

**Highlight** - indicates items changed from the original constitution that have been voted on to update language to include elders and has been voted on by the congregation and approved that have been reviewed by the elders

**Highlight** - indicates items marked that are to be added by the elders. This took place at the elder constitution review meeting on 3/22/25 and 6/21/25

**Highlight** - indicates items marked that are to be removed by the elders. This took place at the elder constitution review meeting on 3/22/25 and 6/21/25

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, ELLIJAY, GEORGIA, INC.**

#### **PREAMBLE**

So that things may be done according to God's word and in accordance with the accepted tenets of other churches of like faith, and that we may more readily help each other in our Christian service, we declare and establish this constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

#### **Article I**

##### **Name**

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Ellijay, Georgia, Inc.

#### **Article II**

##### **Articles of Faith**

The Holy Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God and is the basis for our faith. This church accepts the current "The Baptist Faith and Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.

#### **Article III**

##### **Church Covenant-**

##### **THE CHURCH COVENANT**

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

First Baptist Church of Ellijay affirms that Scripture calls all believers to live in unity and love. This church covenant serves as a concise expression of God's call for us to walk in community. It reflects the moral foundation of our biblical worldview and captures the essence of the gospel-shaped life to which we are called. By entering into this covenant together, we join with believers throughout history who have sought to faithfully embody the Gospel in both their personal lives and within the larger body of Christ.

This covenant serves as a continual reminder of God's call not only to guard against individual and collective sin, but to live lives of sacrifice, service, and holiness under a greater covenant—one born of divine love, justified by Christ's sacrifice, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and eternally secured by our Savior (1 Tim. 6:9-12; 1 Pet. 1:13-19, Eph. 1:13-14).

We acknowledge that the world offers us nothing of lasting value and that we cannot place our hope in the strength of our flesh. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to enter into this covenant with one another and be empowered to live it out faithfully. (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 2:4-5).

In all we do, we will aim to glorify and enjoy the God of our salvation, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things: to Him be all glory forever! (1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 11:36)

We will eagerly maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by walking together in love and in the Spirit and by putting away all bitterness, anger, and injurious speech. (Eph. 4:3, 29-31; Gal. 5:16, 25)

With humility and gentleness, patience and love, we will be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. (Eph. 4:1-2, 32; Luke 17:3; Col. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Pet. 1:22)

We will carry each other's burdens, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep. (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 12:15)

We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 139:13-16; Jer. 1:5; James 1:27)

We will train our children in the instruction of the Lord, seeking to walk in a way that adorns the Gospel of Christ before our family, friends, and neighbors (Deut. 6:6-7; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 5:25-27, 6:4; 1 Pet. 3:1,7).

We oppose all forms of sin. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose all vices such as racism, every form of greed, selfishness, substance abuse, unrighteous anger and all forms of sexual immorality including adultery, homosexual behavior, pedophilia and pornography, and gender confusion. We recognize that God's standard of holiness calls us not only to righteous actions but also to purity of heart. As Jesus taught, hatred is akin to murder and lust to adultery; therefore, we strive for holiness in both our actions and our thoughts. (Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 5:21-30; 1 Pet. 1:13-19; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-11).

We will strive to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, as we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ by denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, and following Him. (Gal. 5:22-24; Titus 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; Luke 9:23)

We will not neglect to gather together, but will support and treasure the biblical preaching of the whole counsel of God, the faithful observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the loving exercise of church discipline. (Heb. 10:25; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13)

We will contribute cheerfully and generously to the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the advancement of the Gospel both to our neighbors and the nations. (Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 12:33; 2 Cor. 9:7)

In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. When we leave this fellowship we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## THE CHURCH COVENANT

Realizing that Baptists have no legal document that is considered a test of faith, this church has adopted the Church Covenant as a spiritual agreement between our members. It is as follows:

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

By the aid of the Holy Spirit, all Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in their lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose all vices such as racism, every form of greed, selfishness, abuse of drugs and alcohol and all forms of sexual immorality including adultery, homosexuality, pedophilia and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. When we leave this fellowship we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## **Article IV**

### **Character**

#### **Section 1. Polity.**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers (members) who compose it. This church shall always be a sovereign, autonomous Baptist church, self-governing on all matters by a majority of the body of members who compose it which recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation with **Morganton-Mountaintown Baptist Association, The Georgia Baptist Mission Board**, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

As a local Church, the style of government will be Elder-led and congregationally ruled, submissive to the Word and Will of God as best understood and congregationally affirmed. (I Timothy 5:17-19.)

#### **Section 2. Doctrine.**

This church receives the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice **and agrees with other Baptist churches** as to the truth contained in the Scriptures as indicated in the Articles of Faith.

## **BYLAWS**

### **ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section 1. Qualifications.**

The membership of this church shall consist of such persons who confess Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9).

#### **Section 2. General.**

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist Church. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and 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.

#### **Section 3. Candidacy.**

Any person may offer himself/herself as a candidate for membership in this church in any of the following ways:

- A. By profession of faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and desire for baptism according to the policies of this church;
  - B. By promise of a letter from a Baptist church of like faith and order;
  - C. By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and prior baptism in a Baptist church, when no letter is obtainable;
- or

D. By statement of prior conversion experience and Believer's baptism (baptism by immersion) upon the recommendation of an elder, minister or deacon.

