

# BYLAWS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PLANT CITY, FL

## ARTICLE I     PURPOSE STATEMENT

All actions of the church shall be evaluated for consistency with this purpose statement:

The mission of First Baptist Church is Leading people beyond “just good enough,” to experience L.I.F.E. in Christ:

- Loving God and others;
- Investing in the Kingdom;
- Faithfully sharing;
- Engaging in service.

## ARTICLE II     MEMBERSHIP

### Section 1:       How received:

Members may be received by any of the following means at any service of the church:

- A. Profession of faith in Jesus Christ followed by believer’s baptism.
- B. Promise and receipt of membership letter from a Baptist Church.
- C. Statement of prior conversion experience and believer’s baptism by immersion.
- D. Watchcare, when a person wishes to unite with our church but for whatever reason is unable to be baptized. Watchcare members are not permitted to vote in church business meetings or to be elected to leadership positions in the church.

### Section 2:       Conditions of:

- A. Membership in First Baptist Church is contingent upon the believer’s coming by one of the above means and being affirmed through a decision counseling process and whatever additional new member qualifications the church may subsequently impose.
- B. The church is a fellowship of Christian believers. Membership is therefore reserved for those who share a common view of basic evangelical Christian tenets as defined in scripture and summarized in The Baptist Faith and Message. Church facilities are dedicated to the purposes of the church and are not a place of public accommodation.
- C. Membership may be refused or withdrawn through the exclusion process in Article II, Section 3, E, if a member’s lifestyle, speech, or actions are contrary to scripture and detrimental to the fellowship, and the disciplinary actions outlined in Article XIV do not bring restoration. Tit. 3:9-11, 1 Cor. 5:4-5.

### Section 3:       How dismissed:

Membership may be terminated by any of the following means:

- A. Death
- B. Transfer of membership letter to another Baptist Church
- C. Membership taken in another church or denomination
- D. Exclusion at the request of the member
- E. Exclusion by church action which would require an 80% vote of members in a duly announced business meeting.

## ARTICLE III     CHURCH MEETINGS

### Section 1:       Services of the church:

Regular services of the church will be scheduled as determined by the church in a business meeting.

Deviation from regular service schedules will be at the recommendation of pastoral staff and in communication with the deacons. Additional services and activities may be added as deemed appropriate by pastoral staff.

### Section 2:       Business Meetings:

#### A. Regular business meetings:

Regular business meetings will be held twice annually during Sunday evening services in April and September. Prior notification will be given orally at two services of the church and also printed in the worship bulletin or newsletter.

#### B. Annual meeting of the Corporation:

The annual meeting of the corporation will be held at the regular business meeting in September.

#### C. Special business meetings:

Special business meetings may be called as needed at the request of the pastor or the deacons and requires prior notification as for regular business meetings.

Adopted: May 31, 2015   Amended: September 27, 2020

D. Rules of order:

Roberts Rules of Order will guide all parliamentary procedures.

E. Quorum:

All members present at a duly called business meeting will form a quorum regardless of number.

F. Moderator:

The Chairman of the Deacons will serve as moderator at all business meetings. At his request, or in his absence, the Vice Chairman of the Deacons or the Church Clerk or the Church Treasurer may be enlisted for this purpose.

G. Voting:

Voice votes will be taken as needed to determine the will of the church. A written, private ballot may be taken if a motion to do so is affirmed by at least 80% of those members voting. Absentee or proxy votes are not permitted.

ARTICLE IV ORDINANCES

Section 1: Baptism:

Baptism will be by immersion and will be administered by members of the pastoral staff or other ordained minister with the pastor's approval.

Section 2: The Lord's Supper:

The Lord's Supper will be administered by the pastor or other ordained minister with the pastor's approval, and with the assistance of the deacons. The Lord's Supper will be observed regularly as scheduled by pastor and deacons.

ARTICLE V BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION

Section 1: Purpose

Subject to the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ as its head, as revealed to its members through the orderly processes set forth in its articles of incorporation and bylaws, and except as otherwise provided in the articles of incorporation, by bylaw, or under Florida law, the powers of this corporation shall be exercised, its properties controlled, and its affairs conducted by the board of directors, which may, however, delegate the performance of any duties or the exercise of any powers to officers and agents designated by resolution of the board of directors.

