

# CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS of FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH *Martinsburg, WV*

## PREAMBLE

For the preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly fashion consistent with the teachings of God's Holy Word, we do declare and establish this constitution.

## ARTICLE I – NAME

This local Body of Christ and Community of Faith shall be known as First Baptist Church of Martinsburg, WV.

## ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

It is the mission of First Baptist Church to:

- ❖ SEEK God's counsel in all that we do
- ❖ CELEBRATE Christ through corporate worship
- ❖ SHARE God's love and the Gospel of Christ with our community
- ❖ GROW as individual believers in spiritual health and maturity
- ❖ SERVE one another in love through ministry and Christian fellowship

## ARTICLE III – STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Holy Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God and is the basis for any statement of faith. We subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000. Where there is a conflict between the constitution and the "*Baptist Faith and Message*", the constitution will take precedence.

## ARTICLE IV-MARRIAGE

**(This is taken directly from the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.)** "As stated in Article XVIII of our statement of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000: 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 biological man and one biological 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.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Genesis 1:26-27.) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4.)"

## **ARTICLE V – COVENANT**

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We agree, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to live together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this congregation in knowledge, holiness, and faith; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to support its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the advancement of the gospel through all nations.

We further agree to watch over one another in Christian love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation being mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We, moreover, agree that when we leave this area we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we may carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## **ARTICLE VI - POLITY AND RELATIONSHIPS**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body but recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches. This church will cooperate with and support the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, the Southern Baptists Conservatives of Virginia, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The government of this church shall be congregational in nature and shall be vested in the membership. Internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report and be accountable to the church as set forth in the Constitution and By-laws or as may otherwise be specified by church action.

## **ARTICLE VII – MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION 1 – GENERAL**

First Baptist Church is a sovereign and autonomous church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-governance in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life and affairs of this church.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of membership.

### **SECTION 2 – REQUIREMENTS**

All candidates must meet with a pastor of the church to ensure that a personal relationship with Christ exists with all who seek membership. The pastor will include a clear explanation of what is needed for a believer to grow in spiritual health, an orientation to the church, and will seek to connect the candidate(s) into a Biblical Community group.

Candidates may be received as members into the church by meeting any one of the following criteria:

- A. By public profession of faith in Christ, followed by baptism by immersion.
- B. By letter or statement from another Baptist Church, provided they have received baptism by immersion.
- C. By candidate statement of Christian experience and prior baptism by immersion.
- D. If, due to extreme and extenuating circumstances (i.e. physically restricted), a candidate cannot be immersed, all efforts will be made to accommodate for baptism.

### **SECTION 3 – RIGHTS AND DUTIES**

- A. Active members aged sixteen (16) or older who are present may vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in a business session.
- B. Members are expected to maintain a healthy and vibrant relationship with Christ and His church. As such, each member is urged to participate in the regular attendance of services, the Lord's Supper, the daily systematic reading of the Bible, private and family prayer, serving in personal ministry, the sharing of Christ, and involvement in a Sunday School class and/or a small group Biblical community.
- C. Members are expected to share the gospel in keeping with the Great Commission. (Matthew 28: 18-20)
- D. Members are expected to financially support the ministry of First Baptist Church by being obedient to the Biblical principles of stewardship through the systematic giving of tithes and offerings.

- E. Members are expected to do all that he or she can do to maintain unity and peace with the church body.

#### **SECTION 4 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

Membership from this church may be terminated in the following ways:

- A. By letter of transfer to another church.
- B. Upon request of termination from the member.
- C. Upon knowledge of a member uniting with another church in consistent, active participation.
- D. By death.
- E. By church action.

#### **SECTION 5 – INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP STATUS**

As members of this church, we are expected to pray for, financially support, and faithfully attend the worship services of the church when possible. Persons who do not continue to support this church by these means for a period of greater than one (1) year shall be transferred to an inactive roll. In this capacity, they shall lose all voting privileges and right to serve in leadership until such time they can once again support the church by these means. Exceptions will include individuals who are: students, homebound, residents of a care facility, military service men and women, missionaries, and seasonal residents.

#### **SECTION 6 – REINSTATEMENT TO ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP**

In cases where a person has been inactive for longer than (12) twelve months, and they do not meet any of the listed exceptions, they must meet with one of the pastors to re-engage with the church family and move back to active status. After a period of ninety (90) days from meeting with one of the pastors, the member will be reinstated to active membership. The person must also fulfill the rights and duties listed in ARTICLE VII-SECTION 3.

