

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION  
of  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
Merced, California

**PREAMBLE**

As members of First Baptist Church of Merced, united in our Lord Jesus Christ to carry out His calling, we establish this Constitution.

**ARTICLE I – NAME**

The name of this church shall be First Baptist Church of Merced, California

Date Organized: February 10, 1935 with a charter membership of thirty (30).

By virtue of the laws of the State of California, incorporated as First Baptist Church of Merced on December 22, 1944.

Its official address shall be: 500 Buena Vista Drive, Merced, California 95348

**ARTICLE II – STATEMENT OF FAITH**

**A. The Trinity**

We teach that the coexistence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead is the **Trinity**. God eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal, co-eternal, and are one God. (Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

**B. God the Father**

We teach that **God** is the creator and sustainer of the universe. He is unchanging, all powerful, all knowing, and is everywhere. He is eternal, holy, righteous, and truth. The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of **God**; it simply affirms His existence by declaring, “In the beginning **God**...” (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 1:12; Gen. 17:1; Gen. 18:14; Job 38:39; Rev. 1:8)

**C. God the Son**

We teach that **Jesus Christ** is the **Son** of God. He is co-equal with the Father and possesses all the attributes of deity. Born of a virgin, He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on the cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to the right hand of the Father and will return again someday to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; Hebrews 4:4-16; 1 Corinthians

15:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Isaiah 7:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-18; Revelation 19:11-16)

#### **D. God the Holy Spirit**

We teach that the **Holy Spirit** is a divine person possessing all the attributes of God. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The **Holy Spirit** lives in the life of every believer. He develops a Christ-like character in believers, empowers them for ministry, and brings comfort in times of hurt. (Mark 1:8; John 14:16-17; 16:8-11; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:4; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Galatians 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:8)

#### **E. The Bible**

We teach that the **Bible** is God's infallible, authoritative Word to us. It is written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the Truth without error. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Psalms 119:89, 105, 160; Proverbs 30:5; Mark 13:31; Isaiah 40:8)

#### **F. Mankind**

We teach that **mankind** was made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. Mankind was the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience towards God called "sin." Sin separates people from God and keeps us from a right relationship with God. (Gen. 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8)

#### **G. Salvation**

We teach **salvation** is by grace through faith alone and is wholly of God on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works. Trusting in Jesus Christ alone, as God's free gift and offer of forgiveness, results in being saved from sin's penalty. When we admit we are sinners, recognizing that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again on the third day and believe on Him, we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment we repent and receive Jesus Christ into our lives by faith. Once saved, the redeemed are kept by God's power and thus secure in Christ forever. (Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-9; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Titus 3:5-6; Romans 6:23; John 14:6; Acts 3:19; 17:30; Galatians 3:26; Acts 16:31; John 1:12; Romans 10:9; John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

#### **H. Ordinances**

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: **baptism and the Lord's Supper**. Christian baptism (by immersion) is the testimony of a believer showing forth his/her identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination (Acts 2:38-42; 8:36-39; Romans 6:2-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28)

## **I. The Church**

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into **one united spiritual body – the church**. The local church is a group of believers who have joined together for the purpose of fellowship, prayer, worship, instruction, the administration of the ordinances, and ministry (Acts 2:41-47; 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18a; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

## **J. Eternal Destiny**

We teach that people were created to **exist forever**. We either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. Eternal union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence. (John 3:16-18; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 5:11-13; Romans 6:6, 23; Revelation 20:15; Matthew 25:44, 46; Philippians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8)

### **ARTICLE III – CORE VALUES**

**Section 1 PREAMBLE:** The following core values define the identity of First Baptist Church of Merced, California. They inspire our ministries, drive our mission and motivate our vision. They are the heart and soul of *who we are and are striving to become* as a body of Christ-followers!