Section 2: Composition

The Board shall be comprised of:

- A. The incumbent Chairman of the Deacons who shall be President of the Corporation and serve as Chairman of the Board;
- B. The incumbent Vice Chairman of the Deacons who shall be Vice President of the Corporation and serve as Vice Chairman of the Board.
- C. The incumbent Church Treasurer who shall be Treasurer of the Corporation;
- D. The incumbent Church Clerk who shall be Secretary of the Corporation;
- E. The previous two Chairmen of the Deacons;
- F. The incumbent Finance Committee Chairperson
- G. The incumbent Personnel Committee Chairperson
- H. The Pastor.

Section 3: Duties

- A. The President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, as corporate officers, are authorized to sign any legal document on behalf of the church so long as it is in keeping with these bylaws, church policies or vote of the church.
- B. Matters of a routine or recurring nature for which there is precedence do not require specific consent of the church.
- C. Authority is granted to act on behalf of the church to enter into legally binding agreements or contracts provided that church approval is obtained in advance through adoption of an annual budget or by specific vote of the members at a regular or special business meeting, and to sign agreements or contracts that are contingent on subsequent church ratification by vote of the members at a regular or special business meeting.

ARTICLE VI CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1: President of the Corporation

The Deacons shall annually elect a Deacon Chairman who will serve as President of the corporation and preside at all church business meetings.

Section 2: Vice President of the Corporation

The Deacons will annually elect a Deacon Vice Chairman who will serve as Vice President of the corporation and preside at church business meetings if the Chairman is not present.

Section 3: Treasurer of the Corporation

The church shall annually elect a Treasurer as nominated by the Nominating Committee. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to oversee the receipt and disbursement of all money or things of value paid or given to the church. He shall ensure that accurate accounting and compliance with the budget is maintained and that regular reports are prepared for business meetings.

Section 4: Clerk or Secretary of the Corporation

The church shall annually elect a Clerk as nominated by the Nominating Committee. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to keep an accurate record of the proceedings of all business meetings of the church. All such records and minutes are church property and will be preserved in the church office.

## ARTICLE VII LEADERSHIP

Section 1: Pastor

A. Duties:

The pastor is recognized as God's chosen leader for this congregation. As such he is responsible for leading the church to closely adhere to God's will and purpose for our church. In recognition of his biblically defined shepherding role, and the pastor's responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the membership, the pastor is expected to be the leader of the church.

B. Calling:

Responsibility for selecting a pastor will be given to a Pastor Search Committee made up of at least seven members, both men and women, nominated by the Deacons, and elected by the church in a business meeting called for that purpose. Every effort should be made to determine God's chosen man for this position. Any candidate should be thoroughly interviewed, investigated and unanimously recommended by the committee. The committee will consult with the Personnel Committee, the Finance Committee and the deacons before the candidate is brought before the membership. Various opportunities will be provided for members to meet and talk with the candidate. The pastor will be called by the church if a vote is taken in a business meeting for this purpose and at least 80% of those members present and voting are in the affirmative.

C. Supervision:

The pastor will be supervised by the Personnel Committee.

D. Removal:

Removal of a pastor is a matter of grave concern and should be viewed as a final resort. As such, any discussion related to removal of a pastor should be reserved for the Personnel Committee in a meeting called for this purpose. Every effort should be made for redemption and resolution of the issues. Failing this, the Personnel Committee should bring a motion for removal to a specially called meeting of active deacons for a final effort toward reconciliation. An 80% majority of those deacons present and voting will be required to sustain the motion for removal. The deacons may then announce a special business meeting called for this purpose, at which the motion for removal will be discussed and a vote taken. At least 80% of those members present and voting must concur with the motion to remove. Any severance issues will be negotiated by the Personnel Committee.

Section 2: Pastoral Staff Members

A. Duties:

Additional ordained or licensed pastors may be called by the church to serve in specific areas when a vacancy occurs or when a need is determined by the pastor and Personnel Committee. Duties will be outlined by the pastor and the Personnel Committee.

B. Calling:

Responsibility for selecting a candidate rests with the pastor. After determining God's chosen person for the position, the pastor will recommend the candidate to the Personnel Committee for appropriate interviewing and investigation. With concurrence of the Personnel Committee, the candidate will be presented to the deacons for discussion and approval. The Finance Committee will be consulted related to financial terms of possible employment. The candidate will be presented to the church with support of the deacons and the committees. An affirmative vote of 80% of those members present and voting is required in order for the church to issue a call.

C. Supervision:

Pastoral staff members are supervised by the pastor or his designee.

