew 18:15-17](#) and those of the Apostle Paul in [1 Timothy 5:17-21](#).

3.4: Associate Pastors

A. Other particular pastoral responsibilities expected to be of a long-term nature may be vested in one or more associate Pastors.

B. Role and Qualifications:

1. An associate pastor shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a member of the church. He shall satisfy all the qualifications and hold all the duties and responsibilities of an elder.
2. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an elder and an associate pastor.

C. Installation: An associate pastor shall be selected as follows:

1. The elders shall at any regular members' meeting present to the church the name of one nominee to the position of Associate Pastor.
 2. For a period of at least two weeks, the church shall consider the nominee's gifts in the particular area of service to which he is being called, and his commitment to minister personally to the members of this church. If any member believes the nominee to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders.
 3. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the elders shall at the next members' meeting present the nominee for Associate Pastor to the church, who shall vote "yea" or "nay" on his selection as such by a private ballot.
 4. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and if the nominee receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question, he shall be a member of the church, an elder, and an associate pastor, whom the church shall in due haste publicly recognize as such.
- D. Term:** An associate pastor shall not be subject to a reaffirmation vote, nor to any term limit.
- E. Removal:** An associate pastor shall be removed from office and his employment terminated upon the vote of three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in [Matthew 18:15-17](#) and those of the Apostle Paul in [1 Timothy 5:17-21](#).

3.5: Deacons

- A. Qualifications:** Particular service to the church shall be provided by deacons/deaconesses, the number of which shall vary as the church has need, and who shall satisfy the qualifications set forth in [1 Timothy 3:8-13](#).
- B. Role:** Specific roles and titles of deacons/deaconesses are recommended by the elders according to the needs of the church at that time and the subsequent vote of the majority of members present. **However, the church must have a deacon/deaconess of administration who oversees church finances.**
1. The church may recognize deacons/deaconesses to take responsibility for seeing that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the infirm receive spiritual and physical comfort.
 2. They may lead the hospitality ministries of the church, attend to the normal care and maintenance of church properties, and attend to the accommodations for public worship.
 3. They may receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence and report from time to time on the use of such funds to both the elders and the church.
 4. Deacons may also serve in other specific capacities as the church has need.

5. In keeping with the principles set forth in [Acts 6:1-6](#), deacons/deaconesses shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority, but shall support the Elders' ministry of the Word, work to maintain the unity of the church, and care for the physical needs of the church.

C. Installation: Deacons/deaconesses shall be selected as follows:

1. The Council of Elders shall present to the congregation at any regular Sunday morning gathering that is at least 2 weeks in advance to the next members meeting a list of nominees to the office of Deacon/deaconess.
2. For a period of at least two weeks, the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders, who may on the basis of that advice remove names from the list of nominees. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list.
3. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the elders shall at the next regular Members' Meeting present a final list of nominees to the church, who shall vote "yea" or "nay" on each of the nominees in turn.
4. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of three-quarters of the members present and voting on his nomination shall be a deacon/deaconess, which men or women the church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.

D. Term:

1. No deacon shall hold the office of elder during his or her term, nor more than one Diaconate.
2. Deacons/deaconesses shall be reaffirmed by the church every two years, in accordance with the process described in [section 3.5:C](#) of these bylaws.

E. Removal: A deacon/deaconess may be removed from office by a decision of the elders, or upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of three-fourths of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting, except as otherwise specified by these bylaws.

Section 4: ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCES

4.1: Financial Oversight

A. Deacon/Deaconess of Administration: The church shall select a deacon/deaconess of administration according to [section 3.5:C](#) of these bylaws.

1. The deacon/deaconess of administration shall be responsible, with oversight of the elders, for creating and maintaining all of the church's accounts for purposes of banking, paying bills, accounting, tax/wage reporting, and church operations, and shall be responsible for maintaining a secure list of updated usernames and passwords for these accounts.

2. This deacon/deaconess shall oversee finances, and shall, with the advice and approval of the elders, make available the next year's budget to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the final regular members meeting of every year where it will be voted upon.
3. This deacon/deaconess shall render to the elders at least once in every year, or whenever they may require it, an account of the financial condition of the church, and/or, upon the request of the elders, an account of all financial transactions.
4. This deacon/deaconess shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular members' meetings.
5. The deacon/deaconess of administration shall oversee a church finance team.
6. In the event that the deacon of administration position becomes vacant, the elders may appoint a person to fill that position and assume its responsibilities, until such time as some person can be duly recognized by the church as a deacon/deaconess, but not for longer than two consecutive members' meetings.

