
BYLAWS



THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ROCK HILL



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Preamble to the Church Bylaws

We, the membership of The First Baptist Church of Rock Hill, South Carolina, recognize Jesus Christ as the only head and foundation of the church. As a body of believers, we endeavor to be a church of Jesus Christ as described, established and mandated in the New Testament. The purpose of these Bylaws is to secure and preserve the principles of our faith and govern the body in an orderly manner.

While these Bylaws are based on Biblical principles and practices, the sole authority for First Baptist Church's organization, governance, operation and beliefs is the Bible. This church recognizes the Bible is God's word to His people and is inerrant. (Matthew 5:17-18; II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:19-21)

First Baptist Church exists to obey and fulfill the Great Commission and Great Commandments, as given by our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Matthew 22:36-39; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28; Luke 24:46-47).

To accomplish this purpose, we provide opportunities, training, and ways for people to worship, to grow as disciples of Jesus, to serve, and to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This church is an independent, autonomous, self-governing body, controlled by the will of the members under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It recognizes no control by any other ecclesiastical body or person.

This church voluntarily cooperates with like-minded Baptist churches in the York Baptist Association, the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention to support and conduct ministry at the local, state, national and international levels. We cooperate, at our discretion, with other bodies for the advancement of this church and the Kingdom of God.

Statement of Faith

The First Baptist Church Statement of Faith, as expressed in the following appendices, sets forth certain teachings which we believe.

Appendix One: The Baptist Faith and Message, as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.

Appendix Two: Statement on Marriage and Sexuality.

In adopting this Statement of Faith, we maintain our religious liberty and deny the right of any secular or religious authority to impose a confession of faith or belief on our church.

Article One - Principal Office

Name: The First Baptist Church of Rock Hill, South Carolina

Organized: 11/03/1878

Articles of Incorporation dated: 10/12/1912

Physical Address: 481 Hood Center Drive

City: Rock Hill **State:** SC **Zip:** 29730

Phone: (803) 327-7181

Mailing Address: 481 Hood Center Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730

Domain Name: fbcrockhill.org

Article Two - Membership

Section 1 – General Information

The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to the Lord, identified themselves with and committed themselves to a particular local body (Acts 2:42-46; Romans 16:1; I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 8:1; Philippians 1:1; Acts 11:26).

Membership is open to people who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, have been baptized (Article 3, Section 2), desire to be united with a local body of believers, and support the mission/vision/strategy and Statement of Faith of this church.

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

Section 2 – Candidacy

Candidates for membership must present themselves in person or through approved proxy at any worship service of the church. Such presentation must be made initially to an ordained Pastor for such examination as the Pastor may desire. If the Pastor finds no reason to delay presentation of the candidate, the church may approve and affirm the candidate's request for membership at the same service at which the candidate presented himself/herself.

Any person may present themselves in person or through approved proxy (as defined in d below) to the church, at any regular church service, as a candidate for membership in any of the following ways:

- a) By profession of faith and for baptism by immersion as a believer in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.
- b) By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist Church of like-minded faith.
- c) By statement of faith of a prior conversion and baptism by immersion as a believer, when they do not currently have a membership in another Baptist Church.
- d) By proxy upon approval by the Senior Pastor if they are unable to present themselves in person.

Candidates for membership agree to abide by the faith and practices of this church.

Section 3 – Active and Inactive Designation

To properly reflect the church's membership, two (2) church rolls will be maintained by the Church Clerk.

- a) Active members: All members who are currently involved in the church's activities, ministries, and worship services, demonstrating their active status by supporting the church with their attendance, service, and/or giving.
- b) Inactive members: Members for whom there is no record of participation in the church's activities, ministries and worship services, demonstrating their inactive status by not supporting the church with their attendance, service and/or giving for a period of two years. Inactive members will be restored to active member status when they resume their involvement and support as an active member. Voting privileges are suspended for those on the inactive roll.

