

Constitution & Bylaws
of the
Second Baptist Church
Mt. Vernon, Illinois

Adopted by the membership on December 31st of 2017

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Article I – Name

The name of this church is Second Baptist Church (hereafter may be denoted as 2BC). We are a non-profit (501c3) religious organization in Mt. Vernon, Illinois. 2BC is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, The Illinois Baptist State Association and the Salem South Baptist Association.

Article II – Purpose

This church exists by the grace of God, and for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. In short, we are to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

Worshipping Him;

Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;

Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;

Contributing monetarily and prayerfully, in supporting and participating in missions work, including local as well as domestic and international;

Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion;

Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers;

Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ; and

Calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and encouragement about the nature of the local church.

Article III – Statement of Faith

I. The Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God and equal in all its parts. (1 Peter 1:20-21) Every word is verbally inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) and without any error in the original documents. It is literally God breathed out and infallible.

We affirm the belief that in the opening chapters of Genesis:

- a. God alone created the universe and everything in it out of nothing, and formed His creation in 6 literal 24 hour days.
- b. He made it good, without sin or imperfection.
- c. He created Adam and Eve directly from the dust of the earth, not thru an evolutionary process.
- d. Mankind has his beginnings within the scope of the biblical genealogies.
- e. This was by the cooperative efforts of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1-2; Colossians 1:16).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18).

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet, the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

II. God

There is but one true and living God; the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience.

III. The Trinity

God is revealed to us as Father, The Son Jesus Christ and The Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being. We teach that each Member of the Trinity is deserving of worship and obedience.

God The Father: We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1

Corinthians 8:6). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36).

God The Son: We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellences, and in these He is coequal and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

We teach that in the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body (Ephesians 5:23). And as a result, has promised to return and gather His bride to Himself (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

We teach that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), and hence, the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31)

God the Holy Spirit: We teach that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity (Psalm 139:7-10; Romans 15:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, 12:4-6, 11; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 9:14).

We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21) and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13). Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. In this respect that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characterized as normative in the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

IV. Providence

God from eternity, has determined or permitted all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet in such a way as to never be the author or approver of sin, nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

V. Election

Election is God's eternal choice, from before the foundation of the world, of some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ. As a result of that choice, they are called, justified and glorified. This in no way negates man's responsibility to repent and trust Christ as Lord and Savior (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace and love (Romans 9:11-16).

VI. The Fall of Man

God originally created Man in His own image, and free from sin (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9); but, through the temptation from Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby all mankind inherit a nature corrupt and completely opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8), Jesus Christ being the only exception.

VII. Regeneration

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who quickens (awakens) the dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5), and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness demonstrated by obedience to the Word (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). It is a work of God's free and special grace alone.

VIII. Repentance

Repentance is an evangelical grace of regeneration (Acts 5:31, 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25). It is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and makes a person sensible to the manifold evil of his sin. Further, repentance causes that individual to humble himself because of his sin, and with godly sorrow, utterly detest it, with self-abhorrence, and with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

IX. Faith

Saving faith, like repentance, is an evangelical grace of regeneration and wrought by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8). It is the belief, on God's authority, of everything revealed in His Word concerning Christ. Upon such belief, it accepts and rests upon Him alone for justification and eternal life.

X. Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

XI. Sanctification

Those who have been regenerated and justified, are also sanctified (set apart) by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is both positional (instantaneous) and progressive.

We teach that positional sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23). In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

XII. Perseverance and Preservation of the Saints

Those whom God has accepted in His beloved Son, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24); and though they may fall through neglect and temptation into sin whereby they grieve the Spirit, forfeit to some degree their graces and comforts even

bringing reproach on the Church and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

XIII. The Church

The Lord Jesus is the head of The Church (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18), which is composed of all His true disciples (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), and in Him is invested supremely all power for its governance. According to His commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into local churches (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1); and to each of these churches He has given needful authority for administering that order, as well as the discipline and worship that He has appointed. The regular offices of a church are Elders and Deacons.

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5).

XIV. Spiritual Gifts

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

XV. Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:38-42), obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of giving himself up to God (1 Peter 3:20), to live and walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4). It is subsequent to regeneration, faith and repentance.

XVI. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine (or those which closely represent them), and to be observed by His churches until the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice. The elements are representative of His body and His blood. They are designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church fellowship. Nevertheless, it is an actual communion with the risen Christ.

XVII. The Lord's Day

The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance, and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. The New Testament pattern is on Sunday, the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2).

XVIII. Liberty of Conscience

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men (Romans 14:1-6), which are in anything contrary to His Word, or not contained in it. Civil authorities being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful things commanded by them, ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake (Romans 13:1-5).

