



CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

First Baptist Church of West Memphis, Arkansas

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
200 N. MISSOURI ST
West Memphis, AR 72301

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CONSTITUTION

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 relation to other churches.

ARTICLE I

Name

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of West Memphis, Arkansas.

ARTICLE II

Objective

The purpose of the First Baptist Church of West Memphis, Arkansas shall be to evangelize the lost according to the religious purposes as set forth in Matthew 28:19-20 and to encourage individual and corporate worship and develop the believers in moral, civic, and daily responsibilities.

ARTICLE III

Statement of Belief

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired word of God and the basis for our beliefs. This church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of The Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963. We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind. The ordinances of the church are believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper. (See Article III of the Bylaws.)

ARTICLE IV

Polity and Relationships

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership (See Article I of the Bylaws).

All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.

This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist churches. This church will cooperate with and support the local Baptist association, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

BYLAWS

I. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A. General

This is a sovereign and democratic Southern Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains the right to exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

B. Candidacy

Any person may request membership in this church at any regular worship service in the following ways: (1) by profession of faith and subsequent baptism, (2) by promise of a letter from another Baptist church of like faith and order, or (3) by restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and baptism in a Baptist church when no letter is obtainable.

C. Termination Of Membership

Membership may be terminated in the following ways: (1) death of a member, (2) transfer of a letter to another Baptist church, or (3) erasure upon request or proof of membership in another church (4) disciplinary action of the church as stated in Bylaw D.

D. Discipline

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist each member to obey the teachings, admonitions, and proscriptptions of the Holy Scriptures. In this regard, the pastor, other members of the church staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

Should some serious condition exist which causes a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the pastor and deacon body will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to exclude a member, an affirmative vote of a simple majority of the members present and voting is required.

The church may restore to membership any person previously excluded, upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and upon his or her request.

II. CHURCH OFFICERS, STAFF, AND COMMITTEES

All who serve as officers of the church and those who serve on committees are required to be members of First Baptist Church. The officers of this church shall include but not be limited to the pastor, the church ministerial staff, the deacons, a moderator, a clerk, a treasurer and trustees.

A. Pastor

The pastor is responsible for leading First Baptist to function as a New Testament Church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff to perform their various tasks. The pastor will be the leader of pastoral ministries within the church. As such, he will work with the church staff and the deacons to lead the church in the achievement of its mission, proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers and care for the church's members.

A pastor will be chosen and called by church election whenever a vacancy occurs. The recommendation of a candidate for pastor will be made to the church by the elected Pastor Search Committee. The election will take place at a meeting specifically called for that purpose. A letter will be mailed to every member of the church family at least two (2) weeks prior to the date of the meeting. Notice must also be given in all regular church publications and all regular church meetings for two (2) weeks preceding the meeting. This election will be administered by the officers of the Deacon Body and must be by secret ballot. The results of this election will be maintained as a permanent church record and must be announced to the church members prior to the adjournment of the meeting. An affirmative vote of 85% of those present and voting will be required in order for the call to be extended to a pastor.

A Pastor Search Committee shall be elected as soon as possible when the church becomes without a pastor. The committee shall be composed of four (4) men and three (3) women. The committee shall be elected in the following manner. At a Sunday morning service set aside, the congregation will be given a ballot to write-in the names of up to fourteen (14) members. The nominees shall be eight (8) men and six (6) women. A husband and wife may not serve on the committee even if they receive enough votes to serve. The deacon officers will oversee the counting of the ballots and contact those receiving the most votes as to their willingness to serve. If one declines to serve, then the next highest vote recipient will be contacted to serve. Following this, the deacon officers will submit a ballot with the names of the eight (8) men and six (6) women who have agreed to serve, to the congregation within two weeks. The deacon officers will oversee the counting of the ballots and the seven (7) receiving the most votes will form the Pastor Search Committee with the results being announced to the church. The committee will elect their own chairman.

An Interim Pastor Selection Committee shall be elected one (1) week following the election of the Pastor Search Committee. The committee shall be composed of three (3) men and

two (2) women. The committee shall be elected in the following manner. At a Sunday morning service, the congregation will be given a ballot to write-in the names of up to ten (10) members. The nominees shall be six (6) men and four (4) women. A husband and wife may not serve on the committee even if they receive enough votes to serve. The deacon officers will oversee the counting of the ballots and contact those receiving the most votes as to their willingness to serve. If one declines to serve, then the next highest vote recipient will be contacted to serve. Following this, the deacon officers will submit a ballot with the names of the six (6) men and four (4) women who have agreed to serve, to the congregation within two (2) weeks. The deacon officers will oversee the counting of the ballots and the five (5) receiving the most votes will form the Interim Pastor Selection Committee with the results being announced to the church. The committee will elect their own chairman.

