CONSTITUTION & BY LAWS

First Baptist Church of Seminole, Oklahoma
420 Reid Street  Seminole Oklahoma  74868
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PART I - CONSTITUTION

Preamble

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner, and for the purposes of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of First Baptist Church, Seminole, Oklahoma (the "Church"), and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other churches, especially those of like faith and order, we do declare and establish these Bylaws.

These Bylaws supersede any polices and/or procedures previously adopted and practiced by the Church. At any point of difference or conflict, such policies and procedures shall be rewritten to conform to these Bylaws.

Name

The name of the Church shall be First Baptist Church of Seminole, Oklahoma.

Purpose

The Church is formed to engage in public worship and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through such ministries, programs and methods as may be determined by the Church.

The Church, being empowered by the Holy Spirit, is formed to:

Preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in obedience to the command set forth by our Lord in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), both at home and in foreign lands.

Regularly engage in corporate worship whereby we experience the awareness of God, exalt His Holy Name, and respond in obedience to His leadership.

Faithfully educate and motivate its membership toward deeper knowledge of God in Holy Scripture, Baptist doctrine and beliefs, and increased spiritual growth.

Offer and support such ministries that reach in to our church family and out to our community and the world so that Christ’s love for mankind is made known.

Provide an atmosphere and opportunities that promote fellowship with God and fellow believers in an effort to encourage each other in Christ-likeness.
The Bible

The Church believes in the Bible as the inerrant, infallible Word of God.

The Baptist Faith and Message

The Church subscribes to the latest version of the Baptist Faith and Message as an expression of its doctrinal position, which is incorporated into this document by reference.

The Ordinances

1. Baptism

   This Church may receive for Baptism all persons who have received Jesus Christ as their Savior by personal faith, who profess him publicly, and who indicate a commitment to follow Christ as Lord. Baptism shall be by immersion in water. The Pastor, or any ordained church member may administer Baptism. Baptism may be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the Church.

2. Lord's Supper

   This Church shall periodically observe the Lord's Supper. The pastor and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper as set forth in I Corinthians 11:23-29.

Relationship

This Church is related in missions, doctrine and interest to the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and the South Canadian Baptist Association. These relationships do not affect the complete autonomy and independence of this local Church.

Church Government

This sovereign and autonomous Baptist Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ retains unto itself the exclusive right to the temporal life of this Church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this Church and the conditions of such membership. This Church is a democracy and its authority is vested in the members.

Every member has the right to a voice in the Church's government, plans and discipline, except when the Church under special conditions limits voting based on age or other requirements in regard to certain business issues and/or matters. The Church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but enjoys mutual counsel and cooperation with other churches, especially those of like faith and order.
Marriages

Our statement of faith, "The Baptist Faith and Message" (2000), of the Southern Baptist Convention, expresses our fundamental biblical conviction that Christian marriage is, by definition, the spiritual and physical uniting of one man and one woman in an exclusive covenant commitment for their joint lifetime. Christian marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church. As such, this local Church believes that wedding ceremonies on Church property are spiritual observances of worship of God who created this divine institution. As worship services, weddings on Church property shall be officiated by one or more ordained ministers of the gospel. The Church may decline to make its facilities or ministers available for any wedding if it is determined that one or both parties are not biblically and/or legally qualified to marry. Such determinations may be made by the minister and/or ministers of this Church. No minister [or employee] of the Church shall officiate at any marriage ceremony unless such marriage is consistent with this policy.

Membership

Any person may become a candidate for membership in this Church. All such candidates shall be presented to the Church at any regular church service for membership following church approval in any of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith and upon Baptism by immersion.
2. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist church of like doctrine and practice.
3. By statement of faith when an individual gives testimony that he or she has previously experienced salvation by receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord and has been scripturally baptized. It will be necessary for a person to be baptized to become a member of this Church if he or she has never been baptized by immersion after their salvation experience, or if they were baptized in a church which holds a different view of salvation, baptism, or eternal security, than our church.

Rights of Members

1. Every member of the Church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the Church in conference, provided the Member is present or unless the Church under special conditions limits voting based on age or other requirements in regard to certain business issues and/or matters.
2. Every active member of the Church, age 25 and above, is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the Church.
3. Every member 12 years of age or older may vote in Church business meetings.
4. Every born again Christian may participate in the ordinances of the Church as administered by the Church.