XIX. The Resurrection

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God (2 Corinthians 5:8)—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15). At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised (Revelation 20:11-15).

XX. The Judgment

God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ (John 5:22), when everyone shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life (Revelation 20:11-15).

STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND SEXUALITY

Second Baptist Church teaches that marriage was given by God as part of His common grace, and that it has no meaning other than as He has provided. We teach that marriage is subject to the curse of the Fall, but this curse does not change the definition of marriage established at creation. Believers, living in obedience to the Scripture and under the control of the Holy Spirit, can begin to experience peaceful, productive, and fulfilled marriage as intended by God.

We teach that the marriages of believers are to illustrate the loving relationship of Christ and His church, with the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the church and the wife responding to her husband's loving leadership as the church responds to Christ.

We teach that as believers' marriages are to illustrate Christ's relationship with His church, believers should choose to marry those who share their faith and regenerate life. We teach that the term "marriage" has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in scripture.

We teach that marriage is always a public, formal, and officially recognized covenant between a man and a woman. We teach that without such a covenant, which may include a "common law marriage," where valid in specific cases under pertinent law, prolonged conjugal cohabitation does not establish, and is not equivalent to, marriage. Biblically, such a relationship is fornication, requiring repentance of such behavior. We teach that where no such covenant exists, or can be discerned, between a cohabiting couple, prior to coming to faith in Christ, family units should be preserved to the extent possible and, if otherwise appropriate,

solemnization encouraged. We teach that where a valid marriage has been established prior to coming to faith in Christ, the couple should remain married.

We teach that God hates divorce, permitting it only where there has been unrepentant sexual sin or desertion by an unbeliever. We teach that remarriage is permitted to a faithful partner, but only when the divorce was on biblical grounds.

We teach that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We teach that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We teach that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, and pornography, in desire or behavior, is sinful and offensive to God. Any attempt to change one's sex or disagreement with one's biological sex, is also sinful and offensive to God.

We teach that homosexuality is subject to God's wrath of abandonment, is a matter of choice and not inherited status, and epitomizes man's ungrateful rebellion against God. No portion of the grounds or physical plant of Second Baptist Church shall be used for the celebration or acknowledgement of such a union by the means of a marriage ceremony, reception or any other gathering. Finally, no marriage ceremony between two individuals of the same sex shall be performed by any member of the staff, elder, deacon, or representative of 2BC.

We teach that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of the church. We teach that the faithful proclamation of the Scripture, including the call to repentance, does not constitute hate speech, or hateful and harassing behavior, but is instead a fundamental part of the church's loving mission to the world.

We teach that God offers redemption and forgiveness to all who confess and forsake their sin, including sexual sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We teach that His forgiveness is total and complete and that God imputes the full righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner. We teach that the forgiven sinner has been cleansed from the guilt of sin, set apart unto God, or made holy, and justified before Him. We teach that any man or woman who has received that forgiveness is "in Christ" and is a "new creation," able to persevere in and pursue a way of life that pleases the Lord by the power of the Spirit.

CODIFIED STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL SEXUALITY

Second Baptist Church and its elders are in full support of the document known as the "Nashville Statement" regarding biblical sexuality and as published by the Coalition of Biblical Manhood & Womanhood in 2017. <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/>

Article IV – Church Covenant

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, professing Him as my Savior, and being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and believing that God, by his divine and perfect providence, has brought me to this local body of believers, I enter into a covenant with the other members of this local congregation.

I understand that this covenant is in no way intended to add to or take away from the clear instructions found in God's word. In addition, I understand that this covenant is not to be construed as a legalistic list of do's and don'ts, but rather, guiding principles of how the Christian should conduct his or her life.

It is in that spirit, that I pledge to walk in Christian love towards my fellow brother and sister. Love is expressed in many ways. For instance, praying for one another, encouraging one another, correcting one another and forgiving one another; in short, bearing one another's burdens; all examples of Christian love.

Further, I pledge to conduct myself in a godly manner in the world. My aim is to do no action, or to say no word that would bring shame or dishonor to the Lord Jesus Christ, this local church or my personal reputation. I will seek to live a life that is above reproach. I will be just and honest in my dealings and faithful in my responsibilities and commitments. I will abide by the standards of sexual purity and ethical integrity as taught in the Bible.

I also pledge to cheerfully, willingly and with a sacrificial attitude, support the various and overall ministries of this church through the use of my spiritual gifts and financial resources, that I might be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Further, in keeping with the instruction of not forsaking the assembling of the saints, I pledge to eagerly and regularly gather with the other believers of this local congregation during those times of corporate worship, to offer praise, honor, and glory to the God of my salvation. I will work toward doctrinal unity with a humble and teachable spirit. For this reason, I am willing to be taught according to the statement of faith, which this church believes to be an accurate summary of biblical truth.