**Section 2 BIBLE-BASED...Teaching God’s Word!** We are Christ-followers who desire to live according to the inspired Word of God, searching for and discovering truth with grace and love. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Section 3 CHRIST-CENTERED...Communicating the Hope of Jesus!** We are Christ-followers who allow the gospel of Christ to inform and transform every aspect of our lives. (John 3:16)

**Section 4 WORSHIP-ORIENTED...Glorifying the Living God!** We are Christ-followers who are intent on pleasing God, not ourselves. Worship is not about us, it’s all about Jesus! (John 4:23-24)

**Section 5 COMMUNITY-FOCUSED...Building authentic relationships!** We are Christ-followers who value honesty and transparency in our relationships with one another as together we endeavor to equip ourselves to be generous and service-oriented. (Luke 10:27)

**Section 6 MISSION-DRIVEN...Making disciples!** We are Christ-followers who passionately love Jesus by engaging in the mission of Jesus to connect, equip and release people for ministry both in the church and the world. (Matthew 28:19-20)

#### **ARTICLE IV – MISSION STATEMENT**

We purpose.... To live by **faith**, to offer **hope**, and to be known by **love**.  
*“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.”*  
1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV

#### **ARTICLE V – VISION STATEMENT**

Proclaiming the unchanging Christ to a changing world!  
*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*  
Hebrews 13:8 NIV

#### **ARTICLE VI - CORPORATE SEAL**

The corporate seal shall be circular in form and shall contain the name of the Corporation, the date, and State of Incorporation.

#### **ARTICLE VII – MEMBERSHIP**

The membership of this church shall consist only of individuals who give evidence in life and testimony of being born again (John 3:1-15) through saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, have followed the Lord in believer’s baptism, and whose lives conform to the New Testament pattern of Christian living. (Romans 10:9-11; Galatians 5:16-26) The membership of the church shall have final authority in all matters of church governance as set forth in the Governance Manual and Church Bylaws.

#### **ARTICLE VIII– AFFILIATION AND PROPERTY**

**Section 1** First Baptist Church of Merced shall remain free and independent and shall not join itself to any other denomination or synod. If approved by the Council of Elders, the congregation may join an association of (like-minded) churches.

**Section 2** First Baptist Church of Merced shall have the power to receive either by gift or purchase, and to hold real and personal property as authorized by the laws of the State of California, and as necessary for the business of the church. All such property shall be held in the name of First Baptist Church of Merced, California, and the church shall have the power to dispose of such property as provided in this constitution.

**Section 3** In the event of the dissolution of First Baptist Church of Merced, no member shall personally be entitled to any asset of the Church. Upon recommendation of remaining Council of Elder members and/or church officials, all remaining assets and property rights shall pass to designated church/mission organizations to renew the work or use the values thereof for other Gospel enterprises.

#### **ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS**

**Section 1** Amendments to this constitution may be made at the annual business meeting or a special business meeting of the members of the congregation. All proposed amendments will be made available no less than thirty (30) days prior to their adoption and discussed at “town hall” style meetings. Proposed amendments are approved by three fourths (3/4) of the votes cast.

**Section 2** Notification of the meeting shall be given thirty (30) days prior to the vote on the amendment. At least two (2) of the following forms of communication shall be used: an entry in or insert to the Sunday Morning Worship Program, email notices to all members with an email, announcements made from the pulpit or platform that accompany such written presentations during each worship service or any other forms of media shall be used prior to the meeting where the vote will be taken, and notices posted on the Website.

**Section 3** The quorum for any business meeting or special business meeting for the purpose of amending the Constitution shall be thirty (30) percent of the active members of First Baptist Church of Merced. Voting shall be by secret ballot.

#### **ARTICLE X - POSITION STATEMENTS**

The Council of Elders may, from time to time, produce position papers on doctrine, theology, church discipline or other ecclesiastical matters. The position papers shall be entitled "Position Statements," and a copy shall be made available, without charge, to members.

Approved by Constitutional Revision Team to recommend to Council of Elders 06.13.17  
First revision by Council of Elders 07.26.17  
Second revision by Council of Elders 08.02.17  
Third revision by Council of Elders 08.16.17  
Fourth revision by Council of Elders 01.17.18  
Final revision approved by the Council of Elders 04.18.18  
Congregational Approval \_\_\_\_\_

**PROPOSED BYLAWS**  
**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**

Merced, California

**PREAMBLE**

We, the members of the First Baptist Church of Merced, California, in order to carry out more effectively the commission given by Jesus Christ to His church, do establish the following Bylaws to which we voluntarily submit.