Section 4 – Responsibilities

The responsibilities of membership are as follows:

- a) Support the church's testimony by attending faithfully, living a Godly life, and regularly giving (Heb. 10:24, 25; Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 16:2).
- b) Serve the ministry of the church by using individual gifts and talents, by being equipped to serve, and by developing a servant's heart (1 Pet. 4:10; Eph. 4:11-12; Phil. 2:3-4,7).
- c) Protect the health and unity of the church by acting in love toward other members, by refusing to gossip, and by following the leaders (Rom. 15:5, 19; 1 Peter 1:22; Eph. 4:29; Heb. 13:17).
- d) Support the mission of the church by praying for its growth, inviting the unchurched to attend, warmly welcoming those who attend, and being trained to share the Gospel (1 Thess. 1:2; Luke 4:23; Romans 15:7).

Section 5 – Voting Rights and Approval Thresholds

Every active member (Article 2, Section 3) aged 18 and older is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in a properly noticed business meeting.

There shall be no provisions for absentee voting, proxy ballots, or electronic voting.

Quorum and Vote Thresholds:

- a) Annual business meeting requires a simple majority vote of those qualified (Article 2, Section 3) members present and voting, unless otherwise required by these Bylaws or Robert's Rule of Order.

- b) Called business meetings require two-thirds majority votes of qualified (Article 2, Section 3) members present and voting, unless otherwise required by these Bylaws or Robert's Rule of Order.
- c) For a motion to be adopted, the Church Leadership Council meetings require 80% of the Council members to be present and an 80% affirmative vote of the members in attendance.
- d) Properly noticed voting during Sunday worship services require:
 - 1) Calling a new Senior Pastor: 80% of all qualified (Article 2, Section 3) members in attendance and voting, is required for a motion to be adopted
 - 2) Deacon Election, Annual Budget and other matters: A simple majority of all qualified (Article 2, Section 3) members in attendance and voting, is required for a motion to be adopted.
- e) Committee meetings and all other meetings where voting takes place require a simple majority of those committee members present and voting.
- f) In South Carolina state statutes, certain types of motions require a two-thirds majority vote at a properly noticed business meeting (Article 3, Section 5). Where these Bylaws require a higher percentage vote, then that requirement shall take precedence. These motions are: Personnel labor law; purchasing, leasing, or sale of real property; or Amendments to the Bylaws. The voting process regarding any motions pertaining to these categories shall be by secret ballot. These ballots shall remain in the secure file for seven years, at which time they shall be properly destroyed.

Section 6 – Membership Transfer and Termination

Membership shall be terminated for the following reasons:

- a) Death
- b) Transfer of membership to another Baptist Church
- c) Proof of membership or active participation in another church
- d) Personal request of the member
- e) Unknown – If a member should fail to keep the church advised of changes to their name or contact information to such an extent that the church is unable to establish contact with such member
- f) Exclusion by church vote in a business meeting (Article 2, Section 7). Voting requirements will be in accordance with (Article 2, Section 5).

The church may approve the transfer and termination of members at any properly noticed called business meeting or the annual church business meeting.

Section 7 – Discipline

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The Senior Pastor, the Deacon Fellowship, and Ministerial/Commissioned staff are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

Should a member commit a serious offense that the church considers to be detrimental to the church's general welfare and reputation, the Senior Pastor and the Deacon Fellowship will take every reasonable measure to encourage the offender to repent and be reconciled to God and the church in accordance with Scripture (1 Cor. 5:6; 1 Tim. 5:20-21; Matt. 18:15-18).

If the exclusion of the member best serves the church's welfare, the church may dismiss the member (Article 2, Section 6) in a properly noticed business meeting.

Section 8 – Discipline Restoration

Any person whose membership was terminated because of discipline may request restoration of membership through an appeal to the Senior Pastor and the Deacon chair. Upon recommendation from the Deacon Fellowship to the church body, membership may be restored. A recommendation for restoration from the Deacon Fellowship will be brought to the church during a properly noticed business meeting for a vote (Article 2, Section 5).