All such candidates professing to be Christians shall be presented or announced to the church at any regular service or meeting for acceptance into the Watchcare of the church.

#### **Section 4. Watchcare.**

The church will accept professed Christians into Watchcare until they have completed membership requirements--which include the completion of a new members class--or where circumstances may prevent them from becoming members.

- A. During Watchcare, the prospective member should be working toward the requirements of full church membership, including completion of the New Members Class

B. Candidates for membership shall be accepted for membership under Watchcare until the candidate has

- (1) experienced Believer's Baptism;
- (2) completed the **New Members** Next Steps Class; and
- (3) is in agreement with the **beliefs** **Articles of Faith** of this

Church.

**Candidates for Watchcare may be baptized at any time.**

- (4) Meet with at least one elder to discuss the items above or other questions a prospective member might have.

C. Although not a member, a person in the Watchcare of the church may receive all of the ministries and participate in all the programs and activities of the church with the exception of voting, holding office, and exercising elected positions of leadership.

### **Section 5. Membership.**

Once a candidate has been accepted into the Watchcare of the church and has completed the requirements of full church membership, which includes professing to have an understanding and agreement with the beliefs of our fellowship, that person may become a member of this Church.

Should there be any question that might require prayer, thought, or study, or if there is any dissent as to any candidate, such question or dissent shall be referred to the elder **body s** for the making of a recommendation **within thirty days of presentment** to the church. **A ninety percent vote of those members present and voting shall be required to elect such candidates to membership.**

### **Section 6. Termination of Membership.**

Membership may be terminated by either death, transfer of membership by letter **to another Southern Baptist Church**, affiliation with a church of another denomination, by request of a member desiring termination of his/her membership or by exclusion by action of this church.

Should a member become an offense to the church and to **its good name** **the name of Jesus Christ** by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of that person's covenant vows, or nonsupport of the church, the church may terminate that person's membership, but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and restoration by the elders. (Matthew 18:15-18)

### **Section 7. Restoration.**

Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of the church, upon evidence of that person's repentance and reformation, **as determined by the elder and deacon bodies.**

### **Section 8. Record of Membership.**

The Secretary, in coordination with the church staff, shall keep an accurate roll of all members, and insofar as possible an up-to-date record of addresses. The membership of the church shall include all **active** members on roll at the adoption of this Constitution and Bylaws and all those that shall be added according to the procedure of this Constitution and Bylaws.

### **Section 9. Rights and Duties of Membership.**

Members are expected to be faithful and obedient in all areas of their Christian life, attend the services of this church, give regularly to its support, and participate in its ministries. Members may participate in the ministries of the church, vote in church meetings, hold office, and serve in roles of leadership and service.

## **ARTICLE II**

### **CHURCH OFFICERS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS**

The spiritual leaders of this church shall consist of **elders**, ordained ministers, and deacons as set forth in this Article, in addition to any other staff members called by this Church. The church also recognizes administrative positions required by state law. Any spiritual leader/officer must be confirmed to the office by vote of the membership of the church.

### **Section 1. Elders**

Whenever necessary, the term Board of Directors described in the Official Code of Georgia, as amended, shall refer to the elders. The elders shall not convey, encumber, pledge or sell any real estate owned by the church without receiving approval of a majority of the church members at a meeting called for that purpose, subject to the quorum requirements set forth herein.

#### **A. Qualifications of elders**

1. The elders shall be comprised of men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
2. The elders shall be active members of the church for a minimum of five years prior to serving. (1 Timothy 3:6, 5:22)
3. The majority of the elders shall not be paid staff members but serving as voluntary servants of the church as the bride of Christ.
4. No elder shall hold the office of deacon while serving as an elder.

#### **B. Duties and Responsibilities**

1. The fundamental responsibilities of the elders are to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word of God in the oversight of this church and all its affairs. The oversight of the elders shall include: teaching the word of God; promoting church unity; caring for members; examining prospective members and assimilating new members; shall be considered an ex-officio member, without vote, of all committees; guiding the process of church discipline; examining prospective elders, deacons, ministers, and directors; working with the church administrator to organize business meetings; reporting any actions taken between business meetings; leading the work of the deacons and all ministries of the church; give aid in procuring speakers at the request of the pastor or in his absence; oversee the ordinances of baptism and communion. (Acts 6:2-4, 20:28-30, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, Titus 2:1, 1 Corinthians 12:25-26)

2. The elders have the responsibility to perform reviews of performance and provide feedback and guidance to the senior pastor.

### C. Selection of elders

The elder body shall be comprised of no less than three members (to include the Senior Pastor).