An individual elected to the Pastor Search Committee will not be eligible to serve on the Interim Pastor Selection Committee. Because of the nature of committee work, a member of the Pastor Search Committee or the Interim Pastor Selection Committee will not be eligible to serve on either the Personnel Committee and/or the Finance and Budget Committee and if is currently serving on that committee he or she must resign.

B. Ministerial Staff

Ministerial staff members will be called and employed as the church determines the need for such position(s). New ministerial staff positions will be created by recommendation from the pastor and the personnel committee to the Deacon Body for approval and then to the church for approval. The Pastor and Personnel Committee will prepare a job description with input from the appropriate committees (i.e., youth, family life, etc.) as necessary.

In order to fill vacant ministerial positions, The Pastor and the Committee on Committees will select a Search Committee and present them to the Deacon Body and the Church for approval. This committee will include representatives from the Personnel Committee, Finance Committee, other appropriate committees (i.e., music, children, etc.) and members of the congregation. The Committee will work with the Pastor to locate a candidate to present to the church for approval.

The election to fill ministerial staff positions will take place at a meeting specifically called for that purpose. Notice must be given in all regular church publications and all regular church meetings for two (2) weeks preceding the meeting. The Pastor will administer this meeting. In the absence of a Pastor, the Officers of the Deacon Body will administer this meeting. Ballots will be issued to all members present. The Deacon Officers and designees will count the ballots. A two-thirds majority will be required for the call to be extended. The results will be announced to the members prior to the adjournment of the service.

C. Non-Ministerial Staff

Non-ministerial staff members shall be employed as the church determines the need for their services. New Non-Ministerial staff positions will be created by recommendation from the pastor and the personnel committee to the Deacon Body for approval and then to the church for approval. A job description will be prepared and/or reviewed by the Personnel Committee, pastor and the administrator when the need for each staff member is determined. The church Personnel Committee, pastor, and administrator shall have the authority to employ non-ministerial staff members in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Administrative Manual. Such employment of services shall be with the recommendation of the pastor and the supervising ministerial staff member and, as appropriate, with the consultation of the related committee(s) of the church.

D. Administrative Manual

A document entitled “Administrative Manual: Personnel Policies and Job Descriptions” shall be approved by the Personnel Committee. The purpose of the document is to have in print, policies and job descriptions for all staff members. This document may be revised as needed by the Personnel Committee and Pastor/Administrator upon due notice to the church.

Each staff member is given an “Administrative Manual: Personnel Policies and Job Descriptions” at the time of employment or at the time of revision. The manual is also available to any church member through the church office.

The manual sets forth guidelines and compensation approved by the Personnel Committee for the dismissal of any staff member.

E. Deacon

1. NUMBER. The active deacon body will be made up of a maximum of thirty-six (36) deacons.
2. METHOD OF ELECTION. This election will be held in the Sunday morning service(s) of the second Sunday in September. The election will be announced in regular publications and during services at least two weeks in advance.

The election will proceed as follows. A ballot will be distributed to all members present. The ballot will include: a.) a list of all “active” deacons and their terms of service, b.) a list of all “reserve” deacons, c.) space for the nomination of five deacons to serve on the “Deacon Selection Committee”, and d.) an area for the nomination of twelve men to serve as “active” deacons. These men may be nominated from the “reserve” deacon list or from the general body.

The Deacon Officers and designees will count the ballots to determine who will serve on the Deacon Selection Committee. This committee will select and contact men to serve as

“active” deacons. Their selection will be based on the ballots from the congregation and the qualifications established in God’s Word.

The names of the newly selected deacons who have agreed to serve and those requiring ordination will be announced in a Sunday Morning Service following the election. The deacons will begin their term of service on January 1st of the new year.

3. TENURE OF OFFICE. Each year the term of the third year deacons will expire. When the term for deacons expires, they will not be eligible for active service until the lapse of at least one year.

The term of any active deacon who shall, unexcused, fail to attend at least 50% of the scheduled Deacon's Meetings in any one year shall automatically be removed from the active list.

A deacon who joins from another Baptist church shall not become an active deacon of this church unless duly elected. However, he shall be recognized as an ordained deacon.

4. ORGANIZATION OF DEACONS. Officers of deacons shall consist of a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a secretary. These officers shall be elected by the active deacons at their first meeting of the calendar year. Each officer shall be elected for a one year term and shall not be eligible for re-election in the same capacity until one year shall have elapsed from the date of the expiration of such term.

5. MEETINGS. The deacons shall meet regularly each month, and at such special times as deemed necessary upon the call of the pastor or chairman of deacons.

6. ELIGIBILITY. To be eligible for election to the office of deacon, a man shall be a member of the church for at least two (2) years and at least 21 years of age and meet the biblical qualifications.

F. Church Moderator

The pastor will assume the responsibilities of moderator during all business meetings. In his absence, the pastor will appoint a ministerial staff member to serve as moderator. In the event the office of pastor is vacant, the Deacon Body will elect a moderator.

