

**CONSTITUTION
OF
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CLEBURNE, TEXAS**

PREAMBLE

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other churches, we do declare and establish this constitution, which shall supersede any and all previous rules, constitutions, bylaws, and policies.

Article I

NAME AND PURPOSE

- Section 1. The name of the corporation shall be First Baptist Church of Cleburne, Texas
- Section 2. This church is formed to support public worship and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ through such ministries as may be determined by the church.

Article II

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND DOCTRINE

- Section 1. Government: The authority of this church is vested in the members who compose it. Every member has the right to a voice in its government, plans, and discipline.
- This church is subject to the control of no ecclesiastical body, but recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation with other churches. This church will cooperate with and support the association and state convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, and any other Christian denominational churches and groups as the church deems wise.
- Section 2. Doctrine: The following statements are accepted as common ground faith:
- This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself, as the ultimate truth of the universe and the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe and teach. For purposes of church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Pastor, Deacons, and Church Council are the church's interpretive authority on the

Bible's meaning and application.

- (a) The Bible is the inspired, written record of God's revelation of Himself to man and the authority for doctrine and practice.
- (b) God is the ruler of all mankind: Christ is the Head of the church ruling through the Holy Spirit.
- (c) We believe in a regenerated church membership, and we believe that the conversion experience through faith in Christ is a prerequisite for church membership.
- (d) We believe that immersion in water answers Christ's command to baptize and that such immersions symbolize the heart of gospel message, death, burial, resurrection.
- (e) We believe in the two New Testament ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and we believe that both are symbolic in nature.
- (f) We believe that "The Baptist Faith and Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963 represents a consensus of our membership and is suitable for general instruction and guidance.
- (g) We believe in the freedom of the individual conscience and in the voluntary principle, not the coercive principle in religion.
- (h) We believe in the principle of separation of church and state.
- (i) We believe that Christian cooperation is not dependent upon organizational unification. We believe we are united as brothers in Christ with all others who are children of God by faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (j) Covenant marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. We believe and teach that Ephesians 5: 21-33 is the normative expression of covenant marriage.

First Baptist Church, Cleburne believes that the Bible mandates that sexual activity is to be enjoyed exclusively between a man and a woman who have been joined together in covenant marriage. All other sexual activity is a violation of biblical standards.

Article III

MEMBERSHIP

As a Church body we accept the Five Solas of the Reformation

- Sola Scriptura “The Scripture alone is the Standard”¹
- Soli Deo Gloria “For the Glory of God alone”²
- Solo Christo “By Christ’s work alone are we saved”³
- Sola Gratia “Salvation by Grace alone”⁴
- Sola Fide “Justification by Faith alone”⁵

The criteria for membership at First Baptist Church of Cleburne Texas are:

1. The understanding that we are all sinners and in need of a Savior from the righteous judgment of God. *Exodus 20: 1-17; Psalm 51:4; Psalm 53:1-3; Psalm 14: 1-3; Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 59: 7-8; Romans 3: 1-23; Romans 6:2; 1 John 1:9*
2. A profession of faith that Jesus Christ took the wrath of God for our sake; that He shattered sin and death on the cross; and that he rose again on the third day as Lord of all. This profession declares that there is no other name under Heaven whereby mankind can be saved. *John 3:16-17; Romans 6:8; Romans 10: 9-10; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:23; Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:4*
3. A following in Believer’s Baptism by immersion as a public testimony of faith. *Matthew 28:19 Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12; Acts 8: 37-39; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:48; John 3:23*
4. Acceptance that the Holy Bible contains the Ultimate Truth in the Universe. *2 Timothy 3:14-16; John 2:2; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 2 Peter 1: 19-21*
5. Confirmation to the adherence of the by-laws and Constitution as well as the “First Baptist Church Cleburne, Texas Sincerely Held Beliefs and Teachings about Marriage and Sexuality” established by this body of believers in their effort to serve God fully and perform Kingdom work.