1. Elder candidates shall be identified and recommended by the congregation. Church members will be asked to submit nominations at a specified time each year. Nominations shall be submitted in writing using an elder nomination form.
2. Following a season of prayer, the elder body shall notify the nominees that they are being considered for the office of elder.
3. The elders shall lead the nominee through a validation process which will include completion of an elder candidate questionnaire to determine whether he meets the Biblical qualifications of an elder, adequate time to evaluate the candidate is doctrinally sound (Titus 1:9), affirmation that the candidate is in agreement with the beliefs and governance of this church, and various interviews with third parties concerning the candidates character, life, service within the body, and Christian witness.
4. Upon satisfactory completion of the validation process, the elder candidate shall be presented to the congregation for comment on his character, qualifications, or any other issue that would affect his suitability to serve as an elder of the church. The church body will be given two weeks to submit comments, questions, or concerns about any candidate to the elder body. The elder body will spend time investigating and praying through feedback received. When this period is complete the names of the remaining elder candidates will be submitted to the church body for a vote. The election of elders shall be by secret ballot and an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present, subject to a quorum, and voting shall be necessary for elders to be called.



1. Once the elder elect is affirmed by vote of the church, he will serve **for up to a year** as an elder elect. This time of service as an elder elect will serve as a period of testing (1 Timothy 3:10) **and training**. During this time, his life will be observed by the elder body and the congregation where his call is collectively observed and ultimately qualified by his consistent testimony of a pure life in the eyes of all. It is God who calls him, the congregation who acknowledges him to be a godly and qualified man (Acts 6:5) and the elders who appoint him to his task (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). When his period of testing **and training** has been successfully completed and he receives the blessing and recommendation of the **elder** body, the elder elect will be recognized by the church body in an ordination service where he will be officially received by the leadership of the church and will begin his five year term of service.

#### D. Terms of service

1. Elders shall be elected to serve for a five-year term, after completion of **one full year** **a period** as an elder-elect. At the end of the five-year term, elders may be reaffirmed by vote of the church if they feel led to serve another term.
2. Voluntary resignation- an elder may step down at any time he chooses. The elder should prayerfully reflect on this decision and seek counsel from the board of elders before making a final decision.
3. Involuntary dismissal- If a church member believes that an elder has compromised his office, they should express their concern to the elder body. The elders will decide whether disciplinary action is appropriate. If action is necessary, the elder will be rebuked and restoration should be sought in accordance with the instruction of 1 Timothy 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1, and Matthew 18:15-18. If the issue cannot be resolved, the matter will be presented to the church for a vote on the removal of the elder.

E. An elder who has reached sixty-five years of age or because of disabilities is now unable to serve as an active elder may request to be elected to elder emeritus status. Upon approval by the active elders and thereafter by the church at a regularly scheduled business meeting, said elder shall become an elder emeritus. An elder emeritus shall be privileged to attend any elder's meeting and participate fully in the deliberations of the elders but shall not have voting privileges, except as otherwise set forth herein. Any work

assigned to an elder emeritus shall be subject to his voluntary acceptance of such responsibility.

## **Section 2. Senior Pastor/Elder**

The senior pastor (hereto referred to as "pastor" and/or "elder") shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation and shall have general and active management of the operation of the corporation. He shall be responsible for the administration of the corporation, including general supervision of the policies of the corporation. The pastor shall be considered an ex-officio member, without vote, of all committees and he, or his designee, will serve as the Church Moderator. In his leading the church to function as a New Testament Church, and by virtue of his calling as chief shepherd, the pastor shall serve as the preacher and senior Bible teacher of the church and shall, in coordination with the elders, oversee the total ministry of the Church. As the senior pastor he shall supervise the ministerial aspects of the staff as they perform their ministerial functions. The Pastor shall be responsible for the leadership, management, and supervision of the staff in their daily duties, ministerial or otherwise. In this function, he has the responsibility to perform reviews of performance and provide feedback and guidance to the staff as needed to fulfill his duties as Chief Executive Officer. He, along with the elders, shall provide leadership and guidance to the Personnel Committee in recommending additional staffing, changes in staffing, changes in duties of the present staff, and disciplinary actions.

The Pastor shall be selected and called by this church. As authorized in Article III, Section 8 of these Bylaws, a Minister Search Committee shall be appointed to seek a suitable pastor whenever a vacancy occurs. This committee's recommendation will constitute a nomination to the church following elder approval. The Committee shall bring to the consideration of this Church only one person at a time. The election of a pastor shall be by secret ballot and an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present, subject to a quorum, and voting shall be necessary for a pastor to be called. If the candidate accepts the call of the church, he shall serve until the relationship is terminated as provided in this Constitution and Bylaws.

Upon the resignation of the pastor, a Minister Search Committee shall be formed in accordance with Article III Section 8 of these Bylaws. In the interim, the Personnel Committee elders have the option to fill the role of interim, select supply preachers, or to select an Interim Minister Search Committee. This Interim Minister Search Committee shall select an Interim Minister for the church, following elder approval and a majority vote, subject to a quorum, by those present and voting by secret ballot. Wherever used herein, the term *Minister* shall include the Pastor.