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Termination of Membership

The continuance of membership shall be subject to the principles and usage of Southern Baptist Churches, and especially as follows:

1. Any member who desires a transfer of letter and recommendation to any other Baptist church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention is entitled to receive it by asking the new church to request it. In case of removal to another community, he should promptly make such request. This letter is to be a communication between the two churches and not to be granted to the member as a personal bearer.

2. If a member requests to be released from his covenant obligations to this Church for reasons which the Church may finally deem satisfactory after it shall have patiently and kindly endeavored to secure his continuance in its fellowship such requests will be granted, and his membership terminated.

3. Should a member become an offense to the Church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant, the Church may terminate his membership, but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment. In this instance, the membership of person shall be terminated at the same meeting that a recommendation for such action is made.

4. All requests for termination of membership under (2) and (3) above or action looking thereto shall be considered by the deacons, who shall make recommendations to the Church.

5. Should a member unite with a church of another faith, his membership shall be terminated.

Restoration of Membership

Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of the Church, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation, or upon satisfactory explanation.
PART II - BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - Church Pastor, Staff, Deacons, Committees and Officers

All who serve as officers of the Church and those who serve as teachers and officers in our organizations and/or on Church Committees shall be members of this Church. Called staff may be hired before they become members as long as they express intentions of becoming a member at the earliest possible time. If for some reason an exception needs to be made to this guideline regarding the hiring of a particular called staff member, such exception can be made by vote of the church.

Section 1. Church Officers

The officers of this Church shall be the Pastor, Called Staff, the Chairman of the Deacons, and in his absence the Vice-Chairman of the Deacons, Clerk, Treasurer, Office Manager, Trustees and Church Administrator if other than the Pastor.

For the purpose of annual performance review and the setting of salaries and benefits, all staff and other paid workers are considered employees of the Church. No staff member, other individual, nor any committee is authorized to spend money beyond a budgeted amount, based on available funds without approval of the Stewardship Committee (formerly called the Budget, Stewardship & Finance Committee).

1. The Pastor

The pastor is responsible for leading the Church in accordance with New Testament practices. The pastor will lead the congregation and the Church staff in performing their tasks. The pastor is the administrative head and moderator of the Church and is considered to be an ex-officio member of all committees. The pastor may delegate a called staff member to be ex-officio member of the various committees.

The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the Church.

He leads and inspires the Church members in performing tasks;

…is worship leader of the Church;

…engages in a fellowship of worship, evangelism, education, discipleship and ministry;

…proclaims the gospel to believers and unbelievers;

…and seeks to care for the Church's members and other persons in the community.
A. The Pastor as Moderator

The pastor shall serve as Moderator, presiding over Church business meetings. The pastor may appoint, for limited periods of time, a Moderator from the membership as its presiding officer. In the absence of the Moderator, the Chairman of the Deacons shall preside; or in the absence of all, the Vice-Chairman of the Deacons shall preside.

In guarding and maintaining the fellowship of the Church, the aim of the Moderator must be to bring unity with people of different views, ideas and convictions. The objectives of the Moderator should be to maintain the spirit of Christian love while presiding, to be fair and courteous with all members, to help members understand parliamentary procedures without embarrassment to them, to insist that motions be stated and seconded before discussion, to call on the person who makes a motion to discuss it first, to encourage full and free discussion by members to talk through any disagreements and to try to avoid trivial matters, to alternate discussion so as to bring out both sides of a question by giving a member who has not spoken preference over the one who has, to respect the minority who have a right to be heard even though the majority must prevail, and to always take the affirmative vote first and then the negative vote second.

B. The Call of the Pastor

A pastor shall be recommended by a pulpit committee and called by the Church whenever a vacancy occurs. In the selection of a potential pastor, the committee shall be guided by the requirements set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

I Timothy 3:1-7:

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may becomeuffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” ESV

Titus 1:5-9:

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you – if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” ESV
C. Selection of Pulpit Committee

1. The election of the Pulpit Committee shall be in a Sunday evening service to which a minimum of two weeks advanced publicity has been given.

2. Any person who has been a Church member for at least two years may be elected.

3. The election of the actual pulpit committee shall be by written ballot, with members selecting five candidates, plus an alternate, of their choice. The five members receiving the most votes, who are willing to serve, shall make up the pulpit committee, with the alternate being the next in number of votes.