In addition, I pledge to do all I can through the means the Lord provides, to spread the gospel to the four corners of the world. I understand that this begins with the evangelizing of my own family, then moving to my neighbors and acquaintances, and ultimately, to the uttermost parts of the world.

Finally, I pledge that should the Lord move me from this place, I will unite with another church as soon as possible, where I can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the teachings of the Bible.

Article V – Church Membership

SECTION 1: MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

- Interview with one or more of the elders
- Be able to share a valid conversion testimony
- Receive unanimous recommendation from the elders
- Understand and agree with our Statement of Faith (Article III) and our Church Covenant (Article IV)
- Give a public testimony of conversion to the congregation
- Submit to baptism by immersion (if not previously done as a believer). It is understood that baptism is neither the moment when sin is removed nor receiving of the Holy Spirit. These occur prior to baptism, at the point of conversion. The baptism may be scheduled for a later date, but the individual will be received and have full membership privileges until that time.
- Agrees to place himself or herself under the spiritual direction, protection and authority of the church's elders.

SECTION 2: MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES

Voting privileges are restricted to members who are in good standing (not under any public disciplinary action) and who have passed their sixteenth (16) birthday. Members must be present to vote and may not vote by proxy, but may vote by absentee. If by absentee, the member must submit a written vote with his/her signature on the ballot. This must be received by the elders no later than the day prior to the actual vote.

SECTION 3: MEMBERSHIP TERMINATION

The following are valid reasons to remove a member from the church's roll:

- Personal request
- Transfer of membership
- Death
- Six months of non-attendance (excluding health, ministerial and scholastic endeavors, and the like)
- Disciplinary necessity (Membership may be terminated at any time by the Elder Board, if the Elder Board determines that the member to be terminated consistently displays behavior which is out of harmony with the Bible, inconsistent with Christian behavior and that biblical procedures have failed in bringing restoration. See Section 5 below)

SECTION 4: MEMBERSHIP DISCIPLINE

The discipline of members shall be a responsibility of the body of Elders under such rules and procedures as the elders may from time to time establish, on the basis of Scripture. All such

proceedings shall be guided by a spirit of prayer mingled with Christian kindness, forbearance and holy steadfastness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Sub-Section 1. General Policy.

All members of the Body of Christ have an individual responsibility to live righteously and to encourage righteous behavior in other believers. Interpersonal accountability is a Christian obligation that extends beyond the membership of the local church. As Galatians 6:1-5 instructs, this process begins with self-examination and a spirit of humility sensitive to one's own faults. Believers are instructed to be aware of their own sins, to be penitent and to be quick to seek reconciliation with offended individuals (Matthew 5:23-25; 7:1-5). It is recognized that Second Baptist Church members have a special relationship one to the other. Consequently, 2BC members have the privilege of experiencing the full expression of love and care for the local body as outlined in Scripture and as detailed below.

Church discipline is regarded as a serious and clear directive in Scripture. It is intended to restore an erring member (2 Corinthians 2:5-8), to purify the Church (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), to warn other members about the dangers of sinful behavior or teaching (Deuteronomy 19:20; Acts 5:11; 2 Corinthians 7:11) and to demonstrate the reality of righteous living to the unsaved world (Ephesians 4:22-24). Discipline is exercised with compassion for the erring member and a sincere desire to seek that person's repentance, reconciliation and if necessary, restoration to the fellowship of the local church (Matthew 18:12-14).

Discipline does not entitle the elders to abuse their authority over the members of the church (1 Peter 5:1-3). Specific guidelines are followed that identify the grounds for church discipline and the process of such discipline.

The members of 2BC belong to a spiritual body of local believers who identify with a common purpose and mission. There is a mutual accountability that each member has, one to the other, to encourage and provoke holy living (Hebrews 10:23-25). Church discipline begins with individual accountability that is a responsibility of every member. Members are encouraged to take this responsibility seriously.

Scripture is clear that the motives of the individual(s) or the elders dealing with the erring member must be pure before our Savior, His Church and the world.

- (a) They are to avoid vengeance and arrogant presumption (Galatians 6:1).
- (b) They are not to be motivated by hostility or anger but by a loving concern for the erring member (2 Thessalonians 3:15).
- (c) They are to approach the erring member with heart-felt sorrow and sincere concern (1 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 2:4).
- (d) They are to be ready to grant restoration to the erring member when repentance occurs (Luke 17:1-10; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8).

Sub-Section 2. Offenses Applicable to Church Discipline.