## **Section 3. Ministerial Staff**

The church may call ministerial staff to assist the Pastor in the administration of the ministerial and worship programs of this Church. A Ministerial Staff search committee shall be appointed by the elders pursuant to Article III Section 8 of these Bylaws to seek a qualified candidate. The committee shall, following elder approval, bring to the consideration of the church only one person at a time. The call of a ministerial staff member shall be by secret ballot and an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present, subject to a quorum, and voting shall be necessary for that candidate to be called to fill that position. Ministerial staff shall be employed on the same terms and conditions as the Pastor with respect to compensation paid to that called ministerial staff member upon resignation or termination and the filling of such position by a permanent candidate or interim shall be conducted in the same manner as the Pastor.

Called Ministerial staff shall lead the church in the development and promotion of the programs and services in their areas of responsibilities and promote the entire ministry and educational programs of the church and its auxiliary organizations. Called Ministerial Staff, in exercising their specific call to ministry, are supervised by the Pastor. By the nature and virtue of his calling as Chief Shepherd, he, along with the elders, is responsible for all aspects of worship and ministry of the church.

Job descriptions for called ministerial staff shall be prepared and maintained by the Personnel Committee. Any ministerial job descriptions not previously approved or any additions or revisions shall be presented to the church by the elders for approval as part of the Personnel Policy Handbook.

#### **Section 4. Tenure of Office of the Senior Pastor or Called Ministerial Staff**

The employment of the Pastor or Called Ministerial Staff member may be ended by resignation or by action of the church as outlined in these By-Laws. The procedures for such end of employment are as follows:

**A.** The Pastor or Ministerial Staff Member may resign by giving written notice to the Personnel Committee who shall then present the resignation to the elders. The elders shall ensure the church membership is properly notified. A Minister Search Committee shall then be formed in accordance with Article III Section 8 of these Bylaws.

**B.** The church may rescind the call of the Pastor or Other Called Ministerial Staff member at any special business meeting called by the elders, for that purpose. The voting shall be conducted by secret ballot, subject to the presence of a quorum, with an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present and voting.

**C.** Upon resignation, the Pastor or Called Ministerial staff member shall be entitled to receive thirty days salary during the thirty day notice that said person shall give the church, except as otherwise provided for herein. If the elders determine that a minister or other called staff member resigned to

avoid controversy in the church, the elders may grant that person a maximum of ninety days salary.

**D.** If conflict arises between the Ministerial Staff and Pastor, the Pastor is expected to inform the Ministerial Staff member and the elders of the conflict and to work diligently with them to come to a resolution. When there is an impasse, the employment of Ministerial Staff may be terminated with recommendation by the Pastor which must be approved by the elders.

In keeping with brotherly love and scripture, the termination of a Called Ministerial Staff Member is not to be taken lightly. Prior to any decision to terminate the employment or to present to the church a recommendation to rescind the call of a Called Ministerial Staff Member, the following steps will be followed:

1. In keeping with Matthew 18, any person accused of wrong doing shall have an opportunity to meet with the accuser to work toward reconciliation. A witness of the accused's choosing may be present during this meeting.
2. If reconciliation does not occur, the Personnel Committee shall speak with the Ministerial Staff Member with the Pastor and at least one additional elder present.
3. The Pastor, elders and Called Ministerial Staff member may request the Personnel Committee review specific documents and speak with specific individuals to include witnesses on their behalf.
4. The Personnel Committee will review and consider, document, and preserve, all information before them prior to making a decision. This will be presented to the elders for consideration. If a path to reconciliation is not possible, the elders will make a recommendation for termination.
5. Upon a recommendation of the termination of the employment of a Called Ministerial Staff member, the church will be notified by the elders.
6. It is recognized that the duty to protect the dignity and Christian reputation of all parties involved, as well as that of the church, outweighs an individual church member's desire to know the details of personnel matters. The specific details of personnel matters will not be discussed with individual church members unless they are integrally involved in the matter at hand and it is during the processes outlined above. The exception is if the elders affirm by a unanimous vote to share the details with the church during a special called meeting for that purpose.

**E.** A terminated Pastor or Called Ministerial Staff member may be entitled to a maximum of ninety days salary. A Pastor or Called Ministerial Staff member may not be entitled to any payment of salary if the termination is because of that person's sexual misconduct, substance abuse, abuse of alcoholic beverages, use of illegal drugs, or serious illegal activities,

that the elders unanimously deem is the reason for the termination of that person's employment. However, the elders may, in their discretion, provide assistance to the family in accordance with New Testament principles.

### **Section 5. Non-Ministerial Staff (Non-Called).**

Non-ministerial staff members, full and part-time, shall be employed as the church determines the need for their services. Recommendations for new or additional staff positions shall be presented to the church for approval at a church business meeting. The Personnel Committee, in conjunction with the church administrator shall hire or release persons from such positions. The elders should be informed of any actions that will be taken, prior to dismissal of non-ministerial staff.

### **Section 6. Deacons.**

Their qualifications, number, election and term of service:

**A.** The deacons of this church shall be consecrated men who have manifested by their Christian lives and manner of living that they are worthy of this high office.

(1) A deacon nominee shall have been a member of this church for at least one year prior to the presentation of the nominee's name to the church for election.

(2) In electing deacons, the church shall make a diligent effort to choose individuals who have proven spiritual maturity. They shall be honorable, faithful to their Lord and church, of good and honest report. and are true servants of God (I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-8).

