

CONSTITUTION

Introductory Statement

The First Baptist Church of Terrell, Texas, was constituted January 2, 1876, with thirteen charter members at Griffith's Chapel then located at College Street and Brin Avenue. It is believed that the church adopted The New Hampshire Declaration of Faith, but since the records have been burned, this fact cannot be substantiated. The following manual is in keeping with the original constitution of the church and of subsequent actions. We now recognize the Baptist Faith and Message of 1963 as our basic doctrinal statement.

Preamble

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches.

I. Name

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Terrell, Texas.

II. Church Objectives

The First Baptist Church of Terrell, Texas, shall be guided by the following objectives:

1. To be a dynamic, spiritual organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world.
2. To be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership.
3. To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.
4. To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man.
5. To be a church that ministers unselfishly to persons in the community and world in Jesus's name.
6. To be a church whose purpose is to be Christ-like in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the Lordship of Christ.

III. Articles of Faith

- Section 1. We affirm the original sixty-six books of the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God and the authority for our beliefs and practices.
- Section 2. We believe there is one true and living God revealed to us as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Section 3. We believe that man was created in the image of God, but by the disobedience of the first man, sin entered into the world. We believe that sin separates man from God. We believe that everyone is responsible for his own sins committed after reaching the age of accountability.
- Section 4. We believe that the only way of salvation from everlasting punishment and of obtaining a personal fellowship with God is by Grace through a personal belief in Jesus Christ as Savior based on the blood atonement and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior.
- Section 5. We believe that as true believers nothing can separate us from the love of God and that we are kept and sealed by the Holy Spirit who indwells all believers.
- Section 6. We believe the ordinances of the church, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- Section 7. We voluntarily band ourselves as a local body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to all mankind. We believe that this mission will be continuous until the bodily return of Jesus Christ.

IV. Church Covenant

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

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry and expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; and to be zealous in our efforts to extend the Kingdom of the Savior.

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

We, moreover, engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of the covenant and the principles of God's Word.

V. Church Polity and Relationships

- Section 1. We are an autonomous body of believers under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- Section 2. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it.
- Section 3. We will retain voluntary cooperation with Kaufman Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

VI. Rules of Decorum

In all matters with reference to decorum and parliamentary procedure Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed.

BYLAWS

I. Church Membership

Section 1. The membership of this church shall consist of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have been scripturally baptized; acknowledged substantial agreement with the faith, practice, and covenant of this church; and have been received into the fellowship by regular church action.

Candidacy

Section 2. Our church accepts people for membership in one of the following ways:

1. Salvation - those individuals who are inviting Jesus Christ into their life to forgive them of their sin and take control of their life today and who are willing to be baptized as a symbol of their acceptance of Christ.
2. Transfer of Membership - those individuals who are already Christians and have a membership in another church where they have been scripturally baptized.
3. By Baptism - those individuals who have been previously saved but not baptized who are willing to submit themselves to scriptural baptism.
4. With 3/4 of the votes cast by ballot, the church may restore to membership any person previously excluded upon request of the excluded person with evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation.

Voting Rights of Members

Section 3. 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.

Termination of Membership

Section 4. Membership may be terminated in the following ways:

1. Death of a member
2. Transfer of membership to another Baptist Church.
3. Erasure upon request or proof of membership in a church of another denomination.
4. By exclusion after the church has exhausted the scriptural methods of restoration, in the case of a person who holds membership in the church who has departed from the faith, is living in open immorality contrary to the covenant of the church, or who is guilty of sowing discord among the brethren.

II. Church Officers - Elections and Duties

Section 1. The officers of this church shall be members of this church and shall include the following:

1. Pastor
2. Deacons
3. Clerk
4. Trustees

Pastor

Section 2. Upon any vacancy in the pastorate, the church will form a special committee to recommend a successor. The church shall, without delay, take measures to secure a successor. A church-wide notification of the committee's recommendation shall be given at least one week in advance of the church action. A vote of 3/4 of the members present and voting shall be necessary in extending the call.