Fulfillment of the above criteria may be met by the following:

1. *By public profession of faith and subsequent baptism.*
2. *By letter or promise of letter from a church of like faith and order.*
3. *By statement of faith, baptism, and previous church membership in a church of like faith and order, when for any reason a church letter cannot be obtained.*

¹ Psalm 119:18; Psalm 138:2; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

² 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 3:1; Revelations 1:6; Revelations 7:12; Romans 11:36

³ 1 Timothy 2: 5-6; Colossians 1: 13-18

⁴ Ephesians 1:3-8

⁵ Galatians 3:6-11

4. *By restoration. After fellowship has been withdrawn from a member, he may be restored to membership when proper acknowledgements are made with evidence of sincere repentance.*

Child Membership and Responsibilities

We believe that the Kingdom of God is open to all mankind and so simple that it can be understood by a child.

Mark 10:13-15 (NKJV)

¹³ Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

We believe that all believers are equal in the sight of God regardless of age, gender, intelligence, status in society, or any other human characteristic.

Therefore we hold that children who accept Christ are part of the body of Christ and have the same Grace and inheritance in the Kingdom of God as an adult.

Romans 8:14-16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Children do not always understand all the details of their faith and as the apostle Paul stated:

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

We do not expect a child to understand all tenets of Faith and Doctrine. Their faith in Christ is sufficient for their membership in the Church until they are able to understand their full obligation to God and man.

We believe that parents are to be the primary guide for children concerning ethics and morality taught by the scriptures. The Church partners with the parents in teaching God's Word and helps define how to live a Christ-like life.

When a child matures to a point of understanding and comprehension he/she becomes responsible for his/her faith and behavior and is held to the same accountability as an adult member.

Adult Membership and Responsibilities:

Adults who wish to join the Church as members must:

- Meet the criteria established under the above Membership section of this document within the presence of this Church or from another Church body of similar beliefs and practices.
- Be received by the Church body.

All adult members of the Church are subject to the Church by-Laws and the Constitution as well as the First Baptist Cleburne, Texas Sincerely Held Beliefs and Teachings about Marriage and Sexuality and as such are subject to censure and/or termination of membership.

Membership is not compulsory for either party (the Church or the member).

Termination of Membership:

1. *Upon due notice of the death of a member, the name shall be removed from the roll.*
2. *A letter of recommendation will be granted to a church of like faith and order for a member upon the request of that church made on behalf of the members.*
3. *If a member requests to be released from his obligation to this church, the request shall be referred to the pastor. If efforts to secure continuance in fellowship fail, such request shall be granted and membership terminated.*
4. *Upon satisfactory evidence that a member has united with a church of another denomination, notice will be given at a regular meeting of the church and the name removed from the roll.*
5. *Should a member become an offense to the church by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct or by denying acceptance of fundamental doctrines of the church, his membership may be terminated, but only after due notice and hearing and after efforts have been made to bring the member to reconciliation.*

1 John 1:5

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness.

Article IV

CHURCH STAFF AND EMPLOYEES

- Section 1. Pastor: A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church when a vacancy occurs. A Pastor search committee elected by the church shall seek out and recommend a new pastor. The election shall require an affirmative vote of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members present and voting at a business meeting announced at least one week prior to the election date. The pastor thus elected shall serve at the will of the church or until the relationship is terminated by mutual consent.
- The pastor shall serve as the spiritual leader of the church and shall promote all the interests of the church.
- The pastor, as officer of the corporation, shall preside at all business meetings of the church unless the pastor and church have agreed otherwise.
- Section 2. Staff and Employees: This church shall call or employ such staff members and employees as needed, according to Personnel Policies and Procedures adopted by the church.
- (a) Staff positions shall include the ministerial and pastoral positions such as associate pastors, ministers of education, youth and music, and any other positions which the church members may elect, by a majority vote, or create because of any needs which may arise. The enumeration of positions in the preceding sentence shall in no way be construed as a limitation on the number or type of staff positions, but new positions may be created and filled at the election of the church membership. Vacancies and new staff positions may be filled by a majority vote of the members. The church may elect a committee to seek and recommend candidates for the staff positions.
- (b) Employees are those individuals who serve in the clerical, secretarial, and maintenance positions in the church. Each position shall be created by the church membership, and shall be filled by the Personnel Committee elected by the church.
- Section 3. Clerk: There shall be at least one individual who shall fulfill the function of keeping records of church proceedings and making available at business meetings copies of the Constitution, Financial Policy, Personnel rules, rules regulating election of deacons, and any other rules, policies, or procedures adopted by the church. Such individuals shall be familiar with methods and practices used in the church office to maintain a correct register of church members.