**B.** There shall be a minimum of twelve active deacons serving at any time. If a greater number of deacons shall be needed, the elders and deacons may make appropriate recommendation to the church in conference and any additional deacons authorized shall be elected as provided herein. This provision regarding ratification shall apply only to those deacons in excess of the number currently serving at the time of the adoption of this Constitution and Bylaws.

**C.** At least six months prior to the beginning of the new Church Year, the Pastor and the elders shall appoint a Deacon Nominating Committee composed of two active deacons and two other church members representing the congregation.

This committee shall select nominees from the membership who meet the qualifications specified in these Bylaws and would fulfill the ministry of a deacon.

At least five months prior to the beginning of the new Church Year, the church family will be asked via the church bulletin for

recommendations. Nominations shall not be taken from the floor.

A questionnaire will be used by the Deacon Nominating Committee to assist in the examination process. Representative(s) from the Deacon Nominating Committee will visit each nominee to give the nominee the Prospective Deacon's Questionnaire and then to ascertain his willingness and availability to serve.

For each nominee who declines to serve, the committee will replace that nominee who declines to serve so that there are at least four accepting nominees.

Until the deacon presbytery has approved of the deacon candidates, no announcement of the candidates shall be made.

A deacon presbytery, which is composed of the ministers, active elders, active deacons, inactive and emeritus elders and emeritus deacons shall question the candidates. Others may be invited to witness in an honorary capacity by the elders.

The church membership shall be advised--by mail or church bulletin--at least two weeks in advance, of the election date and names of the candidates. The election shall be by secret ballot. A candidate for deacon must receive a majority of the ballots cast to be elected, subject to a quorum. Deacons selected in this manner are active deacons.

**D.** The normal term of office for deacons shall be four years. However, some terms may be less to ensure that one-fourth of the active deacons has their term expire each year. A deacon may continue to serve until his successor is qualified and ready to serve. Eligibility for re-election shall be after one year of not serving as an active deacon. However, if the term of service is for less than two years, the deacon shall be eligible for re-election at the expiration of his term. If sufficient vacancies occur that a majority of the active deacons deem necessary to fill with a special deacon election, the nomination and election process set forth in this Article for the election of deacon candidates under normal circumstances shall be followed and may occur at any time of the year.

All deacons, whether active or inactive, called by FBC Ellijay shall serve the Lord's Supper and assist with other assigned responsibilities by the ministerial staff and deacon officers.

**E.** A deacon who has reached sixty-five years of age or because of disabilities is now unable to serve as an active deacon may request to be elected to deacon emeritus status. Upon approval by the active deacons and thereafter by the church at a regularly scheduled business meeting, said deacon shall become a deacon emeritus. A deacon emeritus shall be privileged to attend any deacon's meeting and participate fully in the

deliberations of the deacons but shall not have voting privileges, except as otherwise set forth herein. Any work assigned to a deacon emeritus shall be subject to his voluntary acceptance of such responsibility.

**F.** A majority of the active deacons shall constitute a quorum at any deacon's meeting for the purpose of conducting business and a majority of those present shall be necessary for approval of recommendations to be presented to the church.

**G.** Any Deacon who is elected Chair or Vice-Chair of the Deacons is exempt from serving as chair of any other committee in that particular church year.

### **Section 7. Other Church Officers**

**A.** All church officers provided for in this Article shall be nominated by the elders and approved by the church.

**B.** Moderator. The Moderator shall preside at and maintain order and decorum befitting a Christian meeting and obligating those present to be regulated by this Constitution and Bylaws at all regular and special business meetings of this church. Any issues regarding parliamentary procedure shall be referred to the Parliamentarian, or in his absence or inability to serve his constitutional successor, for determination. A Vice-Moderator shall serve in his/her place and stead if the Moderator is unable to serve. The Senior Pastor, or his designee The elder body representative shall serve as Moderator. and the Deacon Chairman shall serve as Vice-Moderator. If the Moderator and Vice-Moderator are unable to serve, the Vice-Chairman of Deacons shall serve as Moderator.

The Moderator shall be responsible for interpreting the Constitution and Bylaws should an immediate decision during a business meeting be needed.

The Moderator, or his successor, shall see that all business meetings are scheduled on the church calendar as said meetings are required by this Constitution and Bylaws.

**C.** Parliamentarian. The Parliamentarian shall be present at and rule on issues of procedure as governed by Robert's Rules of Order, the most current edition, at all regular and special business meetings of this Church. If s/he is unable to serve for any reason, the First Vice-Parliamentarian shall serve in his/her place and stead. Likewise, there shall be a Second and Third Vice-Parliamentarians who shall serve in that order if the First Vice-Parliamentarian is unable to serve. No minister or other called staff member shall serve as Parliamentarian or Vice-Parliamentarian.

**D.** Secretary. The Secretary shall keep in a suitable book a record of all church actions taken at regular and specially called church business

meetings and a register of all members, their dates of admission, baptism and dismissal—either by letter, action or death. Officers, members of committees, and delegates shall be notified of their election or appointment by the Secretary. The Secretary shall also issue letters of dismissal when granted by the church, write official reports and give required legal notice of all meetings.