**ARTICLE I**  
**GOVERNANCE AND OPERATION**

**GOVERNANCE:**

The governance of this church is vested in its members. The Council of Elders represents the members as their servants, overseeing all matters necessary for the effectual accomplishment of the church's mission and vision, and is the church's sole authoritative interpreter of Scripture. The Council of Elders serves as the church's visionaries for its future and as the custodian of its physical assets.

**OPERATION:**

Execution of the day-to-day ministry, teaching and training to accomplish the mission and vision of First Baptist Church of Merced, is vested in the Lead Pastor, using the gifts and leadership of the ministry staff and their various ministry teams. The Lead Pastor is accountable to the Council of Elders, and the Pastoral and Ministry Staffs are accountable to the Lead Pastor.

**ARTICLE II**  
**MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1 QUALIFICATIONS:** To become a member, individuals must meet the following criteria:

1. Be at least 16 years of age;
2. Give evidence in life and testimony of being born again (John 3:1-15) through saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10);

3. Have followed the Lord in believer's baptism by immersion (Matthew 28:19-20);
4. Are living lives that conform to the New Testament pattern of Christian living (Galatians 5:16- 26);
5. Agree to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of First Baptist Church of Merced; and
6. Commit to the Covenant of Membership (*Section 3: Covenant of Membership*).

**Section 2 ADMISSION:** For admission to membership individuals must:

1. Complete First Baptist Church of Merced membership classes;
2. Submit an application for membership to the Council of Elders;
3. Participate in a personal interview with either an Elder/Pastor/Deacon/or Deaconess where they share their conversion experience and growth in Christ;
4. Personally affirm by signature to abide by the Constitution and By-laws of First Baptist Church of Merced;
5. Personally affirm by signature the core values, mission, vision and philosophy of ministry statements of First Baptist Church of Merced;
6. Be approved by the Council of Elders and be welcomed into the fellowship of the church.

**Section 3 COVENANT OF MEMBERSHIP:**

1. We will be consistent in holy living (1 Peter 2:11-12).
2. We will be active in ministry (1 Peter 4:10-11).
3. We will cooperate with spiritual leadership (Hebrews 13:17)
4. We will be accountable to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21; Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1-2).

5. We will be faithful in attendance (Hebrews 10:23-25).
6. We will be regular in our giving (1 Corinthians 16:2).

#### **Section 4 RESPONSIBILITIES:**

##### **Members are responsible for:**

##### A. Personal responsibilities:

1. Living holy and consistent lives (1 Peter 2:11-12);
2. Supporting the church in faithful attendance and prayer (Hebrews 10:23-25);
3. Generous giving of tithes and offerings (1 Corinthians 16:2);
4. Discovering, developing and deploying their spiritual gifts for active service in the First Baptist Church of Merced family (1 Peter 4:10-11);
5. Praying for and submitting to the spiritual leadership of the church (Hebrews 13:17).

##### B. Corporate responsibilities:

1. Installing all Elders (Acts 14:23);
2. Calling and/or dismissing the Lead Pastor;
3. Approving the annual budget which shall serve as a guide for financial decisions and actions throughout the fiscal year;
4. Approving acquisition and disposition of real property;
5. Approving capital investment projects that affect more than one third fiscal year's budget;
6. Approving First Baptist Church of Merced's Constitution and Bylaws and any revisions of the same and;
7. Approving dissolution of First Baptist Church of Merced if ever necessary. (*See Constitution, Article VIII, Section 3*)

#### **Section 5 DISCIPLINE, ABSENCE and WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERS**

##### A: Discipline:

1. Discipline will be conducted in accordance with procedures established by the Council of Elders and as referenced in Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20, Titus 1:10-11, 1 Timothy 5:20, Matthew 18:15-18, and 1 Corinthians 5:13.