4. The deacon body shall certify the nominees and count the ballots, and determine if each nominee is willing to serve if elected.

5. The committee members shall select their own Chairman.

6. A Vice-Chairman and Secretary shall be chosen by the committee.

D. Calling a Pastor

1. Only one person at a time shall be considered for pastor by the Church.

2. When the committee is ready to present a person as the prospective pastor, an announcement to this effect shall be given to the church at least two weeks prior to his presentation to the church in view of a call.

3. Election shall be by written ballot with an affirmative vote of 90% of the ballots being necessary for approval.

4. Absentee ballots may be requested through the church office prior to the vote, and must be turned in to the church office prior to the vote.

5. The pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the Church’s request.

2. Church Staff

The Church shall employ called staff members additional to the pastor as needed to effectively carry out the work of our Lord. Called staff members will minister primarily in areas as defined by the respective Church approved job descriptions for assigned areas of ministry. In order to select and call staff members, the nominating committee shall select a Staff Search Committee of five members to present to the Church for approval.

1. The election of the Staff Search Committee shall be in a Sunday evening service to which a minimum of two weeks advanced publicity has been given.
2. Any person who has been a Church member for at least two years may be elected.

3. The election of the Staff Search Committee shall be by written ballot.

4. The deacon body shall count the ballots.

5. The committee members shall select their own Chairman.

6. A Vice-Chairman and Secretary shall be chosen by the committee.

The Staff Search Committee will seek out, in consultation with the pastor, a person with the necessary qualifications for the particular position. The staff search committee shall present to the Church only one candidate at a time for Church action by written ballot, with 80% approval being necessary to fill the position.

3. Deacons

In accordance with the New Testament belief of the priesthood of every believer, Baptists have always practiced congregational rule. The word "Deacon" means servant, and therefore deacons serve the needs of the Church.

A. Responsibilities and Duties

In accordance with the meaning of the word in the New Testament, Deacons are to recognize their roles as ministering servants of the Church. They are to be members of this Church whose character and qualifications shall be as specified in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-6, and Titus 1:6-9.

The deacon body shall serve under the leadership of the pastor and assist him in performing duties in order to free him for ministry of the Word. The deacons will support and work with the pastor as follows:

1. To lead the Church in the achievement of its mission;
2. To minister the gospel to believers and unbelievers;
3. To care for the Church's members and others in the community;
4. To have "a consistent commitment to stewardship shall be attested by the Deacon's example of tithing to the Church;"
5. To demonstrate Christ-like consecration, loyalty, prayer support and faithfulness to the local church program;
6. To visit the sick, needy and indifferent of the Church;
7. To encourage and strengthen new converts and the spiritually weak;
8. To attend deacon's meetings regularly;
9. To be available with his wife at worship services for assisting the pastor in receiving new members. Training sessions will be offered to acquaint everyone with the procedures to follow;
10. To be available to assist with the "Deacon of the Week" assignments for contacting guests from Sunday.
B. Qualifications

In the spirit of 1 Timothy 3:8-13:

"Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus." ESV

. . . a deacon should demonstrate:

1. Loyal support of the pastor and staff.
2. Faithful attendance at the services of the Church.
3. Encouragement of and participation in the organizations of the Church. (Fellowship, Music, Discipleship, Ministry, Missions etc.)
4. A consistent commitment to stewardship shall be attested by the Deacon's example of tithing to the Church.
5. Personal evangelism among the lost and visitation of the sick, shut-ins and indifferent of the membership.
6. Regular attendance at the meetings of the deacons.
7. Assistance with new member assimilation.
8. Participation in the "Deacons of the Week" assignments.

C. Selection

1. In consultation with the Pastor and Deacon Body, the Church will elect an indeterminate number of deacons required to do the work of deacons in caring for the Church membership and to assist the Pastor with ministry.
2. When a Deacon Election is necessary, a "Deacon Candidate Ballot" will be distributed over a two-week period and collected during Church services.
3. Deacon qualifications will be publicized on the ballot which will include all active men in the Church, who meet the qualifications of a deacon, are age 25 years or older, and who have been a member for at least one year.
4. Each candidate will complete screening and confirmation requirements as determined and administered by the Deacon Body IAW the Deacon Handbook.
5. Candidates who meet qualification and confirmation requirements and are approved by the Deacon Body who have not previously been ordained as deacons will be presented to the Church for an ordination vote.

