

**CONSTITUTION OF
THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
ELMER, NEW JERSEY**

RULES OF CHURCH ORDER

ARTICLE I - Reception of Members

1. Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of a change of heart, and adopting the views of faith and practice held by this Church, as set forth in the Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, and Constitution, may, upon baptism by immersion, be received into its membership.

2. Candidates for baptism shall be examined before the Board of Deacons and Pastor, and upon their favorable recommendation may then make a statement of experience before the Church, after which final action shall be taken by the Church.

3. Believers, baptized by immersion, from other churches may be received by a letter of recommendation and removal from their respective churches after they have satisfied the Church as to their spiritual life.

4. Baptized believers, who in consequence of any peculiar circumstances have no regular letters of resignation, may be received by giving satisfactory evidence of a change of heart, Christian conduct and scriptural faith.

5. Excluded members may be restored to membership on confession of their errors, and giving evidence of repentance.

6. A person shall be received as a member of this Church upon receiving an affirmative vote of at least seventy-five (75) percent of those members present and voting.

7. No person shall be considered for membership or shall be permitted to serve in any of the church's ministries who declares himself/herself to be homosexual, bisexual, transsexual or transgender as this is in direct opposition to the church's stated biblical views of God's creative plans for men and women as described in Article XII*.

*Approved – February 17, 2016

ARTICLE II - General Duties of Members

1. The duties of members to themselves are: the acquisition of Scriptural knowledge, constant progress in Christian growth, and consistency of external conduct.

2. It is the duty of members to honor, esteem, and love their Pastor(s), to pray for him (them) fervently and daily, to submit to him (them) in Scriptural exercise of his (their) official authority, to attend constantly upon his (their) ministrations, to manifest a tender regard for his (their) reputation, and to contribute toward his (their) support in proportion to their ability.

3. It is the duty of each member to cultivate and cherish brotherly love for all other members of the Church, and to show this love by using all proper measures to promote their spiritual benefit and prosperity.

4. Toward those who are not connected with the Church, it is the duty of members to be exact in fulfilling obligations and performing promises, and as opportunity arises, to commend the gospel of Christ unto them.

5. It is the duty of all members removing from the vicinity of the Church to unite with some other Church of like precious faith.

ARTICLE III - Officers of the Church

1. The officers of the Church shall be a Senior Pastor, Associate/Assistant Pastor(s) (optional), Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Clerk, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Missions Committee, Missionary Treasurer, and Sunday School Superintendent.

2. The duties of the officers shall be:

- a. Senior Pastor - The Senior Pastor shall preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, tenderly watch over the membership and spiritual interests of the Church, and endeavor to organize and develop its strength for the propagation of the Word. He shall be a non-voting ex-officio member of all committees, act as moderator of the meetings of the Church, and appoint such committees as may be necessary which are not otherwise provided for.
- b. Associate or Assistant Pastor(s) - He shall work under the leadership of the Senior Pastor. His duties shall be to assist the Senior Pastor as outlined in the recommendation of the Pastor and the Board of Deacons. He shall be able to preach the gospel in the absence of the Senior Pastor and perform other duties as designated by the Church.