Article Three - Meetings

Section 1 – Worship

The church shall hold regular meetings for worship, teaching, training, outreach, and fellowship at the principal Church location, unless otherwise designated from time to time by the Senior Pastor/Staff.

Section 2 – Ordinances

There shall be two ordinances of this church:

Baptism: A candidate for baptism is one who:

- a) Receives Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith
- b) Professes Him publicly at any worship service
- c) Indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord
- d) Desires to be an active member of this church

Baptism shall be by immersion in water and administered by the Senior Pastor or the Senior Pastor's designee. Baptism is an act of worship and may occur during any worship service. (Mark 1:9-11).

A person confessing Christ and not being baptized after a reasonable time will receive counseling by a Pastor, Ministerial/Commissioned staff, or the Deacon Fellowship. Resisting counsel to pursue baptism results in removal from the baptismal candidate list.

Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper is a symbol of obedience for followers of Jesus Christ. Partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine commemorates the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and anticipates His second coming (Matthew 26:26-29).

The Senior Pastor and the Deacon Fellowship (or designated team) bear responsibility for preparing and administering the Lord's Supper.

The observance of the Lord's Supper takes place at least four times annually at times scheduled by the Senior Pastor.

Section 3 – Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting will be convened during the month of August each year. The agenda will be: call to order, prayer, acceptance of the agenda as printed, approval of minutes, membership report, financial report, Church Leadership Council report, Deacon Fellowship report, committee reports, old/former business, new business, and adjourn.

All business meetings will be guided by Christian courtesy and conducted according to the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order. All motions are subject to discussion. All decisions will be by simple majority vote, unless otherwise required by these Bylaws or Robert's Rule of Order.

All new motions, after a second, will be taken as information and referred to either a church committee, the Deacon Fellowship, the Church Leadership Council or other group to whom the matter relates. The referred body, after review, will re-state the original motion as old business in the next annual business meeting or at a called business meeting to propose church action on the motion after discussion.

A matter deemed important may be scheduled for a vote without discussion during the next Sunday morning worship services following the annual business meeting, provided both meetings have been properly noticed.

The Sunday morning one week prior to the annual business meeting, the following recommendations will be made available to the church:

- a) The annual list of nominees for Church Officers, committee members and ministry leaders presented by the Nominating Committee. This recommendation will be included in the committee's report at the annual business meeting and a vote by secret ballot without discussion will be held during the Sunday morning worship service(s) immediately following the annual business meeting. Proper notice of this vote must be given (Article 3, Section 5).
- b) The annual budget presented by the Stewardship Committee. This recommendation will be included in the committee's report at the annual business meeting and a vote by secret ballot without discussion will be held during the Sunday morning worship service(s) immediately following the annual business meeting. Proper notice of this vote must be given (Article 3, Section 5).

Deacon election is a separate issue (Article 6, Section 4) in these Bylaws. It can be voted on the same Sunday as the above items, but is not included in this specific article.

Section 4 – Called Business Meetings

The Senior Pastor or the Church Leadership Council may call a called business meeting at any time, for any purpose, by giving notice to the members (Article 3, Section 5).

A matter deemed important may be scheduled for a vote without discussion during the Sunday morning worship services immediately following a called business meeting at which the matter was presented and discussed. Both the meeting and the vote must be properly noticed.

Section 5 – Notices

Notification of all business meeting and scheduled votes will occur with a two-week advance notice by mandatory oral announcement at all regular worship services and by using any of the following reasonable methods:

- a) Written material made available to the congregation in attendance at a weekend service
- b) Delivery by United States mail to each active church household
- c) Church website and/or other available forms of electronic communication

Additionally, the substance of the matter to be considered must be given in all cases.