D. Service of a Deacon

A deacon shall remain in active status as long as he annually indicates his desire and commitment to serve, is regular in attendance at the deacons’
E. Deacon Officers

1. Deacon Officers serve in the positions of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary who serve for one year terms; with the ability to serve two consecutive terms.
2. The chairman of the deacons may not serve on a standing committee.

4. Church Clerk

A. Selection

The Church shall elect annually a Clerk to serve as its clerical officer for a one year term. The person serving in this position may be re-elected annually upon nomination and election by the Church.

B. Responsibilities and Duties

The Clerk or someone chosen by the Clerk (office employee or otherwise) in consultation with the pastor shall:

1. Be responsible for keeping official records of all official actions of the Church and recording minutes of the Church business meetings. Official records will be signed by the moderator and church clerk. Records will also be stored electronically and copies will be kept separately by the moderator and church clerk.

2. Be present in regular and special Church business meetings to record the results of all matters voted upon and see that there is a follow-through on all necessary correspondence related to the actions.

3. Record information on candidates for Church membership and other decisions.

4. Be responsible for keeping, or seeing that the Church office keeps, a register of names of members with dates of admission by baptism or otherwise, dismissal, death, erasure and any other information needed for a complete membership roll.

5. See that all official communications and written reports are preserved on file.

6. Be responsible for preparing the annual Church Profile Report to the Association or other appropriate agency.

7. To preserve records for present and future use, including records of Church history.
5. Church Treasurer

A. Unless Church action stipulates otherwise, the Chairman of the Stewardship Committee (referred to as the Stewardship Team) will serve as Church Treasurer. This person will work carefully with the entire committee in making decisions, and will not be independent of the committee in regard to recommendations and reports brought to the Church.

B. Duties include:

1. Supervise signatories on all accounts.
2. Preparation of financial statements and reporting them to the Church.
3. Assist with audits of the Church finances.
4. Supervise investments as to type and/or place.
5. Lead in budget preparation and Church money administration.
6. Supervise accounts payable, payroll, general ledger and other accounting functions.
7. Supervise all financial matters to verify that they conform to IRS regulations.

C. Designated and Undesignated Monies:

1. All monies received, both designated and undesignated, are the property of the Church.

2. As much as possible, the Treasurer will assure that designated monies are used for the designated purpose.

3. When special circumstances or reasons explained to the Church family indicate designated monies cannot or should not be used as designated, and after a reasonable period of time holding such funds, the Treasurer with approval of the Stewardship Team and deacons may recommend to the Church another use for these funds. A two-thirds vote of the Church is required to accept such a recommendation.

6. Trustees

The nominating committee will seek out qualified candidates who are willing to serve, and the Church shall elect five trustees to act for the Church in legal matters who shall serve in staggered terms so that one trustee is elected each year as one rotates off. Initially one trustee will be elected to a one year term, one for a two year term, one for a three year term, one for a four year term, and one for a five year term. The trustee who is rotating off the board may be re-elected if he is willing to serve for another five year term. The trustees will elect a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. They shall be the custodians of the Church's legal documents which are to be kept in the Church safety
deposit boxes. Upon specific vote of the Church authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any Church property.

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When the signatures of Trustees are required, any two or more shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase or rental of property, or other legal documents related to Church approved matters. The Church shall furnish bonding on and indemnify each trustee for any legal issue arising from their action at the Church’s request. The pastor will be notified of any Trustee meeting.

Section 2. Church Committees

Appropriate committees shall serve at the discretion of the Church as needed in its ministry.

1. Standing Committees of the Church include:
   1. Baptism/Lord's Supper
   2. Stewardship
   3. Nominating
   4. Food Service
   5. Offering/Counting
   6. Personnel
   7. Preschool/Children
   8. Building and Grounds
   9. Youth

2. The nominating team is responsible for nominating members to serve on each standing committee for Church approval. (a minimum of 6 members will serve on each standing committee). Members will serve for three consecutive years with two members rotating off each year.