D. Removal:

A Pastoral staff member can be removed with the recommendation of his supervisor and the concurrence of the Personnel Committee. Any severance issues will be negotiated by the Personnel Committee in consultation with the Finance Committee.

Section 3: Support Staff

A. Duties:

Non-pastoral staff members may be employed as need is determined by the Personnel Committee. Duties will be outlined by the Personnel Committee. The Finance Committee will be consulted regarding budgetary issues.

B. Hiring

Support Staff members will be selected and hired by the person who will be their supervisor providing the pastor concurs. A report of new employee hiring will be made to the Personnel Committee.

C. Supervision:

Supervision of Support Staff members will be performed by the individual designated by the pastor or Personnel Committee.

D. Removal:

Removal of Support staff members will be initiated by their supervisor in consultation with the Personnel Committee.

ARTICLE VIII DEACONS

Section 1: Introduction

The church shall annually elect men to serve as deacons for the purposes of assisting in the ministry of the church and serving in an advisory capacity to the pastor and staff.

Section 2: Qualifications

To be eligible for consideration a man must be at least 25 years of age and a member of this church for at least 12 consecutive months prior to beginning service of a term as a deacon. Deacons shall be men of good report who meet the biblical guidelines for deacons as found in Acts 6:3-7 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13, including:

A. Filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3);

B. Manages his household well... If married, the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:12);

C. Do all in his power to create and preserve harmony in the church (1 Tim. 3:13);

D. Abstain from the use of alcohol, so as not to cause another to stumble (1 Tim. 3:3,8);

E. Be free from the love of money and a faithful steward of his possessions (1 Tim. 3:8);

F. Recognize the God-given role of the pastor and seek to serve under that leadership (Tit. 1:5-9).

Section 3: Duties

Duties of deacons shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Ministry to church members as valued partners in ministry alongside the pastoral staff;

B. Active support for the church, and its ministries;

C. Encouragement and support of the pastor and pastoral team;

D. Nurture and protection of the Body of Christ from discord or controversy;

E. Coordination of reports, recommendations and motions to be presented in business meetings.

Section 4: Selection

Deacons will be chosen through a nominating process in which church members are asked to list the names of one or more men whom they consider qualified to serve as deacons. Nominating forms will be provided in multiple worship services for this purpose. Men who are nominated will be contacted to determine their willingness to serve, asked to submit a questionnaire, and will be interviewed by a screening committee consisting of the deacon officers and the pastor.

Section 5: Ordination

The deacons shall convene an ordaining council for the purpose of examining each candidate recommended by the screening committee. The church will ordain such men as are recommended to serve as deacons in the biblical manner of laying on of hands, setting apart these men for ministry.

Section 6: Term of Office

Deacons shall serve actively for a period of 3 years at which time they will rotate out of service for at least one year. Deacons whose circumstances change during their term of office and can no longer meet the qualifications for deacon shall voluntarily remove themselves from the deacon body by delivering a letter of resignation containing an effective date to the Deacon Chairman and a copy to the pastor.

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Section 7: Deacon Officers

No later than the last meeting of each church administrative year the Deacons shall elect from within the body of deacons active for the following administrative year a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary to serve during the following administrative church year. The Vice Chairman will not automatically accede to Chairman.

ARTICLE IX COMMITTEES

Section 1: Purpose

Committees of the church are established to provide for competent, knowledgeable leadership in key areas which for legal, financial, or other reasons must be carefully administered.

Section 2: Structure

Committees shall consist of six members elected by the church as provided for in Section 3 plus those officers, if any, designated as ex-officio members in the bylaw section establishing each committee. At the option of the Pastor, not more than two pastoral staff members may serve as nonvoting members of a committee as designated by letter from the Pastor to the committee chairperson.

Section 3: Selection and Qualifications

Committee members not serving ex-officio shall be elected by the members at a regular or special business meeting, upon nomination by the Nominating Committee. No person shall serve as an elected member of more than one committee at any time, nor shall a husband and wife serve simultaneously as an elected committee member. If an elected committee member becomes an ex-officio member of a committee during the term to which he was elected, a replacement member will be elected to serve for the remainder of the unexpired term. The minimum age for service on a committee is eighteen at the time of the commencement of the term.