**E. Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall receive, preserve and pay out (according to the budget of the church) all money or things of value paid or given to the church, and keep, at all times, an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. Payments of bills for local work and expenses shall be made promptly by check, and all funds received for denominational or other causes shall be remitted by check at least quarterly. Each month, the Treasurer shall render an accounting of the income and expenses of the church for the previous month and within thirty days of the end of a calendar year, s/he shall render an annual report of the income and expenses to the church. All books, records and accounts kept by the Treasurer shall be considered church property and shall be open to inspection at all reasonable times by any member of the church.

**F.** Any person holding an office set forth in this Article may succeed himself in such position, unless otherwise provided in this Constitution and Bylaws, and each office shall have a term of one year coinciding with the church calendar year.

## **ARTICLE III CHURCH COMMITTEES**

### **Section 1. General.**

All church committees shall be appointed, in consultation with the elders and pastor. The chairperson of each committee may be named by the elders at the time of the committee appointment and if one is not named at that time, the chairman shall be selected by the committee at its first meeting.

### **Section 2. Finance Committee.**

The Finance Committee—in consultation with the pastor, elders and responsible leaders of the various church organizations—shall prepare and submit to the church for approval, at such time as may be deemed best by the church, an inclusive budget setting forth projected income and expenditures including denominational and other non-local funds. The church budget shall be completed and presented to the church prior to the beginning



of the church fiscal year. If this does not occur, the church shall continue to operate on the budget for the previous year as to all personnel and operating costs until such new budget is approved.

This committee shall be responsible for monitoring the finances of the church throughout the church year and shall meet at least quarterly.

This committee shall consist of 10 members. The Church Treasurer position will be a permanent member. Serving one year and rotating off will be the current Chair of the Deacons; and the current Chair of the elders and Personnel Committee (unless there should be a reappointment as Chair of his/her respective committee). The remaining six members will be "at large", and the two longest-serving members will rotate off each church year. The elders will appoint the chair of this committee each year.

### **Section 3. Nominating Committee.**

The Nominating Committee shall be appointed annually to discover, interview, enlist and propose for election by the church such persons as are suitable to fill those positions of teaching and educational administration. This committee shall select all necessary replacements and additions for any vacancies in these areas. Ministers and other called staff members shall serve as ex-officio members of this committee.

### **Section 4. Buildings & Grounds Committee.**

This committee, under the supervision of the church Administrator, shall maintain the church properties for learning and worship.

### **Section 5. Personnel Committee.**

This committee shall consist of seven members: Present Deacon Chair, Deacon Vice-Chair; and two deacons elders at large (active or inactive) selected by the elders. The remaining three four members will be non-deacon members-at-large. The Deacon Chair and Vice-Chair will rotate off as positions change each church year; the selected two deacon elders members will serve one year terms at the pleasure of the elders and may be renominated for additional terms. The non-deacon members-at-large will serve three year terms and rotate off, one member per year. Should a deacon member become the Deacon Chair or Deacon Vice-Chair, the elders shall appoint another person to replace the deacon.

Any active First Baptist Church member in good standing may be considered to serve on this committee as an at-large member. Each member-at-large candidate shall undergo a qualifying process by the elders before being submitted to the sitting Personnel Committee for further "vetting" of the candidates. The elders will select the initial three four members-at-large and the new member-at-large candidate each year.

This committee shall deal with any sensitive personnel matters that may exist with any employees of the church. The committee shall make any

needed recommendations to the elders who may or may not decide to present the matter to the congregation for further action.

Upon the resignation of a Pastor, a Minister Search Committee shall be formed in accordance with Article III Section 8 of these Bylaws. In the interim, the Personnel Committee shall select an Interim Minister Search Committee. elders have the option to fill the role of interim, select supply preachers, or to select an Interim Minister Search Committee.

#### **Section 6. Ordinances Committee.**

This committee shall consist of at least four persons, with at least two men and two women. The Committee shall make all necessary arrangements for the ordinances of "Baptism and the Lord's Supper" and render such assistance to the elders, deacons, and to the "baptismal" candidate as may be necessary.

#### **Section 7. Church Ushers Committee.**

This committee shall consist of church ushers who shall greet people as they enter the church, seat people at the proper times during the services, provide bulletins and other materials at the time of seating, be attentive to the needs of the congregation and receive offerings at all worship services

#### **Section 8. Minister Search Committee.**

This committee shall consist of a minimum of five church members selected by the elders and approved by the church. No minister or other called staff member or member of their families shall serve on this Committee or shall have any input into the selection of the members of this committee. Each Minister may serve as an ex-officio member of a Minister Search Committee.

The Minister Search Committee shall seek out the candidate best suited for the vacant position. This committee is not a standing committee and shall cease to function upon the filling of a ministerial vacancy.

#### **Section 9. Pulpit Supply Committee.**

Upon the selection of a Minister Search Committee for the selection of a pastor, the Pulpit Supply Committee, which shall be composed of five persons, shall be appointed by the elders under the same circumstances as the Minister Search Committee for assisting in leading worship services until an interim minister is selected.