Section 3. The pastor is recognized as the under-shepherd of Jesus in the local church and is responsible to:

1. Preach the Word of God.
2. Administer the ordinances of the New Testament.
3. Shepherd the church and lead it in the fulfillment of its sacred task.
4. Serve as an ex-officio member of all committees and/or his designated appointee.

Section 4. The dismissal of the pastor, at the discretion of the church, shall be accomplished by the same voting procedure as that which was followed when he was called.

Deacon

Section 5. The church will elect a body of ordained deacons to help it fulfill its purpose. The qualifications of a deacon are detailed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Section 6. Deacons will be elected as needed to minister to the church membership. The number of deacons will be determined by growth of the church membership. Deacons will not be elected unless all church members have been notified and given an opportunity to nominate qualified men for the position. A vote of 3/4 of the members present and voting at a called conference shall be necessary for election.

Section 7. Deacons are servants of the church membership and will fulfill the following duties:

1. Serve with the pastor to perform pastoral ministries.
2. Participate in and actively support all activities of the church unless providentially hindered.
3. Lead in the Lord's Supper.
4. Shall be available to counsel/advise the pastor as needed.
5. Shall review and recommend to the Stewardship Committee the pastor's annual salary.

Section 8. If a question arises concerning the character or actions of a deacon, the matter will be referred to the pastor and the chairman of the deacons for review. If action becomes necessary, the matter will be recommended for action by the deacons to the church membership. Any action taken shall require 3/4 vote of the members present and voting.

Section 9. Specific details related to the deacon body are to be outlined in a church approved "Deacon Policy". A copy of the current policy will be maintained in the church office.

Clerk

Section 10. The church clerk shall be nominated annually by the church-wide nominating committee and elected by the church.

The clerk shall be responsible for keeping minutes and records for all business meetings and work with the church staff on keeping an accurate membership role. Reports from the clerk shall be presented to the church for its approval at the regular church conference.

Trustee

Section 11. Three (3) trustees shall serve as legal officers for the church. Upon a specific vote of the church authorizing each action, the trustees shall have the power to acquire, dispose, mortgage, lease, transfer any property, or any other action as directed by the church.

Any action shall require at least two signatures in the event the third trustee is unavailable. The trustees shall be nominated annually by the church-wide Nominating Committee, elected by the church. These trustees are eligible to serve indefinitely.

Reason for Officer Vacancy

Section 12. Any of the above offices may be declared vacant upon the occurrence of any of the following:

1. Death of the officer
2. Resignation of the officer
3. Termination of membership in this church
4. By vote of 3/4 of the members present and voting

The usual church election procedure shall be followed to fill such vacancies.

III. Committee System

Purpose

First Baptist Church shall maintain a system of committees to assist the church leadership and membership in fulfilling the purpose of the church.

Committee Existence

The church shall maintain the following constitutional committees:

1. Personnel
2. Stewardship
3. Properties
4. Nominating
5. Committee on Committees

The church may create or disband other standing committees or temporary committees.

Committee Manual

The Committee on Committees shall be responsible for writing and maintaining, on a current basis, a committee manual listing the responsibilities of constitutional and other standing committees. The committee manual shall be updated annually and the changes approved in a church conference meeting by majority vote. A current copy of the manual shall be kept in the church office .

Committee Criteria

Each committee shall follow the following criteria:

1. Every member of a committee shall be a member of the church.
2. All actions of committees should be documented, dated, and signed. Copies of these minutes/actions then should be turned into the church office to be maintained on file for future use.
3. All committees shall be composed of no more than seven members including the chairman.
4. Committee members shall serve a three year term. Committee members may be replaced due to chronic absences upon recommendation of the Committee on Committees
5. Committee members shall not serve two consecutive terms.

6. Committee members who are fulfilling a partial term in the absence of someone are eligible for a three year term at the end of the partial term. This is not to exceed one complete three year term.
7. A committee chairman shall be limited to a two year term of a three year committee term.

IV. Amendments/Recensions

This Constitution/Bylaws may be amended or recended by a majority of members present and voting after following this process:

1. A recommendation to amend or recend shall be presented in writing at a regular church conference.
2. The motion will be reread at a second regular church conference.
3. At the third regular church conference, the motion will be read and a vote will be taken.

10/27/96