B. Finance Team:

1. The finance team shall be comprised of the deacon/deaconess of administration and up to two other members. One of these members must be a treasurer. The finance team may also include a financial secretary to assist the treasurer and deacon/deaconess of administration as needed.
2. The finance team shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the church.
3. The deacon/deaconess, working with the finance team, shall ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church.
4. No paid staff member of the church shall be eligible to be part of the finance team.

4.2: Financial Planning

A. Budget Creation: The Deacon of Administration and the elders shall meet at the beginning of the last fiscal quarter of each year to establish a budget draft for the following year.

1. Upon the consent of the elders present and voting on the question at the budget creation meeting, non-paid elders and the deacon of administration will determine the compensation of paid elders during the budget process.

B. Budget Adoption:

1. This budget draft shall be made available to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the final regular members meeting of the year, where it will be considered and voted upon by church members.
2. The budget shall be adopted upon the motion of the deacon/deaconess of administration and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the members present.
3. In the event of a failure by the church to approve a new budget by the beginning of the new fiscal year, church staff shall continue to be compensated as well as necessary operating costs specified by the most recent adopted budget, with its amendments, but no other spending shall be authorized until such time as a new budget is adopted at any members' meeting. In such an event, the elders may call special members' meetings, their sole order of business being the consideration of a budget, with one day's notice by correspondence to the members of the church.

C. Budget Implementation:

1. Once adopted, the elders shall have responsibility to oversee and faithfully disburse the budget.
2. Amendments to the budget shall be adopted upon the motion of the deacon/deaconess of administration and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

D. Other Financial Business:

1. Upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting, the congregation may fund certain designated accounts, distinct from the operating budget, which shall be under the oversight and authority of the elders.
2. No person or group shall solicit money on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders and the deacon/deaconess of administration.
3. The elders may engage an independent certified public accountant to conduct an annual audit of the financial records of the church, in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. The auditor will express an opinion on the financial statements presented in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. These financial statements are to include, but not be limited to, a statement of financial condition, a statement of activity, a statement of cash flows and disclosures. The elders may alternatively choose to appoint an internal Audit Ministry Team composed of Covenant Church Members to review the financial records of the church.

Section 5: CHURCH BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT

The buildings and equipment of the church shall be used in accordance with the vision and ministry stated herein. Use of church property shall be governed by policies established by the elders.

Section 6: DISSOLUTION

6.1: Definition "Dissolution" means the complete disbanding of the Church so that it no longer functions as a congregation or as a corporate entity.

6.2: Procedure

- A.** Upon the dissolution of the Church, its property shall be applied and distributed as follows:
1. All liabilities and obligations of the Church shall be paid and discharged, or adequate provision shall be made therefore;
 2. Assets held by the Church upon condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the dissolution, shall be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements;
 3. Assets received and not held upon a condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance by reason of the dissolution, shall be transferred or conveyed to one or more domestic or foreign corporations, societies, or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and are engaged in activities substantially similar to those of the Corporation; if possible, a church plant seeking a physical building. This distribution shall be done pursuant to a plan adopted by the members; and
 4. Any assets not otherwise disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the Church is then located, for such purposes and to such organizations as said court shall determine, provided such organizations are in agreement with the Church's Articles of Faith and basic form of Government.

Section 7: RATIFICATION

These bylaws shall be ratified upon the approval of three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any regular business meeting of the church, and shall take effect upon the recognition of at least three elders, or in the case that there are fewer than three elders there must be at least two other pastors from outside the church who would recommend the changes.

Section 8: AMENDMENTS

8.1: Amending the Constitution, Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Church Covenant

The Constitution, Bylaws, Statement of Faith, or Church Covenant shall be amended upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of three-quarters of the members voting on the question at any regular members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at any previous regular members' meeting, and shall have been announced at every public meeting of the church for two weeks immediately prior to final consideration. Any member serving under the commission of this church on an international mission field shall also be eligible to vote by correspondence on this question.