Section 6 – Quorum

Except as stated elsewhere in these Bylaws (Article 2, Section 5; Article 3, Section 3; Article 3, Section 4; Article 3, Section 5; Article 4, Section 6; Article 6, Section 4; Article 12; Article 14, Section 1), a quorum shall consist of those active members present and voting at a meeting duly noticed and called for the transaction of business.

Section 7 – Voting

Voting at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in the meeting shall be in accordance with (Article 2, Section 5).

Section 8 – Rules of Order

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order (Latest Edition) shall guide the church in all cases into which they are applicable and in which they are consistent with the articles, these Bylaws, state law, biblical teaching, or any special rules of order the church may adopt.

Section 9 – Church Continuity Meeting

During an emergency, a Church Continuity Meeting shall be called if ALL three things occur due to a catastrophic event:

- a) An emergency (defined as serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action) creates a debilitating impact or immediate threat to the health, safety, or wellbeing of individuals, church operations, and/or property.
- b) A majority of Ministerial Staff, Church Leadership Council and Deacon Fellowship cannot readily be assembled.
- c) There is a clear need for prompt restorative action to ensure continuity, mitigate the situation to protect church property and return to normal operations.

The Church Continuity Meeting is required to establish a quorum using all communication as practical. This quorum shall consist of the contactable members of the Ministerial Staff, Church Leadership Council, Treasurer, Trustees and Deacon Fellowship who are able to assemble.

The Church Continuity Meeting shall by a simple majority vote:

- a) Determine a Chairperson in this order: Senior Pastor (no vote required), Executive Pastor (no vote required), Treasurer (no vote required), Chairman of Deacons (no vote required), Church Leadership Council Member, Deacon Fellowship.
- b) Assign Agents who will act for the direct restoration of church operation and/or protection of church property.
- c) Modify lines of succession to accommodate the incapacity of any Officer, Employee, or Agent.
- d) Designate alternative principal offices, worship location, and/or location where church operations can be conducted.

All restorative actions made in this section shall be temporary until the proper church voting can be conducted in compliance with these Bylaws.

Church action taken in good faith during an emergency under this section to further the ordinary affairs of the church: (1) binds the church: and (2) may not be used to impose liability on an Officer, Employee, or Agent.

Article Four - Church Leadership Council

Section 1 – Responsibilities

The Church Leadership Council is responsible for enhancing the trust and confidence of the members of the church. The Church Leadership Council will gather input, communicate across all other committee lines and work toward consensus on issues affecting the church. This will include, but not be limited to, mitigating risks and dealing with any legal issues which may arise.

Section 2 – Qualifications

I Timothy 3:1-7 provides the qualifications for church members serving on the Church Leadership Council. Representatives on the Church Leadership Council are to be men and women of integrity, open-minded, visionary Christians with a heart for Kingdom work and upholding the vision, goals, and objectives of First Baptist Church Rock Hill.

Section 3 – Duties

The Church Leadership Council will work to protect the health of, and mitigate risks to, First Baptist Church Rock Hill. Also:

- a) Report to the annual business meeting (Article 3, Section 3)
- b) May call a special business meeting (Article 3, Section 4)
- c) May take emergency actions (Article 3, Section 9)
- d) Enhance the trust and confidence of the members of the church. (Article 4, Section 1)
- e) Name four members to join the Council. (Article 4, Section 4)
- f) The Council will provide an annual evaluation of the Senior Pastor and will serve as counsel to him. (Article 5, Section 2)
- g) The Council will see that any needed Senior Pastor search team is created and brought before the church for approval. (Article 5, Section 4)
- h) The Council will select any needed interim pastor. (Article 5, Section 5)
- i) Establish, adjust and/or eliminate all ministerial/commissioned staff positions except the Senior Pastor. (Article 5, Section 8)
- j) In conjunction with the Senior Pastor or his designee, the Council is responsible for the hiring and termination of all ordained ministers/commissioned staff of the church, except for the Senior Pastor. (Article 5, Section 1) (Article 8, Section 2)
- k) Approve Nominating Committee recommendations to fill mid-year vacancies. (Article 7, Section 3) (Article 8, Section 5)
- l) May recommend additional standing or ad hoc committees. (Article 8, Section 1) (Article 9, Section 3)
- m) May remove a committee member (Article 8, Section 5)
- n) Authorize lay led ministries. (Article 9, Section 2)
- o) May authorize the purchase of indemnification insurance. (Article 10, Section 4)