Individual accountability is an on-going expression of believers and is always the first step in dealing with an erring member. No member is above or immune from accountability (1 Timothy 5:19-22). Church discipline is not God's method for making the church sinless. Scripture defines certain deviations from the truth as grounds for formal disciplinary action. Sin that damages the church, weakens its testimony or promotes disunity constitutes an offense that necessitates formal disciplinary action. These sins can be understood in the following categories:

- (a) False teaching constitutes a deliberate, persistent determination of teaching that intentionally rejects the foundational doctrines of Scripture (Titus 3:10; Revelation 2:14).
- (b) Apostasy constitutes a public denial of the essential truths of God's Word (i.e., a belief in the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the final authority for belief and behavior; a belief in the Trinity; a belief in the complete humanity and the complete deity of Christ; a belief in the utter sinfulness of all humanity; a belief in the virgin conception of Christ and His Incarnation as the eternal Son of God; a belief in Christ's substitutionary atonement as the only way of salvation; a belief in the bodily resurrection and return of Christ; a belief in salvation by God's grace alone through faith in Christ alone; a belief in the eternal damnation of the lost and the eternal glorification of the saved). These essential truths are reflected in the Doctrinal Statement of the Church Constitution (Galatians 2:11-14; 1 John 2:19).
- (c) Divisiveness constitutes behavior that undermines the unity of Second Baptist Church either between members or against God's established authority in the church (Philippians 4:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
- (d) Immorality is constituted scripturally as sexual behavior that is outside the prescribed parameters of the Bible and brings shame on the testimony of Christ and the local church (1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-11). This category includes sexual immorality and sexual deviancy (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). While sexual behavior may or may not be known publicly, these sins internally pollute the church and disrupt its mission. Scripture denounces sexual impurity. These sins include adultery, pre-marital sex, pornography, homosexuality, and every other kind of sexual deviancy or impurity that Scripture calls fornication (*porneia*). This unrepentant behavior will not be tolerated among the membership of 2BC (Romans 1:26-27).

Sub-Section 3. Procedures in Membership Accountability.

Church discipline is to be handled prayerfully, carefully, and justly. Below are the steps of accountability and discipline that follow the guidelines given in Matthew 18:15-20.

- (a) **First step:** Arrange a private meeting with the offender. Humbly confront the person with the nature of the offense. If the person repents, the matter is closed (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3). Scripture does not specify the number of times that an offender

should be confronted on an individual basis. Scripture is clear that believers should be long-suffering and have an unrelenting desire for that person's repentance (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a; 1 Peter 4:8). If there is no repentance and the offense is of the nature categorized above as "Offenses Applicable to Church Discipline" then there is a responsibility to move to the next step in the process.

- (b) **Second step:** Set up another private meeting, this time with one or two other witnesses present (Matthew 18:16). This step should never be taken in haste but only after there is prayerful conviction that step one has not availed. If repentance occurs, the offender should seek forgiveness from the circle of offense, and no more. It is important to understand who qualifies as a witness and what their function is in the disciplinary process.

Biblically, a witness is a person who bears testimony of another's wrongdoing based on firsthand knowledge. A person is not constituted a witness who bears testimony based on hearsay, gossip or secondhand knowledge (Deuteronomy 19:15-19). The Bible condemns false witnesses (Exodus 20:13). Accusations not substantiated by two or three witnesses must be left to the One who knows all things and judges righteously (Numbers 35:30; Psalm 51:3-4).

It is the function of a witness to ensure that the offense is clearly and impartially presented and that nothing is left unsaid. The witnesses also keep each other's motivations and actions accountable before God (Matthew 18:20). If there is no repentance, the circle of knowledge must be broadened at this point to include the elders for their consideration in order that Step Three might be taken.

- (c) **Third step:** At this point, the matter must be brought by the elders to the members of Second Baptist Church in a closed session (Matthew 18:17). The entire membership has a responsibility, as opportunity provides, to call the offender to repentance. An equitable period of time will be established by the Board of Elders in order to optimize the fullest effect of the witness of the entire membership, to allow for the work of the Lord and to provide more than ample time for repentance.

Should there be repentance, the entire body should be quick to respond with forgiveness, grace and love (2 Corinthians 2:5-8). While repentance and forgiveness are instantaneous, restoration to service will be monitored by the elders for the benefit and development of the person. If there is no repentance, the elders will meet to act on the final step.

- (d) **Fourth step:** As defined in Matthew 18:17, the unrepentant offender will be considered a "pagan or a tax collector." This phrase contains two interrelated aspects. First, the offender is likened to a pagan, which signifies that the person is outside the community of God's blessing and grace. Second, the offender is likened to a tax collector, which signifies that the person is untrustworthy and potentially dangerous.