ARTICLE 5: ELDER BOARD AND BYLAWS

Section 1. GENERAL

1.1: These bylaws shall be subordinate to the Bylaws of First Baptist Church.

1.2: The Elder Board of First Baptist Church shall proceed according to a reasonable order. Any question not otherwise governed by these bylaws shall be determined by a majority vote of the elders present and voting on the question at any meeting. Except as otherwise specified by any article of these bylaws, abstentions shall be considered as absences and therefore deducted from the total number of votes, and votes shall be considered final unless a majority of the body which originally voted on the question agrees to reconsider; such a motion to reconsider must be made by an elder who voted with the original majority or who did not vote on the question.

1.3: A quorum of the elder board shall be defined as a majority of the full number of elders, gathered physically in accordance with [section 3](#) of these bylaws, except as otherwise specified by any article of these bylaws.

1.4: Except as otherwise specified by any article of these bylaws, elders must be physically present in order to vote. For the purposes of these bylaws, “present” shall be defined as physically present.

1.5: The full number of elders shall be defined as all currently serving elders, not merely those present.

1.6: Except as otherwise specified by these bylaws, in lieu of a meeting and on questions of a time-sensitive nature and expected to be non-controversial, the elders may conduct business by correspondence. A vote by correspondence shall be initiated upon the motion and second of any item of business by any elder. A vote by correspondence shall be considered final one day after initiation, at which point the question shall be decided by a majority of those voting, or immediately when the question has been decided by a two-thirds majority of the full number of elders. Any elder may, while a vote by correspondence is still open and by appeal to the chairman, refer the question to the next meeting of the board.

Section 2. OFFICERS

2.1: The senior pastor, as defined by [section 3.2:D.1](#) of the bylaws of First Baptist Church, will serve as or the council of elders will appoint a chairman and secretary of the elder board. His duties shall be as defined by custom and the provisions of these bylaws.

2.2: The chairman of the elder board shall call and lead elders’ meetings. He shall retain at all times the right to act on any question, commensurate with every other elder and may appoint a representative to serve as moderator of any members’ meeting.

2.3: The chairman of the elders may appoint an assistant, not necessarily an elder, to keep, compile, and archive the minutes of the board. Minutes, including attendance

records, shall be kept for every meeting of the board, except when the board is in executive session. Minutes shall be made available to all elders within seven days of every meeting.

2.4: In the event of a vacancy in the senior pastorate, the elders shall elect an interim chairman.

2.5: No other officers of the board shall be recognized.

Section 3. MEETINGS

3.1: Regular meetings of the board will be called by the chairman and should be held at least once a month.

3.2: A special meeting of the board shall be called within one week of the application of a majority of the full number of elders to the chairman, or at the chairman's discretion.

3.3: No meeting of the board shall be held without notice of such meeting being given to every elder at least two days in advance, except by unanimous consent of all other elders.

3.4: Pursuant of [section 3.2:D.2](#) of the bylaws of First Baptist Church, the board may not exclude any elder from any meeting of the board, or any portion thereof, without his consent or the concurrence of two-thirds of the full number of elders. Even if an elder is to be duly excluded by the board, notice of any meeting must still be given to all elders.

3.5: Visitors may be invited to meetings of the board by a majority vote of the elders, or by the chairman without objection from any other elder.

3.6: During any meeting, the board may enter executive session, defined as a private session of the board members, by majority vote of the elders present and voting on the question, or at the discretion of the chairman without objection by any other elder. The board may exit the executive session by the same procedure. All business shall be in order during executive session, subject to these bylaws. The nomination of new elders may occur only in executive session. Minutes shall not be taken of proceedings in the executive session. By unanimous consent of the elders present, visitors may be invited to the executive session.

3.7: Upon the request of any elder to the chairman, any item of discussion or business shall be referred to the executive session.

Section 4. EXPECTATIONS

4.1: Each elder shall be expected to be present for at least two-thirds of the meetings of the board, both regular and special. Failure to do so over a consecutive twelve-month period shall be duly considered by the board in the matter of re-nomination, censure, request for resignation, or recommendation for removal.

Section 5. BUDGET PROCESS

5.1: Pursuant to [section 4.2:B](#) of the bylaws of First Baptist Church, the elders shall present an approved proposed budget to the congregation at least two weeks before the final members' meeting of each fiscal year. In the event of a failure by the elders to approve a new proposed budget in time, the most recent budget adopted by the church,

with its amendments, shall be presented to the deacon of administration as the approved proposed budget.