Section 4 – Election and Service

The Church Leadership Council will have the following members:

- a) Senior Pastor
- b) Executive Pastor
- c) Chair of Stewardship Committee
- d) Chair of Personnel Committee
- e) Chair of Deacons
- f) Vice Chair of Deacons
- g) Immediate Past Chair of Deacons
- h) Four at-large members

The four at-large members will be named by the other Church Leadership Council members and will serve two-year terms. No person will be eligible for consideration as an at-large member of the Church Leadership Council until the lapse of at least one year from the Church Leadership Council, unless they just completed serving an unexpired term of 12 months or less. The length of service for all other members of this Council will flow with their terms of service on the other committees, Deacon body, and church staff. At large members may not be the spouse, parent, child, sibling of ordained/commissioned staff or another member of the council.

The number of active Deacons on the Church Leadership Council shall not exceed five.

The Church Leadership Council shall elect its own Chair annually from among its members. The Chair cannot be a member of the church staff.

Section 5 – Vacancies

All vacancies on this Council shall be filled according to the committee officers and staff terms. Vacancies among the at-large members will again be filled by this Council into staggered terms as required.

Section 6 – Meetings and Quorum

The Church Leadership Council shall meet in September to welcome any new council members. In addition, other meetings of the Council can be called by either its Chair or the Senior Pastor at any frequency on an as-needed basis.

For a motion to be adopted, the Church Leadership Council meetings require 80% of the Council members to be present and an 80% affirmative vote of the members in attendance (Article 2, Section 5).

Article Five – Ministerial/Commissioned and Support Staff

Section 1 – Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor is the spiritual leader of the church and is responsible for leading the church to fulfill its mission and purpose as a New Testament church (I Peter 5:1-4) He has the primary responsibility of preaching and teaching God's Word (II Timothy 4:2) and has control of the pulpit (subject to the overruling vote of the church) and all public worship services of the church. His goal is to equip the saints (Ephesians 4:11-13) to be growing disciples who minister, serve, share the gospel, give, pray, and live as faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ.

The Senior Pastor is expected to be called of God, spiritually mature, demonstrate effective leadership, have sound theological knowledge and training, and be spiritually gifted for his role. He should meet the qualifications described in I Timothy 3:1-7.

The Senior Pastor has full supervisory responsibility over all staff of the church in accordance with the Personnel policies. All Ministerial/Commissioned Staff are called to serve and/or be terminated at the recommendation of the Senior Pastor and with the approval of the Church Leadership Council. All other staff are called to serve and/or be terminated at the recommendation of the Senior Pastor or his designee with the approval of the Personnel Committee.

The Senior Pastor has the right to preside at all meetings of the church, or he may designate a presiding Officer for a particular meeting. On all matters, his advice, preaching and opinion shall be given to the church without fear or favor. When presiding, he may vote as any other member. He is responsible for seeing that all notices required by these Bylaws are properly given.

The Senior Pastor shall serve as a voting ex-officio member of all church committees, teams and groups. He may call a special meeting of the Deacon Fellowship, committees, teams or groups. The Senior Pastor may call the church into a business meeting with proper notice.

Section 2 – Senior Pastor Accountability

The Senior Pastor serves at the will of the church and is accountable to the church. The Church Leadership Council, acting on behalf of the church, shall conduct an annual evaluation of the Senior Pastor (Article 4, Section 3). In the event there are serious concerns about the Senior Pastor's conduct or execution of his duties, the Council will address these concerns with the Senior Pastor. A mutually agreed upon resolution to the concerns is always the desired outcome.