- c. Deacons - If spiritual, discerning men are available, there may be one (1) deacon for each fifteen (15) members. The deacons shall be elected for a term of three (3) years. The deacons shall cooperate with the Senior Pastor in the performance of his duties, shall have charge of disbursing the Deacons' Fund among those in need, shall prepare and distribute the elements of the Lord's Supper, shall hear the testimony of all applicants for membership before they come before the Church, act on letters, and give such instruction in doctrine and duty as may be needed by the applicants for a perfect understanding of the importance of Church membership. In the absence of the Senior Pastor, they shall be responsible for the spiritual life of the Church. Should a vacancy occur on any Church office, board or committee, or should someone elected or appointed to such office, board or committee refuse or fail to serve, the Deacon Board may with the concurrence of the Senior Pastor, and after consultation with such person, appoint a replacement to serve until the next Annual Meeting, at which time the congregation shall fill the unexpired term of office by election.
- d. Trustees - The Board of Trustees shall consist of at least five (5) spiritually-minded members elected for three (3) years. The trustees shall receive and hold for the use of the Church all estate, real and personal, which may at any time become the property of the Church, either by purchase, gift, or bequest. They shall receive the proceeds thereof for the use of the Church, the maintenance of the pastoral staff and the general benefit. They shall have the general care of the property of the Church, keeping the same in good repair, provided always that they incur no debt other than current operating expenses without the consent of the Church. They shall see to the auditing of the Church Treasurer's books once a year by an independent accounting firm.
- e. Clerk - The clerk shall be elected annually. The clerk shall keep a correct record of the proceedings of the Church and read the same for approval at the quarterly and annual business meetings of the Church; keep an accurate registry of all names of members; issue Church letters as directed by the Church; conduct its official correspondence unless otherwise provided for, and perform such other duties that may reasonably come under this office.
- f. Financial Secretary - The Financial Secretary shall be elected annually. The Financial Secretary shall receive all moneys raised by the church, except the Deacon's Fund, pay the same to the Treasurer weekly, keep an accurate account of all

contributions. The Board of Trustees shall appoint an Assistant Financial Secretary annually.

- g. Treasurer - The Church Treasurer shall be elected to serve for a term of three (3) years. The Treasurer shall receive and keep a record of all funds received from the Financial Secretary and pay all bills as authorized by the Trustees.
- h. Missions Committee - The Missions Committee shall be comprised of the Missionary Treasurer and six (6) spiritually-minded members who are to be elected for a term of two (2) years, three (3) each year. The duties of the Missions Committee are: (1) To be responsible for the stewardship of all mission funds. (2) To recommend to the Church new fields of missionary endeavor, such recommendations to be presented to the Church two (2) weeks prior to the business meeting. (3) To plan and execute mission projects, displays, and services. (4) To publish pertinent missionary information.
- i. Missionary Treasurer - The Missionary Treasurer is elected for a two (2) year term. The Missionary Treasurer shall receive and keep a record of all moneys received for missions. The Treasurer shall disperse all mission funds at the direction of the Missions Committee. The Treasurer shall report at each quarterly and annual meeting.
- j. Sunday School Superintendent - The Sunday School Superintendent shall be elected annually. He shall have charge of the Sunday School, organize classes, appoint teachers, and exercise general oversight and control. An Associate Superintendent shall fulfill the duties of the Superintendent in his absence.

3. When it is necessary to call a Pastor, the Deacons shall take the necessary steps to secure a Pastor. The Deacons shall investigate the merits of every man under consideration in regard to his beliefs, spiritual life, personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability, in determining his fitness for said pastorate. When a suitable man is found, the committee shall recommend him to the church for consideration.

The call of a Pastor shall come before the Church at a properly called business meeting, notice of such meeting and its purpose having been read from the pulpit on two (2) successive Sundays. A vote of seventy-five per cent (3/4) of the qualified members present and voting, shall be necessary to extend a call. Not more than one (1) candidate shall be presented to the Church at a time. The vote shall be by written ballot.

If, in the opinion of the Board of Deacons, the Pastor should be asked to resign because of conduct unbecoming a minister of the gospel, or through failure to faithfully preach the Word, and the Pastor is not willing to resign, the Church may hold a special business meeting, upon proper notification (see Article IV, paragraph 2), to determine the

Pastor's fitness to continue in this pulpit. A vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the members present and voting will be required to retain the Pastor. Adequate time, as mutually agreed by the Church and the Pastor, in the severance of the relationship shall be given.

4. When an Associate or Assistant Pastor(s) is desired to meet the needs of our fellowship, the Senior Pastor shall present the qualifications and the proposed area of ministry for a candidate to the Board of Deacons for its consideration and approval. Such approved candidate shall preach on at least two separate Sundays before a confirmation vote may be taken by the congregation. Written notice of a candidate shall be published in the bulletin at least one Sunday prior to his scheduled preaching service. A candidate may be called at any regular or special business meeting of the Church, provided that written notice of the recommended candidate shall have appeared in the weekly Church bulletin on the two Sundays preceding the business meeting. A candidate shall be duly called by the Church in a confirmation vote by at least seventy-five per cent of those members present and voting. Since the position of Associate or Assistant Pastor is to assist the Senior Pastor in accordance with the prescribed area of ministry and responsibility, the Senior Pastor, with the consent of the Deacons, shall have the authority to terminate his services provided the Senior Pastor shall give at least 30 days notice to him.