5.2: The process of creating and adopting a proposed budget shall include a collaboration between the elder board and the deacon of administration. The deacon of administration does not have the power to approve this budget. That is the responsibility of the elders.

5.3: As part of the budget process, and upon the consent of the elders present and voting on the question at the meeting prescribed by the bylaws of First Baptist Church, non-paid elders and the deacon of administration will determine the compensation of paid elders during the budget process.

5.4: A proposed budget shall be approved by a majority of the full number of elders and then presented to the congregation for approval.

Section 6. NOMINATION OF NEW ELDERS

6.1: These bylaws shall be subordinate to [section 3](#) of the bylaws of First Baptist Church.

6.2: The nomination of a new elder shall proceed with two votes by a quorum of the full number of elders, the first to send the potential nominee the “questionnaire for potential elders,” and the second to nominate. Both votes shall be determined by a two-thirds majority rule.

6.3: The vote to send someone the questionnaire will be initiated by the proposal of a name of a potential nominee during an executive session when a quorum is present. Elders will then discuss the nominee and vote by show of hands. If the proposal survives, any elder not present must be notified of the proposal immediately and allowed to cast a vote within twenty-four hours. Elders not present may vote by correspondence, but any Elder not voting shall be considered to have abstained. Nay or abstentions amounting to over one-third of the full number of elders shall prevent the sending of the questionnaire. Otherwise, the questionnaire shall be sent to the potential nominee.

6.4: The vote to nominate a new elder shall proceed as follows: During any executive session, and a quorum being present, an elder shall propose the name of a potential nominee for elder, provided he has returned the completed questionnaire and the elders have had at least one day to consider it. Elders will then discuss the nominee and vote by show of hands. If the proposal survives, any elder not present must be notified of the proposal immediately and allowed to cast a vote within twenty-four hours. Elders not present may vote by correspondence, but any elder not voting shall be considered to have abstained. Nay or abstentions amounting to over one-third of the full number of elders shall prevent the nomination. Otherwise, the nomination shall be made public to the congregation for consideration pursuant to [section 3.2:B](#) of the bylaws of First Baptist Church.

6.5: Any Elder who is eligible for re-election pursuant to [section 3.2:C](#) of the bylaws of First Baptist Church and by [section 6.2](#) of these bylaws, except that he shall not be required to complete the questionnaire unless otherwise directed by a majority vote of the elders present and voting.

6.6: No person under consideration for nomination or re-nomination as an elder shall be present for the vote process concerning him, and he shall not be privy to the discussions or proceedings therein. An elder considered under [section 6.5](#) of these bylaws shall be privy only to whether or not he will be renominated and a general description of the reasons for the decision, but the votes of particular elders shall not be revealed.

6.7: Votes taken under [section 6](#) of these bylaws shall be considered final until a) the elders by unanimous consent agree to reconsider a proposal; or b) a new duly-called meeting of the board is called to order.

6.8: Both the votes and the deliberations of the board during proceedings under [section 6](#) of these bylaws shall be considered strictly confidential. Except when explicitly directed by unanimous consent of the board, any violation of that confidentiality shall be considered grounds for censure, a request for resignation, or a recommendation for removal, pursuant to [section 7](#) of these bylaws.

Section 7. DISCIPLINE

7.1: These bylaws shall be subordinate to [section 3.2](#) of the bylaws of First Baptist Church.

7.2: The board may censure (communicate displeasure with) any elder by majority vote of the full number of elders. A second majority vote of the full number of elders shall be required to report a censure to the church at the next regular members' meeting. Otherwise the censure shall remain confidential.

7.3: The board may formally request, but not require, the resignation of any elder by majority vote of the full number of elders. A second majority vote of the full number of elders shall be required to report a request for resignation to the church at the next regular members' meeting. Otherwise the request for resignation shall remain confidential.

7.4: The board may formally recommend to the church the removal of an elder from office by two-thirds vote of the full number of elders.

Section 8. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT

8.1: These bylaws shall be adopted upon the approval of a majority of the full number of elders.

8.2: These bylaws shall be amended upon a two-thirds vote of the full number of elders.