2. If any member is found not living in accordance with the teachings of the Bible, First Baptist Church of Merced's Statement of Faith (*Constitution, Article II*) or church-wide beliefs and policies (*Bylaws: Article II, Section 7 STATEMENT OF BELIEFS AND CHURCH POLICIES*), such a member shall be admonished by the Council of Elders in brotherly love and exhorted to abide by First Baptist Church of Merced's statements of Faith and Practice. (Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 10:24-25)
3. Should such a member continue to live in sin, the Council of Elders, after pursuing and failing at all attempts of reconciliation, shall dismiss such a member from membership at First Baptist Church of Merced and inform the dismissed member in writing in accordance with the Policy on Church Discipline. When and if such a person repents, he/she may be readmitted to membership after completing recommended counseling by the Council of Elders.

B. Absence:

Any member, absent more than one year and from whom the church has received no communication, shall be referred to the Diaconate Team for follow-up and inquiry. If membership is no longer desired, or if attempts to contact individuals are unsuccessful, the person(s) may be removed from membership by action of the Council of Elders.

C. Withdrawal: Members in good standing may withdraw from membership by:

1. Request from another church which holds to the same essentials we believe. (*Constitution, Article II*)
2. Request from the member to have his/her name removed.
3. Formal action implemented by the Council of Elders.

D. Dismissal:

Any member who remains on the inactive list for a period of six months or more is subject to dismissal from membership.

## **Section 6 STATEMENT OF BELIEFS AND CHURCH POLICIES**

A. Marriage, Gender and Human Sexuality

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

2. We believe, based on the teachings of the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, that marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world, and intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:22-33)
3. First Baptist Church of Merced follows what the Bible reveals as the “sure foundation” of the teaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles (Matthew 7:24-29 and 1 Corinthians 14:37). The church is called to teach and practice these teachings and is not at liberty to depart from them for a different authority if it is to authentically bear the name “Christian.”
4. Though we strive to live peaceably with all people and to obey legitimate government authority, in instances involving matters as foundational as, marriage, gender and human sexuality, we must ultimately obey God rather than man if the two come into conflict (Acts 4:18-22). Sexual activities outside of marriage, including but not limited to fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia, polygamy and bestiality are inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible and the church. Lewd conduct, transgender behavior and the creation or distribution or viewing of pornography are incompatible with God’s intention for mankind.
5. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of First Baptist Church of Merced as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the First Baptist Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by First Baptist Church of Merced in any capacity, or are members or regular attendees of First Baptist Church of Merced who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by the Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Human Sexuality.

## B. Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Psalm 139).

## C. Child Protection

1. We believe that children are a “*heritage from the Lord*” (Psalm 127:3) and therefore seek to serve them in a protected and safe environment, free from any emotional, physical or sexual harassment and/or abuse. To that end we have established a Child Protection Policy which all volunteers working with children, birth through age seventeen (17) must be personally trained in and

approved by the supervisor directly in charge of each life stage, i.e., Early Childhood Coordinator, Childhood Coordinator, and Student Pastor.

2. All pastors, ministry directors, children's coordinators, student interns, volunteer teachers, caretakers of children, and child counselors must be background checked, sign the mandated reporter form and be thoroughly trained in mandated reporting with a certificate of completion on file. Any hint of sexual or physical abuse will be reported directly to the California Department of Child and Family Services.

### **ARTICLE III LEAD PASTOR**

#### **Section 1 QUALIFICATIONS:** The Lead Pastor shall:

- A. Be a man of true and established Christian character as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:17, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4;
- B. Be credentialed (licensed/ordained) by a recognized church body/denomination or be willing to be credentialed within 18 months after his date of service begins;
- C. Affirm the Constitution and Bylaws of First Baptist Church of Merced;
- D. Affirm the core values, mission, vision, and philosophy of ministry of First Baptist Church of Merced;