3. Each committee has a purpose and responsibilities document that is approved by the Church and maintained by the respective committees. Copies of these documents may be obtained from the Church office.

4. In the event of a vacancy on any committee or the Trustees during the year, the Nominating Committee shall submit to the Church at a business meeting a nomination to fill the vacant office.

5. Minutes are to be kept for all committee meetings. Copies will, within a few days after a meeting, be provided to the pastor, the chairman of the deacons, the Church office (except minutes of Personnel Committee meetings) and the chairman of the committee, with a copy retained by the committee secretary. If at the next meeting of the committee, changes in the minutes are made before the minutes are approved by the committee, copies of the revised minutes will be provided to the aforementioned persons and places.

6. In absence of the pastor, the chairman of deacons is ex-officio member of all committees.

7. No person may serve on more than one standing committee.
Section 3. Committee Organization and Governance

After the committees are approved by the Church, each committee may elect officers as they may deem appropriate to function, always but not limited to, a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary.

A majority of each committee shall constitute a quorum for any meeting and all actions of a committee shall be by 75% majority vote of those present including the chairman.

Committee meetings shall be called by the chairman or by a majority of the committee members. Committee members shall receive notice of meetings prior to any meeting of a committee.

A contingency plan for dealing with emergencies regarding equipment and structures will be developed by the Building and Grounds Committee and approved by the Church. The intent of the contingency plan is to allow the Building and Grounds Committee in consultation with Church Staff to deal with emergencies in a timely manner.

ARTICLE II - Church Meetings

Section 1. Worship Services

The Church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening for the worship of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, always desiring and seeking the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit). Prayer, praise, music, preaching, instruction, and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services. The pastor shall direct the services for all Church members and for others who may choose to attend. Regular services and calendared events may be cancelled and changed by vote of the Church, or changed by providential circumstances beyond the control of the Church.

Section 2. Special Services

Revival services, Bible conferences, and any other Church meetings for the advancement of the Church's objectives shall be held as recommended by the pastor and approved by the Church.

Section 3. Regular Business Meetings

The Church shall hold regular business meetings quarterly unless by Church action this schedule is changed. Notice of such scheduled meetings shall be announced in advance.

Section 4. Special Business Meetings

The Church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special
nature and significance. The notice of a special business meeting shall include the subject, the date, the time and place of the meeting and it must be announced to the congregation in advance of the meeting. No business except that for which the meeting is called may be transacted.

Section 5. Quorum

A quorum consists of a majority of those members who attend any regular or special business meeting.

Section 6. Parliamentary Procedure

Commonly accepted parliamentary procedure will be used for all business meetings of the Church. Refer to section "The Pastor as Moderator".

ARTICLE III - Auxiliary Organizations

Section 1. The Sunday School

1. The Sunday School is a branch of the Church organization and therefore shall be subject to and under direct control of the Church.
2. All Sunday School officers and teachers shall be approved annually by the Church.
3. An annual promotion day will be held and will be considered of major importance to the life of the Sunday School and Church.
4. A paid staff member or volunteer will serve as Director of the Sunday School.
5. Regular assessments on the progress of this organization will be given to the Church.

Section 2. All other Auxiliary Organizations of the Church.

1. Shall be subject to the Church.
2. Directors and officers shall be elected within their respective organizations.
3. Shall report their progress to the Church when asked to do so.
4. All officers of these organizations shall be members of this Church in good standing.

ARTICLE IV - Amendments

Changes in the Bylaws may be made at any business meeting of the Church, provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting or upon request. Amendments to the Bylaws shall be adopted by three-fourths of the voting Church members present. Approved amendments will be made a part of this document, and will be maintained as defined under the responsibilities of the church clerk. The most recently dated copy is the
ARTICLE V - Operation and Dissolution

The Church is to be operated in a way that does not result in accrual of distributive profits, realization of private gain resulting from the payment of compensation in excess of a reasonable allowance for salary or other compensation for services rendered, or realization of any other form of private gain.

The Church pledges its assets for use in performing the organization's religious functions. It directs that on discontinuance of the Church by dissolution or otherwise, the assets are to be transferred to a charitable, educational, religious or other similar organization, connected with or related to the Southern Baptist Convention, or the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, or the South Canadian Baptist Association, and is qualified as a charitable organization under the current Section 501-C-3 Internal Revenue Code.