#### **Section 10. Other Committees and/or Teams.**

Other committees and/or teams may be appointed in the proper manner set out herein and as the elders deem necessary. See addendum with Team list

#### **Section 11. Parliamentary Procedure.**

No minister or other called staff member shall be an Ex-officio member of any committee unless set forth in this Constitution, or mandated by the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

Any staff member whose position is not named in the constitution as an Ex-officio member of a committee shall be eligible to attend any committee or Deacons' meeting if: 1) a staff member has need to report to the committee and makes such a request; or 2) a staff member is requested by a committee chair to attend a specific committee meeting; or 3) a staff member is requested by a committee chair to attend committee meetings on a continuing basis for a specific period of time.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES**

#### **Section 1. General.**

All organizations of the church shall be under church control. All church officers shall be elected by the church and regularly report to the church. The elders are ex-officio members of all committees and organizations herein named unless otherwise specified herein.

#### **Section 2. Existing and New Ministries**

All existing ministries, and any newly formed ministries, shall be under the general direction of the elders, with all officers of these ministries being elected by the church. There shall be other ministries as deemed necessary and authorized by the congregation. The congregation shall exercise its good judgment regarding what programs, ministries, and departments should be established, continued, altered, or eliminated.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **MEETINGS**

#### **Section 1. Worship Services.**

The church will meet regularly each Sunday and at other times of the week for fellowship, instruction, evangelism, discipleship, and for the worship of Almighty God, such meetings being open for the entire membership of the church and all persons who desire to worship God in a sincere manner. The Pastor shall lead or designate someone to lead these services for all the church members and all others who may choose to attend.

There shall be special worship services from time to time as the church sees fit. Among those services shall be the Lord's Supper, which should be conducted at least once a quarter and at such other times as may be fitting. Weddings and funerals conducted in the church sanctuary shall be considered worship services of this church if conducted or approved by the elders.

## **Section 2. Regular Church Conference and Business Meeting.**

The church shall hold a regularly scheduled Church Conference and Business Meeting once each quarter on the fourth Sunday evening of the last month of the quarter, unless it falls on a holiday at which time it will be held on the third Sunday evening of the last month of the quarter. The meeting will be for the purpose of handling any business matter that requires a vote of the membership, except for matters dealing with the call of a pastor or other ministerial staff member.

The regularly scheduled Church Conference and Business Meeting will become part of the church calendar with a reminder placed in the weekly church bulletin. No other church activities should be planned during regularly scheduled Church Conferences. (For purpose and agenda of Church Conference and Business Meeting, see definitional section of the Church Constitution).

## **Section 3. Special Business Meetings**

A special business meeting may be called to consider matters of a significant nature. The church membership shall be notified, **in writing**, at least one week in advance of the subject, date, time, and location of any special business meeting. **Only subjects stated in the written notice shall be considered at a special business meeting.** A special business meeting may be called by either the Pastor, fellowship of active deacons or the **elders**. The calling of ministerial staff **called by the elders** must be handled at a Special Business Meeting at the end of each Sunday morning worship service.

Notification for any called business meeting **(regular scheduled or special called meetings are included)** will be an announcement during each morning worship service; and an announcement placed in the weekly church bulletin giving the time, place, and purpose of the called meeting. And additional notification methods may be used. **Only subjects stated in the notice shall be considered at a special business meeting.**

## **Section 4. Annual Church Conference and Business Meeting.**

**The final Sunday evening of the church calendar year shall be designated as the annual Church Conference and Business Meeting at which time reports covering the preceding year will be given by the pastor, staff, deacons, elders, and all committees and ministries of the church, unless it falls on a holiday at which time it will be held on the third Sunday evening of the last month of the church calendar year. Reports may be oral with a written summary given to the Church Secretary for inclusion in the church's official records.**

**This meeting will also include the nomination and election of all committees, Sunday School teaching staff, and volunteers for the coming church year. Any new ministries or programs proposed for the coming year will be**

discussed and voted upon. Election of Officers of the church for the coming year will be handled.

### **Section 5. Quorum.**

The quorum needed to conduct business at the regular Church Conference and Business Meeting shall be the sum total of the church members present and available to vote at the meeting. The quorum needed for called business meetings shall also be the sum total of the church members present and available to vote.

The moderator will be in charge of regular and special called business meetings, and has the discretion to limit debate or end a business meeting, if in his view, it would be in the best interest of the church to do so. Roberts Rules of Order will be the authority for all business meetings, regular and called.

### **Section 6. Parliamentary Rules.**

The most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of this church. However, no proxy votes shall be counted in deciding an issue or determining a quorum.

### **Section 7. Fiscal Year.**

The Fiscal Year of the Church, Operational Year, Educational Year, etc., shall be determined by the church and need not run concurrently.

## **ARTICLE VI CHURCH FINANCES**

### **Section 1. Financial Responsibilities of Membership.**

Membership in this church involves a financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts. God's Word teaches that the minimum giving is the tithe. Each new member shall be informed of the church's policies and procedures for receiving tithes and offerings and be encouraged to participate according to scriptural teachings and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

### **Section 2. Receipt of Funds.**

All funds received shall be properly recorded on the books of the church through the office of Treasurer. The expenses of all organizations, approved by the church, shall be paid from the local expense fund as heretofore provided.