#### **SECTION 7-- WATCH CARE**

Anyone who is in the area for a temporary period of time (i.e. students, military) and who is a member in good standing of a Baptist Church and wishes to maintain that membership may present him/herself as a candidate for Watch Care. Under Watch Care, First Baptist Church can provide a church home through discipleship, encouragement, accountability and opportunities to serve in ministry while away from their home church. In order to be received into Watch Care, a candidate must have a New Member Visit with a pastor (Article VI – Section 2). Those accepted under the Watch Care of First Baptist Church are not granted voting privileges; however, they will be eligible to serve in ministry leadership positions.

## ARTICLE VIII – ORDINANCES

The ordinances of this church shall be baptism and the Lord's Supper.

### SECTION 1 – BAPTISM

- A. Repentance and faith in Christ shall precede baptism.
- B. Baptism shall be by immersion only.
- C. Baptisms shall be under the supervision of a church pastor. For exceptions, refer to ARTICLE VI—SECTION 2, Letter D.

### SECTION 2 – THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper shall be observed not less than four (4) times annually and shall be the responsibility of the pastors and deacons.

## ARTICLE IX– CHURCH MEETINGS

### SECTION 1 – SERVICES

Worship services shall be held each Sunday. Other services may be scheduled as needed through the cooperation of the pastoral staff and coordinated with appropriate leadership when applicable. The senior pastor and the deacon chair shall be responsible for making the decision should any services need to be canceled (i.e. weather, natural disaster).

### SECTION 2 – BUSINESS MEETINGS

#### A. GENERAL RULES FOR BUSINESS MEETINGS

1. It is the responsibility of every church member to seek God's will regarding all business brought before the body and to conduct him/herself in a manner that demonstrates the Fruit of the Spirit, as outlined in Galatians 5:22-26.
2. Every active member aged sixteen (16) or older, who is present in the meeting or serving in a ministry in the building, may vote at all elections as well as on all questions submitted to the church in a business session.
3. The moderator, elected annually by the church, shall moderate all church business meetings. In the event the moderator is absent, the deacon chair shall serve as moderator. Should both the moderator and the deacon chair not be present, the pastor shall moderate the meeting.
4. Any items that are to be brought to the floor for consideration by the church in business session are to be submitted first through the appropriate committee/ministry and then in writing to the moderator for approval two (2) weeks prior to the meeting for publication in the bulletin and/or *Book of Reports*. In circumstances where this is not possible, it is at the discretion of the moderator whether the items are to be brought to the floor.
5. Ten percent (10%) of the active, resident members shall constitute a quorum to conduct business in a special called or quarterly business meeting.

6. Robert's Rules of Order shall serve as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church.
7. Absentee or proxy voting shall not be permitted.

**B. REGULAR QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETINGS**

1. The church shall hold quarterly business meetings when there is business for an agenda the last Monday in January, April, July and October. For the sake of scheduling convenience, the dates of quarterly business meetings may be changed by unanimous consent of the moderator, deacon chair and senior pastor.
2. A *Book of Reports* containing an agenda of all business items being brought to the church and all Ministry Committee/Officer reports shall be made available to the congregation not less than two (2) Sundays prior to the quarterly business meeting. The *Book of Reports* is to be compiled and printed by the office manager.

**C. ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

1. The October quarterly business meeting shall serve as the church's annual business meeting to project the budget starting in January.
2. The agenda shall include the presentation of the proposed annual budget for discussion and suggested changes, along with the presentation of the rosters of church officers and ministry committee chairs. These shall be voted on the following Sunday.

**D. SPECIAL CALLED BUSINESS MEETING**

1. A special business meeting may be called at any time by the moderator, deacon chair or senior pastor. A ministry committee chair may also request a special business meeting upon the consent of the moderator, deacon chair, pastor, or senior pastor.
2. Not less than a two (2) weeks' notice must be given for any special called business meeting. The notice is to include the agenda, date, time and place of the meeting and shall be available in writing and readily accessible at the church. Notice of the meeting must also be announced at the regular Sunday services.
3. In cases of emergency, and upon agreement of the pastor, deacon chair, and moderator, a special business meeting may be called.
4. No business other than that specified by the agenda may be discussed or acted upon by the church body in a special called business meeting.

## **ARTICLE X – CHURCH STAFF & OFFICERS**

The officers of this church shall include the pastors, deacon chair, trustee chair, church clerk and financial secretary.

updated as of March 23, 2023

*The First Baptist Church Committees, Ministries, Teams, and Organizations Handbook* shall serve as the guideline for the purpose and duties of the committees, ministries, teams, and organizations.

## **SECTION I – PASTORAL STAFF**

The senior pastor shall be accountable to the church through the deacon body. All other pastoral staff shall be accountable to the church through the senior pastor.