Section 4: Term and Rotation

Election of committee members not serving ex-officio shall be to staggered three-year terms. Terms of committee members serving ex-officio shall be concurrent with incumbency in the office specified for ex-officio committee membership. Upon completing a three-year term, a committee member shall be ineligible for nomination to a new three-year term on the same committee for a period of one year. A committee member resigning during a three-year term will be ineligible for nomination to a new term on any committee for a period of one year after the end of the three-year term from which he or she resigned. A committee member who is completing a three-year term is eligible for nomination to any other committee for a new three-year term commencing immediately after completion of his or her term on the prior committee.

Section 5: Committee Officers

Committee members will choose a chairperson, a vice chairperson and a secretary each year at the final meeting of the church administrative year.

Section 6: List of Committees:

A. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is charged with responsibility for managing the financial affairs of the church and all of its programs and auxiliaries in accordance with all applicable statutes, sound accounting practices and biblical principles. The committee is directed to maintain all needed financial policies to facilitate their work and the financial well-being of the church. The Church Treasurer, Church Clerk, and Chairman of the Deacons will be ex-officio voting members of the committee. The committee will bring reports to the deacons regularly for purposes of information, discussion, and affirmation.

B. Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee is given responsibility for all issues related to employees of the church. Actions and decisions are to be made in accordance with all applicable statutes and biblical principles. Duties include employee evaluations, setting of salaries, disciplinary procedures, benefits management and other issues of like nature. The committee is directed to maintain all needed personnel policies to facilitate the orderly and equitable management of the personnel resources of the church. The Chairman of the Deacons will be an ex-officio voting member of the committee. The committee will bring reports to the deacons as needed for purposes of information, discussion, and affirmation.

C. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is responsible for enlisting church members to serve in leadership capacities as church officers, ministry leaders, and committee members. All candidates for leadership positions will be presented to the church for election.

D. Missions Committee

The Missions Committee is responsible for increasing members' awareness, involvement, and financial support for local, national, and international missions. The committee will recommend budgeting and spending priorities to the Finance Committee for any mission efforts which may be included in the church budget. The committee will allocate any designated mission offerings in accordance with a missions budget authorized by the church in a business meeting. The Pastor, Deacon Chairman, and Finance Committee Chairman will be ex-officio voting members of the committee. Each ex-officio member may name a designee to serve in his or her place, to be drawn from the pastoral staff, deacon body, or finance committee as the case may be.

Section 7: Authority

Committees are formed for unique purposes and the work of each should be directed by their role as defined herein. No committee should be considered to have greater authority than another committee.

Section 8: Additional Committees:

Upon determination of a need, the Pastor is authorized to initiate a proposed bylaw amendment to establish an additional committee, specifying in the amendment the responsibilities, and the number, qualifications, and manner of election of the committee membership.

ARTICLE X SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

Section 1: Purpose

A special committee may be formed at the request of the Pastor and upon approval by a majority vote of the membership as such need is determined.

Section 2: Duration & Membership

The duration of a special committee's existence and the qualifications and terms of office of its membership shall be as specified in the proposal creating the special committee.

Section 3: List of Special Committees

The one existing special committees heretofore established is listed in subsection A below; and special committees hereafter established are to be described in following subsections to be added by bylaw amendments which shall be incorporated into each future proposal creating a special committee.

A. Promise Land Committee

The Promise Land Committee was established by vote of the church membership on April 24, 2005. It exists for the purpose of leading the church's relocation efforts. The committee is composed of 18 members identified by name and subcommittees related to the members' area of expertise in the church action establishing the committee. The duration of the committee's existence and terms of its members will expire when the relocation project is completed.

ARTICLE XI BOARDS:

Section 1: Learning Center and Preschool

The Learning Center and Preschool Board is given responsibility for the orderly operation and oversight of weekday preschool programs available to the membership and the community. The board will maintain policies and procedures in cooperation with the Director and assist in development of an annual budget to be administered by the church Finance Committee. The board will consist of three members who are deemed knowledgeable of issues related to preschool education and parenting of preschoolers, plus the Learning Center Director and the Minister of Preschool/Children. Board members will be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church to rotating three year terms with the potential of being renominated and reelected for uninterrupted service.

Section 2: School of Music and Arts

The School of Music and Arts Board is responsible for the orderly operation and oversight of a program of music education offered to the membership and the community. The board will maintain policies and procedures in cooperation with the Coordinator and assist in development of an annual budget to be administered by the church Finance Committee. The board will consist of three members who are deemed knowledgeable of issues related to music education and business issues, plus the School of Music Coordinator and the Worship Pastor. Board members will be nominated annually by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church to rotating three year terms with the potential of being renominated and reelected for uninterrupted service.