By way of application, this constitutes a removal from church membership and fellowship resulting in a recognition that the unrepentant offender is outside the realm of God's blessings (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). Common ground for intimate friendship has been removed. The entire congregation has an ongoing responsibility to act in unison,

calling the person to repentance with all contact, so as not to undermine the scriptural process or the severe temporal consequences of the person's obstinate behavior. It is sincerely hoped there will be repentance and reconciliation as a result of the consistent and loving application of this heart-wrenching but biblical action. The action of the church in matters of discipline carries the highest conceivable authority and is both final and binding as clearly stated in Matthew 18:18-20. There can be no appeal to any court as a result of this action (1 Corinthians 6:1-2) and a member may not resign his/her membership in order to avoid church discipline.

Sub-Section 4. Restoration.

Galatians 6:1 teaches us that “if anyone is caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness...” (see also 2 Cor. 2:5ff) The goal of confronting a sinning brother/sister is always restoration. It is the desired outcome at all stages of discipline, even in those cases where a person has been removed from church membership.

Sub-Section 5. Integrity of Knowledge.

In all matters of church discipline, when members become aware of the offense and the disciplinary action being brought against the unrepentant member, the members are expected, without exception, to hold the knowledge with integrity, avoiding gossip and the defamation of character (Ephesians 4:31-32; James 4:11). Church disciplinary matters are internal affairs and must not be paraded before the world.

Article VI – Church Governance

Section 1: GENERAL STATEMENT:

- (a) **Offices.** The offices of the New Testament Church shall be Elders and the Deacons. These men shall be called to their respective offices by affirmation of the membership of the church, upon recommendation from the body of Elders. All officers of the church shall be members of this church in good and regular standing. The model of governance for Second Baptist Church is elder-led, deacon-served and congregational-affirmed.
- (b) **Committees and Appointees.** The body of Elders has the authority to create committees and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibility. The Elders have the authority to dissolve any committee or position that it created. The Elders also has the authority to appoint elders, deacons or other members of the church to serve as members of such committees and to act as its agents in such positions. Every committee shall have a chairperson, responsible for the overall operation of the committee, whom the body of Elders shall appoint. The Elders may delegate the responsibility for selecting the chairperson to the committee. These committees shall exist for the specific period of time, so directed by the body of Elders. These committees shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with powers specifically delegated by the Elders.

The general functions of the committees will be:

- (1) To bring considered recommendations to the Elders concerning ministries, and
- (2) To provide a wider base of counsel to the elders in their general oversight of specific ministries.

Section 2: FULL-TIME PASTOR/TEACHERS:

- (a) **Definition.** Full-time pastor/teachers are the ordained elders of the church, who in response to God's call, have devoted their vocational lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Full-time pastor/teachers are usually supported financially by the church in return for their vocational labors.
- (b) **Duties.** In addition to the duties of their office as described in Sections 4 and 5 below, Full-time pastor/teachers and ministers shall perform the duties determined by the body of Elders. The duties shall be in writing at the time of the call to service, and substantial changes shall be approved by the body of Elders.
- (c) The church's call of a Full-time pastor/teacher is a call to the eldership of the church. Therefore, they shall be members of the body of Elders and have all the Biblical qualifications of an elder. They are to be considered however, "first among equals" regarding leadership in practical matters such as chairing elders' meetings as well as business meetings.
- (d) **Calling of Full-Time Pastor/Teacher.** The body of Elders shall have the responsibility of all hiring and terminating of full-time pastor/teachers (senior pastor, lead pastor)

and ministers. In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential lead pastor. This may be accomplished by listening to recorded sermons and/or an in person preaching opportunity at either his current church or Second Baptist Church. Before being asked to express its judgment, the congregation must receive assurance from the elders (and others they may appoint and enlist for this task), that having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as lead pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at no less than two Sunday morning services prior to the vote at a Business or Special meeting. Voting must receive a two-thirds majority of members present at the meeting. Voting by absentee ballot will be accepted, as per Article V, Section 3, Membership Privileges.

(d) Termination of Lead Pastor.

- (1) **By resignation.** The question of terminating the call of a Lead Pastor or Minister shall be considered at any time by the body of Elders upon the presentation of the Pastor's or Minister's resignation.
- (2) **Grievance.** Where a grievance exists against a Pastor, either due to his preaching or teaching contrary to the beliefs of the church as set forth in Article III ("Statement of Faith") of this Constitution or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an elder, such grievance may be brought before the body of Elders by any two members in good standing, following the procedure prescribed in Article V, Section 5.5.3 (Membership Discipline) of this Constitution. If the Elders, after thorough investigation and consideration, believe the grievance to be true and substantial, then the vocational call of the Pastor or Minister may be terminated upon the decision of the body of Elders, and a two-thirds majority of the congregation at either a Special or Regular Business Meeting (See Article VII). The congregation will be informed of the intent to remove the man from his leadership position, and given no less than 28 days to express any biblical disagreements to the Elders. If the findings stand, the Elders will remove him indefinitely from leadership. During the 28-day period of congregational evaluation, he will be suspended from all teaching and ministerial duties within the church. If his actions are causing immediate harm to the congregation or himself, the 28-day time frame may be removed. In which case, the Elders will recommend removal and give the congregation a reasonable time to submit biblical disagreements. If the findings stand, the Lead Pastor will be removed from office at either a Special Business Meeting or Regular Business Meeting.