#### **Section 2 LEAD PASTORAL CALL:**

- A. If a Lead Pastor vacancy occurs, the Council of Elders will appoint a Pastoral Search Committee to assist in the process. The search committee shall investigate the merits of every person under consideration in regard to personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability in determining the person's appropriateness for the Lead Pastor position.
- B. The Pastoral Search Committee will recommend one candidate to the Council of Elders for approval.
- C. Upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders, the Lead Pastor candidate shall be invited to the church for a candidating period of time. Following the candidating period of time, a special congregational meeting shall be called by the Council of Elders to recommend that the Lead Pastor candidate be called to become the new Lead Pastor of First Baptist Church of Merced. The vote will be by secret and/or proxy ballot requiring a minimum three-fourths (75%)

majority of votes cast to be issued a call. The quorum for this vote shall be thirty (30) percent of the active members of the First Baptist Church of Merced.

- D. Upon hiring of a Lead Pastor, both the pastor and his spouse are recognized as members of this church and shall assume all duties and responsibilities of such membership immediately.

**Section 3 RESPONSIBILITIES:** The Lead Pastor shall:

- A. Be accountable to the Council of Elders for:

1. The faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God;
2. Administering the ordinances of the church;
3. Watching over the membership and spiritual interests of the church;
4. Communicating and executing the core values, mission, vision and philosophy of ministry of the church within the governance guidelines established by the Council of Elders; and,
5. Provide ongoing leadership training and organizational development appropriate to the life-stage of First Baptist Church of Merced.

- B. Be a full voting member of the Council of Elders on all matters except those concerning his employment and compensation.

- C. In consultation and agreement with the Council of Elders:

1. Personally or through his designee, hire, evaluate, discipline and/or dismiss all pastoral staff, ministerial staff, and support/administrative staff;
2. Personally or through his designee, hire, evaluate, oversee, and review all other church staff.

**Section 4 RESIGNATION, DISCIPLINE and REMOVAL:**

- A. Unless otherwise agreed upon by the Lead Pastor and the Council of Elders, the Lead Pastor will give the Council written notice of his resignation at least sixty (60) days prior to the last date of employment.
- B. Should an issue of correction arise concerning the Lead Pastor as to the fulfillment of his responsibilities, or failure thereof, or as to his qualifications, the Council of Elders shall be responsible for the assessment and implementation of appropriate disciplinary action, if any.

- C. Should there arise a doctrinal or moral error that would justify a suspension or revocation of ministerial credentials, the Lead Pastor may be suspended by the Council of Elders with or without pay. The Council of Elders will inform the congregation of their decision.

## **Section 5 OTHER STAFF POSITIONS**

### **A. Associate Pastoral Staff:**

The Lead Pastor, in consultation and agreement with the Council of Elders, shall hire Associate Pastoral staff within the limits of the approved budget. The participation of the congregation shall be actively sought in the process by providing public opportunities to meet the candidate and provide input to the Lead Pastor and Elders prior to his hire.

1. An Associate Pastor shall preach and teach the Word of God in complete agreement with First Baptist Church of Merced Statement of Faith and provide spiritual leadership to his area of ministry.
2. An Associate Pastor shall meet the Scriptural requirements for service and shall display evidence of irreproachable Christian character (I Timothy 3:1-7).
3. An Associate Pastor shall affirm the core values, mission, vision and philosophy of ministry of First Baptist Church of Merced.
4. He shall be granted a ministerial license or ordained by First Baptist Church of Merced or a like-minded denomination.
5. Upon hiring of an Associate Pastor, both the pastor and his spouse are recognized as members of this church and shall assume all duties and responsibilities of such membership immediately.

### **B. Associate Ministry Staff:**

The Lead Pastor, in consultation and agreement with the Council of Elders, shall hire Associate Ministry Staff according to the needs of the church and within the limits of the approved budget.

1. Associate Ministry Staff shall oversee a ministry area, as determined by the Lead Pastor, shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith of First Baptist Church of Merced, and shall provide spiritual leadership to his or her ministry area.
2. Associate Ministry Staff shall meet the Scriptural requirements for service, and shall display evidence of irreproachable Christian character (I Timothy 3:1-13).
3. Associate Ministry Staff shall affirm the core values, mission, vision and philosophy of ministry of First Baptist Church of Merced.