5. A Nominating Committee shall be formed four months prior to the end of the church fiscal year. The purpose of the committee is to seek out active members who are qualified and in good standing to candidate for church offices. It is the responsibility of the committee to advise potential candidates of the duties of each office. Each member of the committee is to maintain confidences and report only to the committee. The committee will work under the authority of the Deacon Board. The committee shall have a minimum of five (5) members, and the Deacon Board representative shall serve as the chair.

ARTICLE IV - Meetings of the Church

1. The stated meetings of the Church shall be:
 - a. For the public worship and Christian instruction at least once each morning and evening on the Lord's day.
 - b. For prayer, testimony, and conference at least once each week.
 - c. For celebrating the Communion on the first Lord's Day of each month.
 - d. The quarterly business meetings are to be on the third Wednesday evening of February, May, August, and November;

the May meeting to be designated as the annual meeting, at which the election of officers will be held.

2. Special business meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor. In case of his resignation, absence, or refusal to act, the Clerk shall call such a meeting on the written request signed by not less than ten (10) members. The object of such meeting shall be stated in the call. Public notice of the same shall be given at a stated meeting on the Lord's Day preceding — at least three (3) days prior to the day of such meeting. No other business shall be transacted except that stated in the call.

3. A quorum for the transaction of business shall be comprised of twenty-five (25) percent of members in good standing.

4. All matters pertaining to the purchase, sale, or mortgaging of real estate shall be voted on by members in good standing, and who are of legal age. On all other matters, members in good standing and fifteen (15) years of age, or older, are entitled to vote except as limited by the Articles of Incorporation.

ARTICLE V - Manner of Conducting Business

1. The Senior Pastor of the Church, or, in his absence, the chairman of the Board of Deacons, or his appointee, shall act as moderator in all meetings for the transaction of business.

2. It shall be the duty of the Moderator to keep order, state, and explain propositions.

3. He shall cause every meeting to be opened and closed with prayer.

4. The order of proceedings in the quarterly and annual meetings for business shall be as follows:

- a. Devotional exercises.
- b. Reading minutes of previous meeting.
- c. Hear experience of and vote on candidates for membership.
- d. Report letters from sister churches requesting that former members' names be removed.
- e. Report letters requesting removal of membership from those requesting them.
- f. Report of Financial Secretary for filing.
- g. Report of Church Treasurer.
- h. Report of Sunday School Treasurer.
- i. Report of Missions Treasurer.
- j. Report of committees, boards, and organizations of the Church.
- k. Old business.
- l. New business.

5. He shall permit no second motion to be entertained until the one under consideration has been disposed of, except motions to amend, postpone, adjourn, or put to the main question.

6. He shall call to order any member who, while speaking, introduces any subject foreign to the one under consideration.

7. He shall call to order any member who uses discourteous language, or whose remarks may injure the reputation or feelings of any Christian brother or sister.

8. He may speak upon any subject under discussion by inviting a brother to preside in his place.

9. Every member who wishes to speak shall rise and respectfully address the moderator.

10. Every proposition presented for the action of the church, must be introduced by the motion of one member (in writing, if requested) and seconded by another.

11. No member shall speak more than twice upon the same subject without the expressed consent of the Church.

12. All questions shall be decided by the vote of the majority with these exceptions: Article I, section 6; Article III, sections 3 - 4; Article IX, sections 1-2, and Article X.

13. Nominees for Church offices shall be posted at least two (2) weeks prior to the annual meeting.

ARTICLE VI - MEMBERSHIP

1. Letters of transfer shall be valid for twelve (12) months only. Recipients of such letters remain members of this Church, subject to its watch care and discipline until they are actually received into the membership of some sister church, and we are notified of the fact.