Section 3: LAY ELDERS AND DEACONS:

- (a) **Definition.** Lay officers are the non-vocational elders and deacons of the church.
- (b) **Duties.** Lay elders and deacons shall have the duties of their offices as described in Sections 4 and 5 below. These are considered non-rotational duties and shall be without termination or interruption except as prescribed by (d), immediately below.
- (e) **Calling.** The Elders shall recognize, interview, and investigate candidates for lay elder and deacon. They shall provide for individual members of the church either to nominate candidates or to present themselves to the Elders as candidates for office and for further investigation. In no instances shall any individual be considered a nominee for the office without the nominee's consent. In those cases where the Elders concludes that a nominee is not qualified for office, they shall so inform the nominee stating the reasons for this conclusion.
- (d) **Termination.**
 - (1) **Resignation.** An officer may resign his office at any time if he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.
 - (2) **Grievance.** Where a grievance exists against an officer of the church either due to the adherence to and propagation of beliefs contrary to the beliefs of the church as set forth in Article III ("Statement Of Faith") of this Constitution or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an elder or deacon, such grievance may be brought before the body of Elders by any two members in good standing, following the procedures prescribed in Article V, Section 5.5 ("Membership Discipline") in this Constitution. If the Elders, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the officer may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the body of Elders. The congregation will be informed of the intent to remove the man from his leadership position, and given no less than twenty-eight (28) days to express any biblical disagreements to the Elders. If the findings stand, the Elders will remove him indefinitely from leadership. During the 28-day period of congregational evaluation, he will be suspended from all teaching and ministerial duties within the church. If his actions are causing immediate harm to the congregation or himself, the 28-day time frame may be removed. In which case, the Elders will recommend removal and give the congregation a reasonable time to submit biblical disagreements. If the findings stand, the Elder/Deacon will be removed from office at either a Special Business Meeting or Regular Business Meeting.

Section 4: BODY OF ELDERS:

- (a) **Composition and Calling.** The body of Elders shall be composed of men, both lay elders and vocational elders. The Elders shall always be a plurality (more than one). The total number of elders at any time shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church.

The man who holds the full-time office of pastor/teacher will also hold the office of elder. He is considered, "the first among equals" and will be the designated chairperson

for elders' meetings, unless other arrangements are made and a unanimous consensus is agreed upon by the Elders

Other candidates will be carefully examined by the Elders as to their qualifications and support of both the doctrines and practices of the church. A potential elder must have proven himself as a man of elder character and ability within the context of Second Baptist Church for no less than a period of one year.

The following steps will be the process by which an individual will be screened and evaluated in terms of discerning God's hand upon that person's life, in qualifying him for a leadership position within Second Baptist Church:

- (1) Initiation: The individual responds to God's working in his life by expressing a desire to serve in a leadership capacity, when asked.
 - (2) Consultation: The body of Elders and the individual meet to discuss the biblical qualifications for service, agreement with the doctrine and constitution of Second Baptist Church, expectations of the ministry, and/or other areas that may be deemed pertinent and beneficial by either the elders or the individual.
 - (3) Confirmation: The body of Elders must unanimously agree that the individual has the potential for leadership and thereby assume responsibility to work with the individual toward that end.
 - (4) Presentation: The elders will inform the congregation that the man is under consideration for the leadership position. If the individual's life and service is deemed to be appropriate by the body of Elders, the person will be presented to the entire church for evaluation, examination, and affirmation as one whom God has qualified for leadership. The entire congregation will be given now less than 28 days in which to personally express any concerns or needed input to the body of Elders.
 - (5) Affirmation: After the Elders have acted upon the input of the congregation (if any), and if the elders are in unanimous agreement that the individual has indeed been qualified by an act of the grace of God for leadership within the church, then the elders will affirm what God has already done in the man's life by setting him apart for the leadership position.
- (b) **Qualifications.** Elders and nominees for elder shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- (c) **Responsibilities.** The responsibilities of the Elders shall include: examining prospective members and acquainting them with the Doctrinal Statement, overseeing the process of church discipline, examining prospective candidates for office, overseeing the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conducting worship services, administering the ordinances of the Gospel, equipping the membership of the church for the work of the ministry, teaching the whole counsel of God both formally and informally, correcting error, overseeing, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the church and mobilizing the church for world mission. The Elders shall possess the

authority to establish policies, positions, and practices for Second Baptist Church that are consistent with the purposes of the church.