4. Associate Ministry Staff must fulfill the requirements of Church Membership as outlined in Bylaws, Article II.

C. Support/administrative staff

1. Support/administrative staff positions will be recommended by the Lead Pastor and approved by the Council of Elders.
2. Persons to fill support/administrative positions will be recommended to the Lead Pastor from appropriate pastoral/ministerial staff members.
3. Support/administrative staff shall affirm the core values, mission, vision and philosophy of ministry of First Baptist Church of Merced.

D. Dismissal/Resignation of Pastoral, Ministerial and Support/Administrative Staff Members

1. Any doctrinal deviation, moral failure or consecutive negative performance evaluations, is grounds for dismissal of any pastoral or ministerial staff member.
2. Support/Administrative staff may be dismissed immediately by the Lead Pastor or his designee.
3. Pastoral staff members must give the Lead Pastor or his designee sixty (60) days written notice of their intent to resign. This may be negotiated with the Lead Pastor and Council of Elders.
4. Ministerial and Support/Administrative staff must give the Lead Pastor or his designee thirty (30) days written notice of their intent to resign. This may be negotiated with the Lead Pastor and Council of Elders.

**ARTICLE IV**  
**COUNCIL OF ELDERS**  
**(Approved by congregation 9-16-16)**

**Section 1 – Duties of the Council of Elders**

- A. The Council of Elders shall provide spiritual leadership and fulfill the shepherding responsibilities for the church as established in Scripture. (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
- B. The Council of Elders shall be the governing body of the church. (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Hebrews 13:17)

- C. The Council of Elders shall be responsible for church discipline in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17.

## **Section 2 – Make-up and Operation of the Council of Elders**

- A. Laymen aspiring to be Elders, who meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, are members in good standing of First Baptist Church of Merced and have actively served in ministry for at least three (3) years at First Baptist Church of Merced, shall be eligible to serve as Elders.
- B. The Council of Elders shall consist of a minimum of six (6) laymen, who are members of First Baptist Church of Merced, and the Lead Pastor. (1 Timothy 3:1)
- C. Laymen approved to serve as Elders shall be installed for a term of three (3) years-and may serve a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms. They then will be required to take at least one year off the Council of Elders. If they desire to serve again as an Elder, they must once again go through the required qualification process and be installed to serve another term.
- D. If the number of laymen serving on the Council of Elders drops below six (6), the Council of Elders will continue to function without interruption until qualified candidate(s) is/are approved by the Council of Elders and installed.
- E. Decisions of the Council of Elders shall be made by consensus. If the Council cannot reach a consensus and the issue requires a timely resolution, it may be resolved at the next meeting by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote of the entire Council. (Acts 1:14a; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 1:27; 2:2-4)

## **Section 3 – Calling, Nomination, Evaluation and Installation**

- A. Calling: The calling to be an Elder is a high calling from God and one neither to be taken lightly nor circumvented by man. It is the responsibility of the body of Christ to test the individual's qualifications to see that he is blameless and above reproach. (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9)
- B. Nomination: Elders shall be nominated on or before May 31<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year. A prospective Elder may be nominated in several different ways:
  - 1) A member of the congregation who believes that the Lord is calling him to seek an Elder position may nominate himself; or
  - 2) Members of the congregation may nominate potential candidates from within the church membership; or