### **Section 3. Special Offerings.**

Special offerings may be sought by the church or by any of its organizations only upon approval of the church staff elders. This does not preclude individuals making special offerings to the church for any cause as the Spirit of God may move them to give.

#### **Section 4. Church Budget.**

The financial program of the church shall be under the direction of the elders, church Administrator, and the Finance Committee. The elders, church Administrator and Finance Committee shall use such plans as they deem necessary for the promotion of the church budget, as stated in Article III, Section 2 of these Bylaws.

#### **Section 5. Designated Gifts.**

The church will may approve the acceptance of receive designated gifts from members and friends of the church and disburse them in accordance to the donor's request as long as the funds are used for the advancement, promotion, and maintenance of the various causes fostered or officially sanctioned by our church, agency or institution of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board and or Southern Baptist Convention, or any benevolent causes within the meaning of Section 501 (c), of the Internal Revenue Code. These funds shall be held in an established separate Designated Funds Account until fully disbursed.

### **ARTICLE VII AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting specially called for that purpose. The proposed amendment shall be laid before presented to the church in writing not less than one month prior to a vote on the proposed amendment. The amendment shall be discussed at a Church Forum at least two weeks prior to the amendment being brought to the church for a vote. The Amendment may be effective the day of an affirmative vote of the church.

No change shall be made in the "Articles of Faith", "the Church Covenant", or the "Character" except as follows: The proposed amendment shall be laid before presented to the church in writing at a business meeting not less than one month prior to a forum on the amendment; The proposed amendment may be voted upon one month following the church forum held to discuss said amendment; The amendment shall only pass by a two-thirds vote of all members of the church present and voting. The amendment may be effective the day of an affirmative vote of the church.

## DEFINITIONAL SECTION

Wherever used in this document, the following terms, whether or not capitalized, shall have the following meanings:

Active Member is a member who actively participates in FBC through the following activities: attends worship; connects with a Sunday school and/or small group; serves in FBCE ministries; participates in spreading the gospel in our community; supports FBCE through sharing of resources.

**\*\*Homebound, shut-in and those who cannot attend due to limitations may still be considered to be Active.**

Inactive members - church leadership will continually review status of membership based on definition of an Active member. Inactive members will not be eligible for the benefits of active membership.

Believer's Baptism is baptism by immersion of an individual after **he** they **has** **have** publicly confessed to accepting Jesus Christ as **his** **their** personal Lord and Savior. Believer's Baptism does not include infant baptism.

Business Meeting is a formal meeting of the members of the church for the purpose of deciding and voting upon administrative and business matters of the church. The business meeting may be regularly scheduled, special called, or annual and shall be governed by the Moderator utilizing Robert's Rules of Order. The agenda for business meetings will include but not be limited to membership requests; reports from various committees; organizations, ministries and staff of the church; as well as reminders of upcoming activities and other information. Although a business meeting is a part of a church conference, it is only a part and not the main purpose of the Church Conference.

Called Staff refers to the staff members whom the church has called by vote of the church membership to administer the programs of the church.

Church Conference is a regularly scheduled, special called, or annual assembly of members of the church for the purpose of special worship, consultation, discussion, sharing of information, exchanging views, confession, repentance, settling of differences, and establishing peace and fellowship among members. A church conference may include but is not limited to one or more of the following: special music, prayer, testimony, devotions and/or messages from lay leaders; a solemn call to prayer by the leaders of the church; a special call to worship; special call to repentance; church discipline; special celebration of revival; a church business meeting, town hall meeting, information gathering, special forum, etc.

Church Year is a twelve month period established by the **Church Council**. **elders.**

**Congregationally Ruled-** a church that is ruled by a democratic form of government. While there are leaders in the church, such as elders, pastors, and deacons, no major decision is made without the approval of the church.

**Elder Led-** the congregation selects elders to lead and guide the church. Acting within their church-approved authority, the elders are responsible to:

- Feed God's flock by treasuring God's word and teaching it to others.
- Lead God's flock by being examples in both character and skill.
- Protect God's flock from false teachers and from spiritual apathy and sin.
- Care for God's flock by encouraging them in the gospel through all kinds of life circumstances.

**Deacon Supported-** Deacons support the ministries of the church through service. To Widows and Orphans, shut-ins and assist the Pastor in care of church members.

Ex-officio Member has the right, but not the obligation to participate in the proceedings of the committee. Ex-Officio Member does not have the right to vote unless specifically stated otherwise in these bylaws. Ex-Officio members are not counted in determining if there is a quorum present in the committee. Unless otherwise provided in this Constitution, no person—by virtue of his office shall have a right to be an ex-officio member of a committee.

Fiscal Year is an accounting period of twelve months that begins on January 1st and ends on December 31st of that same calendar year.

Sunday Morning Worship Services refers to the regular scheduled Sunday morning worship services. There may be multiple worship services held to accommodate all who may choose to worship with this church in its main weekly worship service.