ARTICLE XII MINISTRY TEAMS:

Much of the work of the church is performed by Ministry Teams made up of individuals who have an affinity for, or an interest in a given area of ministry. Ministry Team members serve with no defined term

and are not elected by the church. Each Ministry Team will elect a team leader to coordinate the work of the team. To constitute a Ministry Team a written statement of purpose containing the names of initial participants and the team leader, must be approved by the Pastor. New Ministry Teams must meet the following conditions:

- A. There are three or more interested individuals willing to participate,
- B. The ministry is in keeping with the church's purpose statement,
- C. One or more church staff members serve with the team.

#### ARTICLE XIII STANDARDS

As members of the 'body of Christ,' each member's actions affect all other members and also reflect upon the reputation of First Baptist Church in the community, and the cause of Christ in the world. As such, members are enjoined to accurately reflect the life and teachings of Jesus Christ to the best of their abilities. Staff members and church leaders are expected to support and abide by all of the Standards and the Bylaws delineated herein. Teachings of the Apostle Paul as outlined in the following scripture passages, while not exhaustive may be considered guidelines. 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 1 Cor. 5:9-13, 2 Cor. 2:5-8

##### Section 1: Humanity

We believe that every person is equal in the sight of God and of equal value to this church regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. All persons are to be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful or harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accordance with scripture, nor Christian doctrine. Jn. 13:34-35, Eph. 4:29-32.

##### Section 2: Forgiveness

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 2:5-11, Acts 2:38, Eph. 1:7-8

##### Section 3: Sexual Ethics

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. Any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexual or bisexual conduct, polygamy, pedophilia, bestiality, incest, pornography, or attempts to change one's biological sex, on the authority of Scripture we believe to be sinful and offensive to God. 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 1 Cor. 6:18-20.

##### Section 4: Marriage

We believe that the term 'marriage' has only one meaning, that which is sanctioned by God joining one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union as delineated in Scripture. The church does not condone or recognize any alternative definition of marriage, nor permit staff members to perform such ceremonies, nor allow the use of church resources for such. Gen. 2:18-24, Heb. 13:4.

#### ARTICLE XIV DISCIPLINE

When discord or sin threatens the well-being of the fellowship, the principles of Matthew 18:15-18 should be humbly and prayerfully followed in seeking resolution. Any official act of church discipline must involve the pastoral staff and/or deacon body. The overarching goal is restoration and forgiveness, being mindful that no one is without sin and that God's grace is sufficient in all things. Failing to effect restoration, the last resort could include withdrawal of membership as stated in Article II, Section 2, C. Matt. 18:15-17, 1 Tim. 5:20, 1 Cor. 5:4-5,13, Tit. 3:9-11.

#### ARTICLE XV AMENDMENTS

These bylaws can be amended by a vote of at least two-thirds of those members present and voting at a regular or special business meeting provided the proposed amendment has been made available to the congregation in writing at the regularly scheduled Sunday services at least two weeks prior to the business meeting.

#### ARTICLE XVI DISSOLUTION

Members of the church by a vote of at least two-thirds of those members present and voting at a duly called business meeting may dissolve the church. Upon dissolution, assets remaining after satisfaction of all obligations, debts, and liabilities will be conveyed to the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in the expectation that a new congregation will be planted to resume ministry to the Plant City community.

## ARTICLE XVII EMERGENCY AUTHORIZATIONS

### Section 1: Authorization

Under emergency conditions when the church is significantly precluded or hindered from meeting to conduct business or other essential functions, the Board of Directors, Deacons, Committees, and Pastoral Staff are authorized to act in lieu of a vote of the membership to maintain the orderly operation and ongoing ministry of the church with approval of the Board of Directors. This action may result in temporary modification or suspension of various articles of the bylaws including meeting times, budgets, leaders' terms of service and duties, or others. It shall not authorize hiring or firing of members of the pastoral staff. It shall be the intent of all to honor the bylaws to the fullest extent possible in making procedural adjustments in response to the crisis, and to bring a report to the church at the next regular business meeting.

### Section 2: Definition

Emergency conditions shall include acts of God, fire, hurricane, tropical storm, earthquake, flood, explosion, acts of the elements, war, riots, mob violence, strikes, lockouts, health crisis, epidemic or pandemic, condemnation, court orders, laws or orders of governmental or military authorities or any other cause, whether similar or dissimilar to the foregoing, not within the control of the church or its pastoral staff.