### **A. CALLING A SENIOR PASTOR**

1. In the event the church has the need to call a senior pastor, a Senior Pastor Search Committee comprised of seven (7) persons shall be selected by the deacon body and shall, in turn, be approved by the church.
2. The Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be responsible to seek God's will for a candidate to present to the church for consideration. It shall also be responsible for developing a job description and compensation package for the position, in writing, when the candidate is presented.
3. When the Senior Pastor Search Committee has a candidate to bring to the church, it shall call a special business meeting on a Sunday morning for the purpose of considering a candidate for senior pastor. All the requirements of a special business meeting must be observed (See Article IX, Section II, D); the notice of the meeting is required to be two (2) weeks prior. A written job description, compensation package, and a brief biography of the candidate is to be made available to the members during the two (2) weeks prior to the special called business meeting.
4. Thirty-five percent (**35%**) of the active, resident members shall constitute a quorum for calling a senior pastor. The candidate, compensation package, and job description shall be considered together as one single item of business. The vote shall be by secret ballot. An affirmative vote of eighty-five percent (**85%**) of the ballots cast shall be required to extend a call to a senior pastor.
5. The Senior Pastor Search Committee shall dissolve one (1) month after the candidate has been called by the church and is serving on the field for at least thirty (30) days.

### **B. CALLING OTHER PASTORS**

1. In the event the church needs to call a pastor other than a senior pastor, a Pastor Search Committee of seven (7) persons shall be selected by the deacon

body and approved by the senior pastor, prior to being brought before the church for approval.

2. The Pastor Search Committee shall be responsible to seek God's will for a candidate to present to the church for consideration. It shall also be responsible for developing a job description and compensation package for the position, in writing, when the candidate is presented.
3. When the Pastor Search Committee has a pastoral candidate to bring to the church, it shall call a special business meeting for such on a Sunday morning for the purpose of considering a candidate for pastor. All the requirements of a special business meeting must be observed (see Article VIII, Section II, D); the notice of the meeting is required to be two (2) weeks prior. A written job description, compensation package, and a brief biography is to be made available during the two (2) weeks prior to the special called business meeting.
4. Twenty-five percent (**25%**) of the active resident members shall constitute a quorum for calling any pastors other than the senior pastor. The candidate, compensation package and job description shall be considered together as one single item of business. The vote shall be by secret ballot. An affirmative vote of fifty percent (**50%**) of the ballots cast shall be required to extend a call to a Pastor other than a Senior Pastor.
5. The Pastor Search Committee shall dissolve one month after a candidate has been called by the church and has served on the field for thirty (30) days.

#### C. DISMISSAL OF PASTORAL STAFF

Should the need arise for cause of dismissal, a special business meeting shall be called by the deacon body for the sole purpose of discussion concerning the possible dismissal of a pastor or pastoral staff person. After discussion, should a vote on the matter be warranted, a second business meeting shall be called for a vote by the members on this matter alone. The rules of a special business meeting (Article VIII, Section II, D) shall apply to the balloted meeting with the following exceptions: A written notice shall be made available to the church two (2) weeks prior; fifty-five percent (**55%**) of the active, resident members shall be required to constitute a quorum, and voting shall be by secret ballot. To dismiss a pastor or a ministerial staff person shall require a vote of sixty-six (**66%**) of the casted ballots. The vote shall not take place until the second Sunday following the discussion meeting concerning possible dismissal. This shall allow a two-week notice prior to a vote.

### SECTION II – OTHER CHURCH STAFF



All church staff not considered to be pastoral staff shall be accountable to the church through the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee will present potential candidates to fill church staff positions to the church body.

### **SECTION III – DEACONS**

The deacon body shall be selected by nominations from the congregation. All deacons are to be ordained or considered eligible for ordination at the time of election. Each deacon, upon election by the church body, shall serve up to a three (3) year term. Following this three (3) year term of service, a deacon is not eligible to serve another term until one (1) year has passed. Ideally, the deacon body shall consist of at least twelve (12) members.

### **SECTION IV – TRUSTEES**

The Trustees shall serve as the legal agents of the church as required by the laws of our land and the state of West Virginia. They shall be comprised of not less than three (3) and not more than five (5) members. They shall be elected by the church and serve five (5) year terms, which may run consecutively.

### **SECTION V – CLERK & ASSISTANT CLERK**

The primary responsibility of the church clerk/assistant clerk shall be the recording and maintenance of business meeting minutes. The minutes, membership and all other such records of the church are the sole property of the church and the originals (including data media) shall be kept at the church. The church clerk/assistant clerk shall be elected by the church and serve five (5) year terms, which shall run consecutively.