2. Members of this Church desiring to join another Church of like faith and practice, will be expected to give notice to this Church, whereupon, if in good standing, a letter of general Christian character may be given them, and their membership withdrawn.

3. When members absent themselves for one (1) year or cannot be found, or when reasons exist for withdrawing the hand of fellowship that do not reflect on Christian character, they shall be transferred to an inactive role, with voting privileges withdrawn. Every effort will be made to notify them of this action.

Article VII – Procedure for Handling Offenses Matthew 18:15-17

1. When a member of the church is offended by the language or conduct of another member of the church, the offended member shall privately attempt to reconcile the matter. If reconciliation is achieved, no further complaint shall be made.

2. If reconciliation is not achieved, the offended member shall select two or three witnesses to attempt to privately reconcile the offense. If reconciliation is achieved, no further complaint shall be made.

3. If these efforts fail to secure reconciliation, it shall be the duty of the offended to lay the matter before the Senior Pastor and the Deacon Board for further action.

4. If the Senior Pastor and the Deacon Board are unable to reconcile the matter, they and the offended person shall lay the matter before the church.

ARTICLE VIII - Convening a Council

In cases of difficulty, for the decision of which the Church desires the advice and wisdom of impartial brothers, letters may be sent to neighboring Churches of like faith and practice, requesting them to appoint delegates to meet a delegation from the Church on a specified day; to which council when organized, the case shall be referred, and their advice shall be laid before the Church for further action.

ARTICLE IX - Ordination and Licensing to Preach

1. Any member who, in the judgment of the Church, gives evidence by his piety, zeal, and "aptness to teach" that he is called of God to the work of the ministry, after having preached in the hearing of the Church, may be licensed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, provided seventy-five (75) percent of the members present at any regular meeting shall agree thereto.

2. If the Church decides by a seventy-five percent vote of those qualified members present and voting that one of its members possesses the scriptural qualifications for full ordination, it shall call a council of ministers and brothers from sister Baptist Churches to examine the qualifications of the candidate, to which council the propriety of ordaining shall be wholly referred.

ARTICLE X - Benevolent Action

1. Following the Scriptural mandate to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, the church will endeavor to distribute funds to various mission and ministry-related efforts.

2. All offerings given to churches, ministries, or individuals (excluding the Deacon's Offering) will be first counted by the Financial Secretary, then deposited to the appropriate agency, and reported at the next business meeting.

ARTICLE XI - Amendments to the Constitution

These articles may be changed or amended at any regular business meeting by a seventy-five (75) per cent affirmative vote of all members present and voting; provided, however, that a written notice of such change shall have been proposed and read at a regular business meeting of the Church at least three (3) months previous; and provided, also, that such alteration shall not conflict with the Articles of Incorporation of the Church

Article XII – Biblical Marriage*

Whereas, at the time of creation, God established the institution of marriage and defined marriage as the union between one man (by birth) and one woman (by birth) for life (Genesis 2:23-24) and,

Whereas, Christ honored and affirmed the institution of marriage by quoting from Genesis 2 (Mark 10:1-2) and,

Whereas, The New Testament epistles are consistent in their support of the importance of the institution of marriage and in also reaffirming the definition of one man and one woman for life (Romans 7:1-5; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7). Clarification: no marriage ceremonies will be performed for homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, or transgender individuals.

We resolve, as the members of the First Baptist Church of Elmer, New Jersey to commit ourselves to uphold and faithfully proclaim the sanctity of marriage and to consistently reaffirm that marriage is a privilege instituted by God and is not to be subject to the whims of man.

We further resolve to declare that man has no right to change that which God has instituted or to alter the Bible's definition of marriage.

Additionally, **we resolve** to oppose and firmly stand against any legislation or decisions by the government which seek to expand the definition of marriage beyond one man and one woman united for life and that we strongly support all legislation that will defend the sanctity of the divine institution of marriage and its biblical definition wherever necessary.

Finally, **we resolve** to always treat all who come to First Baptist Church as Christ would treat them. They will be shown grace, godly love and care as we seek to minister to each of their needs.

*Approved – May 17, 2016