- 3) The Council of Elders may nominate potential candidates from within the church membership.
- C. Evaluation: The nominated Elder candidate will go through the following evaluation process:
- 1) The Council of Elders shall evaluate the qualifications of the nominated Elder candidate to determine whether his calling is consistent with Scripture. Upon approval of the Council of Elders, the candidate will move forward in the process. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:22, 24-25; Titus 1:6-9)
  - 2) Two (2) months before the Annual Business Meeting, the Council of Elders will call a special congregational meeting to allow the approved Elder candidate to stand before the church family and give his testimony.
  - 3) After the special congregational meeting, if a member of First Baptist Church of Merced has concerns regarding the qualifications of the approved Elder candidate, the member may meet with that candidate to discuss his/her concerns. If the outcome of that meeting is not satisfactory to both parties, then the parties will meet with two (2) members of the Council of Elders and attempt to resolve the issue. If the issue remains unresolved, then the entire Council of Elders will meet to determine the final resolution. (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Timothy 3:10; 5:22, 24-25)
- D. Installation: At the Annual Business Meeting, the Council of Elders and church family will lay hands on and pray for the approved Elder candidates, installing them as Elders. (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:22, 24-25; Titus 1:6-9)

#### **Section 4 – Removal**

Serving as an Elder carries with it greater responsibilities than a man would otherwise have; therefore, Elders are implicitly warned in Scripture that God holds them to a higher standard. (Luke 12:48b; James 3:1) Any Elder who becomes disqualified while serving as an Elder shall be removed by the Council of Elders in accordance with the instructions given by Paul in 1 Timothy 5:19-22.

#### **Section 5 – Communications**

- A. Regular Council of Elders meetings will be scheduled at least once a month.
- B. All regularly scheduled Council of Elders meetings will have a designated time for input from members of First Baptist Church of Merced.
- C. Minutes of the Council of Elders meetings will be available for review by members of First Baptist Church of Merced upon request to the Secretary of the Council of Elders.

## **Section 6- Corporate Officers and Duties**

- A. Board of Directors: The Council of Elders shall be the Board of Directors of the Corporation.
- B. Composition: Annually, the Council of Elders shall select from among its membership a Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Secretary and Financial Officer. They shall function as officers of the corporation respective to their position, i.e. Moderator – President; Vice-Moderator – Vice-President; Secretary – Clerk; Financial Officer – Treasurer.
- C. Duties:
  - 1) The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Council of Elders and all congregational business meetings of the church. He shall work closely with the Lead Pastor and Council of Elders to ensure that the Statement of Faith of First Baptist Church of Merced is adhered to and that its core values, mission, vision and philosophy of ministry are fulfilled.
  - 2) The Vice-Moderator shall perform the duties of the Moderator in his absence.
  - 3) The Secretary shall be responsible for the recording of all minutes of the Council of Elders meetings, special business meetings and the Annual Congregational Business meeting and shall be the steward of these documents.
  - 4) The Financial Officer shall serve as the Treasurer. He shall provide monthly financial statements to the Council of Elders and oversee an annual audit/review of all financial records of the church.

## **ARTICLE V DIACONATE**

### **Section 1 Duties**

- A. Deacons and Deaconesses shall assist the Council of Elders in accomplishing the specific ministries to which they are called; i.e. shepherding, nurturing and encouraging members of the church family; visiting those who are hospitalized and are unable to attend church; and overseeing the benevolence ministry of the church.
- B. Deacons and Deaconesses shall assist the Lead Pastor in preparing for Communion and Baptismal services when scheduled.

- C. Deacons and Deaconesses shall assist the Lead Pastor in ministering to families who have lost loved ones through ushering at memorial services and preparing a meal reception for families and guests.
- D. The Diaconate shall meet with the Council of Elders at least twice during the church fiscal year at a mutually agreeable time. Additional meetings may be called by either team.
- E. It will be the responsibility of the Diaconate Team in partnership with the Council of Elders to assure that the membership roll is examined at least twice during each calendar year. Any member who willfully removes himself/herself from the activities and life of the church for a period of six months or more shall be placed on an inactive list (having been notified, if possible, in writing of such action). Any member who remains on the inactive list for a period of six months or more is subject to dismissal from membership.

### **Section 2 Selection**

- A. A Deacon/Deaconess shall meet the spiritual qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-12.
- B. Deacons and Deaconesses shall be appointed by the Council of Elders to serve for (2) two (3) three year terms. After serving (2) two consecutive terms of (3) three years, Deacons and Deaconesses shall take one year off before becoming eligible again for additional (3) three year terms.
- C. The Council of Elders shall communicate annually to the congregation the names of the Deacons and Deaconesses they have appointed. They may also fill any unexpired terms as the need arises.