## **ARTICLE XI– COMMITTEES, MINISTRIES, TEAMS & ORGANIZATIONS**

### **SECTION I – GENERAL**

- A. In addition to the ministries and offices outlined in the By-Laws, the church shall elect committees, ministries, teams and organizations at the Annual Business Meeting to efficiently and effectively carry out the various ministry needs of the church. These committees, ministries, teams and organizations shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

**Committees** (administration of the church and its facilities): Constitution & Bylaws, Finance, King Street Property and Facilities, Mt. Zion/Gerrardstown Properties and Facilities, Nominating, Personnel, Ridge Road

**Ministries:** (outreach) Benevolence, Children's, Family, Hospitality, Men's, Silver Wings, Ushers, Women's, Women's Missionary Union (WMU), Youth, Soup Kitchen

**Organizations:** (partnerships with outside organizations that utilize our facilities or services) American Heritage Girls

**Teams:** (internal service-oriented providers) Audio Visual, Decorating, Historical Preservation, Inventory Operations, Publicity and Communications, Safety

- B. Every person serving on a children's or youth ministry (volunteer or paid) must have a background check on an annual basis. Once the form is completed, it is to be approved by pastoral staff and submitted to the office manager for the background check process. All forms shall be shredded by the office manager immediately upon receipt of the background report from the granting agency.
- C. Each committee, ministry, team, or organization shall submit a report for the *Book of Reports* for the Quarterly Business Meetings.
- D. Only active church members who have been members for a period of at least six (6) months may serve as committee, ministry, team, or organization chairs.
- E. Committees must have a simple majority (50%) of their members to form a quorum.
- F. New committees, ministries, teams, and organizations may be formed by the church.
- G. Committee, ministry, team or organization members may serve for a three (3) year term and is then ineligible to serve on that committee, ministry, team or organization until one year has passed.

## **SECTION II – COMMITTEES, MINISTRIES, TEAMS & ORGANIZATIONS HANDBOOK**

- A. The purposes, duties and composition of all committees, ministries, teams, and organizations shall be maintained in a *First Baptist Church Committees, Ministries, Teams & Organizations Handbook*. This shall include all committees, ministries, teams, and organizations listed in the By-Laws as well as all other ministries and programs in the church.
- B. The handbook shall be kept in the church office and made available for any member of the church upon request.
- C. Any active church member or church organization may initiate suggested changes in the *First Baptist Church Committees, Ministries, Teams, and Organizations Handbook* through the Nominating Committee. This includes the suggestion of new ministry possibilities.

D. Each committee shall be responsible for updating and revising the ministry handbook in order to keep it accurate and current with the ongoing ministry of the church.

Additions or revisions of the ministry handbook that result in a substantial change to church policies must be brought before the church for consideration in a business meeting.

E. Committees, ministries, teams, and organizations shall serve the church by leading in planning, coordinating, conducting and evaluating the ministries and programs of the church and its organizations. They shall also serve as the primary agency for the launching of new ministries.

F. Committees, ministries, teams, and organizations will elect their own officials.

G. The Nominating Committee shall recommend volunteers to serve on committees, teams, ministries, and church officers, such as church clerk. These will be voted on at the October Annual Business Meetings.

H. The deacons shall recommend volunteers to serve on the nominating committee.

## **ARTICLE XII– CHURCH FINANCES**

### **SECTION I – BUDGET**

The Finance Committee shall prepare and submit an annual budget to the church for discussion at the Annual Business Meeting in October. The church shall vote on the budget by ballot at the regular Sunday morning worship service on a Sunday to be set in November each year. Notice shall be given to the church in writing as to the date and times. The church fiscal period shall run on a calendar year, from January 1 to December 31.

### **SECTION II – ACCOUNTING PROCEDURE**

All funds received for any, and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the Finance Committee and the Financial Secretary and be properly recorded and secured. A financial policy that shall include a system of accounting, record keeping, reporting and security shall be maintained by the Finance Committee.

## **ARTICLE XIII – AMENDMENTS**

### **SECTION I**

This *Constitution & By-Laws* may be amended at any regular or called business meeting, provided the members have been notified, in writing, by the Constitution & By-Laws

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Committee on two consecutive Sundays prior to the vote. For passage, an amendment shall require a sixty-seven percent **(67%)** favorable vote by the voting members who are present.

## **SECTION II**

The *Constitution & By-Laws* shall become effective upon the approval of the church and shall supersede and nullify any previously approved or adopted Constitution, Rules or Regulations. A date of church approval must be printed on each copy of the *Constitution & By-Laws*.

## **ARTICLE XIV--DISPOSSAL/DISSOLUTION**

In the event this church should cease to exist and function, the property shall be deeded to the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists. The WVCSB, in return, shall make every reasonable attempt to start a new work at this location. If in the event all such attempts prove to be unsuccessful, WVCSB is then free to liquidate the property and equally divide the proceeds between the following: Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, and the WVCSB state convention.