G. Church Clerk

The church clerk shall be elected annually by the church upon nomination by the Nominating Committee. The clerk is responsible for keeping a record of all official actions of the church. The clerk is responsible for keeping a register of names of all members, with date of admission, dismissed, death or erasure, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk will be responsible for preparing the annual letter of the church to the association.

The clerk will preserve, on file, all communications and written official reports by the church.

H. Church Trustees

The trustees are to serve as legal officers for the church. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote of the church authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property. Any two of the three trustees signature will be required when acting upon the authority of the church. When the signature of trustees are required, they 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 elect three (3) trustees serving an indefinite period of time. At such time a new trustee will be nominated by the Committee on Committees and elected by the church to replace the vacant trustee position. Because of the nature of this position, any trustee is eligible to serve on any committee of the church.

I. Church Committees

All church committees will be authorized by the church, are accountable to the church and make reports to the church as needed. The pastor and administrator will assign a ministerial staff member to each church committee as ex-officio member to aid in guidance and direction.

All church committees will be designated as either Special or Standing. Special Committees are temporary and have a specific short term function to perform. Standing Committees are permanent and their functions continue on a year-to-year basis.

A document entitled "Committees: Duties and Responsibilities" has been approved by the Committee on Committees. The purpose of the document is to have, in print, a list of all Standing Committees of First Baptist Church, state the function(s) of each committee and the rules and bylaws governing each and every committee. This document is revised as needed by the Committee on Committees and Church Administrator and is available through the church office to any member.

The Committee on Committees report is to be submitted to the deacons for approval and then to the church for final approval.

III. CHURCH ORDINANCES

A. Baptism

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Jesus Christ. It is a testimony of the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and the Lord's Supper.

1. This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.
2. The pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize shall administer baptism. The Baptismal Committee shall assist in the preparation and the observance of baptism.
3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
4. A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastor and/or staff or deacons. If negative interest is ascertained on the part of the candidate, he shall be deleted from those awaiting baptism.

B. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of observance whereby the members of a local church when assembled together, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

1. The members of First Baptist Church shall observe the Lord's Supper quarterly with additional times to be scheduled by the pastor.
2. Observance will rotate between the morning and evening worship services at the discretion of the pastor. The pastor and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper with the Lord's Supper Committee being responsible for the physical preparations.

IV. CHURCH MEETINGS

A. Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening for the worship of Almighty God. Prayer, praise, preaching, instruction and evangelism shall be among the subjects of these services. The pastor shall direct the services for all the church members and for all others who may choose to attend.

B. Special Services

Revival services and any other church meetings essential to the advancement of the church's objectives shall be placed on the church calendar.

C. Business Meetings

The church shall hold a quarterly business meeting on the Wednesday following the deacon's meeting of the first month of the quarter. If such matters are presented at the monthly deacons meeting, the church will hold a business meeting on the Wednesday following the monthly deacons meeting.

D. Special Business Meetings

The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. A one (1) week notice must be given for the specially called business meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical; provided a two week notice is still required for the calling of a member of the Ministerial staff. The notice shall include the subject, the date, and time and place; and it must be given in such a manner that all resident members have opportunity to know of the meeting. The called meeting shall be published in the church paper (Messenger) the week prior to the business meeting.

E. Quorum

The quorum consists of those members who attend the business meeting, provided it is a regular business meeting or one that has been properly called.

F. Parliamentary Rules

Robert's Rules of Order, Modern Edition is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church.

V. CHURCH FINANCES

A. Church Finances And Budget Preparation

The Finance and Budget Committee shall be responsible for the finances of the church. The committee, in consultation with other committees, shall prepare the annual church budget. The budget will be presented to the deacons for their approval and then to the church for adoption prior to the beginning of the church year.

This church recognizes and adopts as its plan of financial support the scriptural method of tithes and offerings. It is understood that membership in the church involves a financial obligation to support the church and its programs with regular and proportionate gifts.

The church requires an annual audit from an outside firm.

B. Accounting Procedures

A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be developed by and be the responsibility of the Finance and Budget Committee.

The financial secretary shall account for all funds received by the church and shall see the funds are properly recorded on the books of the church. The individual(s) responsible for the actual handling of funds shall be bonded with the church paying for the bond.

C. Fiscal Year

The church fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.

VI. AMENDMENTS

Changes in the constitution and bylaws may be made at any regular 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. Amendments to the constitution and bylaws shall be by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of church members present and voting.

ADOPTIONS AND AMMENDMENTS

Adopted December 7, 1997

Amended July 21, 1999//February 9, 2000

CHANGE MADE TO METHOD OF ELECTION OF DEACONS: MAY 21, 2003.

CHANGE MADE TO THE PERCENTAGE REQUIRED TO CALL A MINISTERIAL STAFF MEMBER
OTHER THAN THE PASTOR: AUGUST 27, 2003.