### **Section 3 Removal**

Deacons and Deaconesses who do not evidence the lifestyle of 1 Timothy 3:8-12 shall be removed by the Council of Elders.

## **ARTICLE VI MINISTRY TEAMS**

### **Section 1 Duties**

Ministry Teams serve in specific ministry areas of the church which are responsible to carry out the mission and vision of First Baptist Church of Merced.

## **Section 2 Selection**

- A. Ministry Team members shall be members of First Baptist Church of Merced. Non-members may also serve as long as they are born again Christ-followers and commit to First Baptist Church of Merced's doctrinal statement, core values, mission, vision and philosophy of ministry statements.
- B. Pastoral/Ministerial staff members submit the names of their specific ministry team to the Council of Elders for approval at the beginning of each fiscal year.

## **Section 3 Removal**

Ministry Team members shall be removed upon recommendation of the Pastoral/Ministerial staff and approval of the Council of Elders.

## **Section 4 Additional Ministry Teams**

Additional Ministry Teams can be formed to carry out the mission and vision of First Baptist Church of Merced.

## **ARTICLE VII MEETINGS**

**Section 1 ANNUAL MEETING:** The Annual Meeting shall be held in the month of October. Business shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Approval of the General Fund budget for the coming fiscal year which begins January 1;
- B. Installation of new Elders;
- C. Report from the Lead Pastor; and
- D. The agenda and proposed budget shall be communicated to the congregation two weeks before the meeting is to be held.

## **Section 2 OTHER MEETINGS:**

- A. If necessary, a Semi-annual meeting may be scheduled to update the membership on various aspects of the ministry and finances.

- B. Other meetings may be called by the Council of Elders to address special business as announced two weeks before the meeting is to be held.
- C. Twenty-five (25) percent of the membership (with the exception of Council of Elder members and any First Baptist Church of Merced employee) may call for a special meeting by written petition.

**Section 3 FISCAL YEAR:**

The fiscal year shall be the calendar year (*January 1 through December 31*)

**Section 4 PROCEDURES:**

- A. The Elder Moderator or his designated representative shall preside at all church business meetings.
- B. The latest edition of the American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, May 3, 2012 by the American Institute of Parliamentarians shall apply unless otherwise stated herein. If circumstances are such that the Council of Elders determines that it would be beneficial for the church to vary from any particular section of the American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, the Council of Elders is authorized to deviate.
- C. Members will acknowledge their attendance on a register.
- D. Proxy voting is permissible at all meetings. A member may vote only one proxy.
- E. Meeting minutes will be recorded by the Elder Secretary or his designee.
- F. The date, time and subject matter of meetings must be communicated in Sunday services, at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

**Section 5 QUORUM:**

Except as otherwise specified, a standard quorum of twenty (20) percent will be required at all business meetings.

**Section 6 VOTING:**

Except as otherwise specified in these By-laws, a simple majority of those members present or voting by proxy will carry all business.

**ARTICLE VIII  
AMENDMENTS**

The Bylaws may be amended by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the active members present or voting by proxy at any congregational business meeting provided that notification of the proposed amendment is made to the members thirty (30) days prior to the meeting. At least two (2) of the following forms of communication constitute notification: an entry in or insert to the Sunday Morning Worship Program, email notices to all members with an email, announcements made from the pulpit or platform that accompany such written presentations during each worship service, or any other forms of media shall be used prior to the meeting where the vote will be taken, and notices posted on the Website.

A quorum for such action shall consist of thirty (30) percent of the active members present in person or by proxy.

Approved by Constitutional Revision Team to recommend to the Council of Elders 06.13.17  
First revision by the Council of Elders 07.26.17  
Second revision by the Council of Elders 08.02.17  
Third revision by the Council of Elders 08.16.17  
Fourth revision by the Council of Elders 01.17.18  
Final revision approved by the Council of Elders 04.18.18  
Congregational Approval \_\_\_\_\_