(d) **Organization.** The body of Elders shall organize itself however it determines to be best to achieve the mission of the church. The elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. The elders shall meet at least once per month. Meetings of the elders may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the elders may simultaneously hear each other. Unless provided otherwise, meetings of the Elders may be held immediately upon notice. A quorum for meetings of the body of Elders is defined as at least a majority of the elders. The priorities of discussion and action at elder meetings shall comply with the following:

- (1) Prayer/Worship: the shepherding and accountability roles of the elders over the flock (cf., 1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28).
- (2) Management of church affairs: decisions regarding finances, administration and policies effecting the direction of the ministry (cf., 1 Timothy 3:5).
- (3) Decisions and applications of church discipline: church discipline is to be administered by the body of Elders when necessary (cf., Hebrews 13:17).
- (4) Doctrinal decisions regarding church policy and ministry methodology: periodic discussions regarding the ministry and how to be biblical and effective in the task God has called us to do.

(e) **Decision-Making.** Decisions shall be reached by the elders after prayerful consideration only by the unanimous or majority vote of the Body of elders, as differentiated below, in a spirit of humility, each elder thereby regarding others before himself. Therefore, in essence, whether the decision is one that necessitates a unanimous vote or a majority vote, the net result after all discussions are terminated and binding decisions have been made, the elders must have a spirit of unanimity as to the direction the church should take. Any violation of this spirit of unanimity must be considered a serious breach of elder qualifications. If it should occur more than once, without genuine repentance, this elder must seek the re-approval of the body of Elders to continue in the office of elder (Titus 3:10).

- (1) Unanimity of all elders required: Whenever the matter to be considered concerns calling a member of the Pastoral Staff, approving an elder, deacon or missionary (to be supported by the Missions Budget), an amendment to or modification of the Constitution and/or Bylaws in general or the Doctrinal Statement, the approval or modification of a Policy/Position Statement, or a modification to the indebtedness limitations outlined in Article IV, a quorum as it pertains to the vote shall consist of all of the members of the body of Elders whether voting in person, or by telephone to be later confirmed in writing, and must be unanimous.

- (2) Majority of all elders required: All other decisions (other than those listed under the preceding unanimity paragraph), will be made on the basis of simple majority of all elders. Those elders in the minority position, after opportunity to defend their minority view from Scripture, will yield to the majority position of the other Elders in the spirit of Philippians 2:3, thereby preserving the spirit of unanimity that the body of Elders must maintain to the church congregation and the public in general. Therefore, the minority elder(s) must publicly support the decision of the majority of the body of Elders in every situation. Any violation to this spirit of unanimity will be dealt with as outlined in the opening paragraph of this section.
- (3) Voting exclusions: Decisions by the Body of Elders that pertain directly to any of the elders themselves (such as church discipline or salary review, etc.), may be made at the discretion of the majority of the other elders without the participation of the elder in question (other than input required of him by the other elders), in the discussions or the final decision of the elders.
- (4) Church participation: The Elders may seek entire church participation in decisions on some major issues so determined by the Elders in the following manner:
- (i) Decisions made by the Elders will be presented to the entire church for consideration and clarification at a meeting deemed appropriate by the Elders.
 - (ii) Questions of a clarification nature only will be answered by the elders at the time of presentation. Questions of an objectionable nature or other information deemed appropriate to support one's objection will be directed to one of the elders on a personal basis at some time other than the time of presentation and within one week from the time of presentation. If the elder who is presented with the information relating to the objection is not able to answer satisfactorily the member's concern, that elder must take the information to the entire Body of Elders for consideration. To assist the elders in their discussion of the issue at hand, the individual may be asked to meet with the Elders to clarify the concerns or objections.
 - (iii) Before any final action may be initiated, the elders must come to a decision as outlined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this section. Should the new information presented prevent the unanimous/majority vote required of the elders, no action will be taken. The congregation will be informed of this process in a manner deemed appropriate by the elders, and no action will be taken on the issue at hand until the required unanimous/majority vote is reached. But after all consideration is given to the input of the congregation, and the required unanimous/majority vote is still the mind of the body of Elders, then the decision will be implemented as originally presented.

- (f) **Leadership of the Body of Elders:** The Body of Elders will, by majority vote, appoint a Chairman, who will provide leadership as it pertains to the elders' meetings, and will represent the Body to the congregation in public meetings. The Chairman of the Body of Elders will be the Lead Pastor, unless he designates another elder.
- (g) **Legal Responsibility:** The Body of Elders shall have the authority to execute legal documents relating to real estate, church property and church finances.