Article V

DEACONS AND TRUSTEES

Section 1. Deacons: The Pastor and Deacons of First Baptist Church will review the need for Deacon election and ordination during the first quarter of every third church year. Nominations for new deacons will be received from the Church membership, with nominations being limited to the “active membership of the church.” The nominations will be submitted to a screening committee appointed by the Pastor or the Chairman of Deacons. The screening committee will interview the nominees in regard to the scriptural qualifications of Deacons. Upon completion of its work, the screening committee will submit the candidates for election to the Deacons. Upon their approval by the Deacons, the candidates will be recommended to the church body for election. A secret ballot vote will be taken, with a simple majority required for election.

Those candidates, elected by the church, will be ordained by the membership in a called Ordination Service.

An ordained Deacon from a sister Southern Baptist Church, who becomes a member of First Baptist Church, Cleburne may be invited to become an “active” deacon of this church after being a member for one year.

Section 2. Trustees: The church shall annually elect three trustees. The trustees shall act for the church in legal matters, but they shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a vote of the church authorizing such action.

The trustees shall remain in office until the election of their successors.

Article VI

COMMITTEES

Section 1. The church shall authorize the appointment of such committees as are necessary to attend properly to the activities of the church. These committees shall be in addition to the committees specified in this constitution. All committee members on all committees shall be elected by a majority of the church membership present at the business meeting or meetings in which such action is taken.

Section 2. There shall be a Committee on Committees which shall consist of at least six (6) members. The members shall be elected by the church membership. It shall be

the duty of this Committee on Committees to serve as nominating committee for all committees.

- Section 3. All committees shall be created by the church membership, with or without the recommendation of the Committee on Committees. The members of the committees shall be elected by the church membership upon their recommendation by the Committee on Committees. However, nothing in this Article VI shall be construed as impairing in any way the right of any member of the church to recommend and nominate an individual to serve on a committee, whether or not that individual has been recommended by the Committee on Committees.

Article VII

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

All organizations of the church shall be under church control, all organization officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church. The pastor is an ex-officio member of all organizations, his leadership recognized in all.

Article VIII

MEETINGS

- Section 1. Regular worship services shall be conducted mornings and evenings of each Lord's Day and on each Wednesday evening, these meetings to be under the direction of the pastor, or when without a pastor, under the direction of a committee elected to perform this duty.

Section 2. Business Meetings:

- (a) Business meetings shall be held for the transaction of any and all business as often as decided by the church, but no less than quarterly.
- (b) Special meetings may be called for the transaction of business of an emergency nature by the pastor by giving at least two (2) days prior notice in writing of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting, the time to be computed by excluding the date of notice and the day of the meeting. No business except that for which the meeting was called may be transacted.
- (c) The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order Revised shall govern business procedure in all cases when they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this constitution.

- (d) Except as otherwise provided in this constitution, all action taken by the church membership shall be by a majority vote of the members present at any given business meeting.

Article IX

AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by a 2/3 vote in any regular business meeting, notice having been given in writing at the previous regular business meeting.

This Constitution adopted by First Baptist Church of Cleburne, Texas, at regular quarterly conference on April 30, 1989, amended at regular quarterly conference on October 1, 2006, and amended at regular quarterly conference on July 26, 2015.