Section 5: DEACONS:

- (a) **Composition and Calling.** Deacons are selected and appointed by the Elders and serve the Church under the direct supervision of the Elders. The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of individuals in the church. A potential deacon must have proven himself as a man of deacon character and ability within the context of Second Baptist Church for no less than a period of one year.

The following steps will be the process by which an individual will be screened and evaluated in discerning God's hand upon that person's life, in qualifying him for a leadership position within 2BC:

- (1) **Initiation:** The individual responds to God's working in his life by expressing a desire to serve in a leadership capacity.
- (2) **Consultation:** The body of Elders and the individuals meet to discuss the biblical qualifications for service, agreement with the Statement of Faith and Bylaws of Second Baptist Church, expectations of the ministry, and/or other areas that may be deemed pertinent and beneficial by either the elders or the individual.
- (3) **Confirmation:** The Elders must unanimously agree that the individual demonstrates leadership in the area of service, and thereby assume responsibility to work with the individual toward that end.
- (4) **Presentation:** The Elders will inform the congregation that the man is under consideration for the office of Deacon. If the individual's life and service is deemed to be appropriate by the Elders, and in accordance with the Scriptural qualifications, the person will be presented to the entire church for evaluation, examination, and affirmation as one whom God has qualified for leadership. The entire congregation will be given a 30-day period in which to personally express any concerns or needed input to the Elders.
- (5) **Affirmation:** After the Elders have acted upon the input of the congregation (if necessary), and if the elders are in unanimous agreement that the individual has indeed been qualified by an act of the grace of God for leadership service within the church, then the elders will affirm what God has already done in the man's life by setting him apart as a Deacon.

- (b) **Qualifications:** Deacons and nominees for deacon shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include I Timothy 3:8-12.

(c) Responsibilities: The deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the church, and the care for the members of the congregation. Their focus is on the physical needs of the congregation following the scriptural example of the church body being responsible for those in need.

Section 6: NON-BIBLICAL OFFICES:

These would include, but not limited to church secretary(ies), music worship leader(s) and the treasurer and other sundry offices. These are understood to be non-temporary positions and binding until either that person or the Elders determine a change is necessary.

- (a) Those individuals who will fill these offices shall be selected by the Elders. Although, recommendations can be brought before the Elders, as well.
- (b) Once the Elders have unanimously approved them, they will be presented to the congregation, a minimum of two weeks prior to their hiring, to allow for evaluation and input from the congregation.
- (c) After two weeks, or at the next Business Meeting (see Article VII), the appointees will be installed, no vote being required.

Article VII – Business Meetings

SECTION 1: REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS:

The regular Business Meetings of the church shall be held quarterly on the last Sunday of March, June, September and December. In the event that the last Business Meeting of the year falls on Christmas day, the meeting will be one week earlier to December 18th. The purpose of these scheduled meetings is to keep the church informed on its finances, announcements from the elders and deacons, as well as any special ministry concerns. Items of special interest and that require congregational input, must be submitted to the Elders no less than ten (10) days prior to the scheduled meeting. This allows time to announce the agenda item to the church prior to the meeting.

Once a year, at the September Business Meeting, a proposed budget for the upcoming year will be presented. In addition, a list of our current teachers, nursery and toddler coordinator(s), and other administrative positions will be presented. If no changes are needed, it shall be approved on the last Business Meeting of the year, in December. This requires only a simple majority approval by the congregation. This can be verbal, but if necessary, a raising of hands.

SECTION 2: SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS:

These may be called at any time by the Elders, and for any reason that needs immediate attention that cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting. There shall be verbal notice given at the Sunday morning worship service, at least one week prior to the meeting, as to the purpose and the date and time for the meeting. If, however, the matter warrants the level of attention that deems it unadvisable to wait for a week, the meeting may be called for any time.

It is understood that in all business meetings, whether regular or special, Robert's Rules of Order shall be recognized as the general pattern of conduct.

Article VIII – Amendments To The Bylaws

This document may be amended or added to only after coming from a recommendation of the elders, at any regular or special Business Meeting.

It requires a two-thirds vote (67%) from the congregation.

The proposed change(s) must be read publically and made available in either print or digital form, at least 28 days prior to the vote.

No changes shall be made to Article III and Article IV without unanimous approval from the body of Elders and a seventy-five percent (75%) approval from the congregation.

If changes are approved, the modified document will immediately supersede any previous document adopted by this church. It shall serve a guideline for orderly conduct for Second Baptist Church of Mt. Vernon, Illinois.