If circumstances dictate, the Senior Pastor's tenure may be terminated as follows:

- a) The Church Leadership Council and the Deacon Fellowship may request the Senior Pastor resign during a face-to-face consultation or through mediation.
- b) If the Church Leadership Council and the Deacon Fellowship determine that the Senior Pastor is guilty of moral failure, they are authorized to immediately terminate the Senior Pastor. Moral failure includes, but is not limited to, sexual sin, financial sin, and/or abusive behavior. Matthew 18:15-20 will serve as the guide for all accountability conversations with the Pastor.
- c) The church may terminate the Senior Pastor. This action may only be taken in a called business meeting. The called business meeting may only be called upon recommendation of the Church Leadership Council and the Deacon Fellowship. The called business meeting must be properly noticed and voting must follow the same requirements of any called business meeting (Article 2, Section 5).

In the event the Senior Pastor's tenure is terminated, the Church Leadership Council and the Church Treasurer will have the authority to determine any severance pay and benefits.

As followers of Jesus Christ both the Senior Pastor and church will seek to follow the will of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in all matters related to tenure and/or termination in a spirit of grace, humility and godliness.

Section 3 – Senior Pastor Resignation

In the event the Senior Pastor submits his resignation, he is asked to give the church at least a four (4) week notice. The Church Leadership Council and Personnel Committee will be responsible for planning any appreciation fellowship or recognition and for working with the Stewardship Committee to determine any financial gift.

Section 4 – Senior Pastor Selection Process

The Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The Church Leadership Council will see that any needed Senior Pastor search team is created and brought before the church for approval. (Article 4, Section 3). At a properly noticed business meeting, the Senior Pastor Search Team will seek input from Personnel and Stewardship Committees, the Deacon Fellowship and the church family early in the search process and may choose to seek the assistance of these groups during the search.

The Senior Pastor Search Team shall bring the name of only one prospective Senior Pastor at a time for consideration by the church, and no nomination shall be made except by the Search Team. Election shall be during weekend worship services by secret ballot given to all members over 18 years of age in attendance. An affirmative vote in accordance with Article 2, Section 5 is required. The meeting at which the vote is taken must be properly noticed.

If a favorable vote is not reached, the Search Team shall be instructed to seek out another candidate and the meeting shall be adjourned without debate.

Section 5 – Interim Senior Pastor Selection

In the event an Interim Senior Pastor is needed, the Church Leadership Council will select the individual to serve, define the duties, and coordinate the financial arrangements with Personnel and Stewardship Committees.

The Interim Senior Pastor may preside at Church business meetings or he may ask a member of the Church Leadership Council to preside. If the Interim Senior Pastor is not a member of the church, he shall have no vote whatsoever.

Section 6 – Temporary Incapacity of the Senior Pastor

In the event that the Senior Pastor becomes physically incapable of performing his duties on a temporary basis, as determined by a medical professional, the following procedures shall be enacted.

- a) Immediate Notification - The Church Leadership Council must be notified within 24 hours of the determination of incapacity by the medical professional.
- b) Interim Leadership – The Executive Pastor shall assume the responsibilities of the Senior Pastor on an interim basis unless otherwise directed by the Church Leadership Council. If there is no Executive Pastor, the Church Leadership Council shall appoint on interim Senior Pastor from the Pastoral staff.
- c) Duration of Interim Period – The Interim Senior Pastor shall serve until the incapacitated Senior Pastor is medically cleared to resume duties or until a permanent replacement is appointed by the Church Leadership Council if the incapacity extends beyond a period of 90 days.
- d) Council Oversight – The Church Leadership Council shall maintain close oversight during this period, ensuring the church's operations and ministries continue to operate smoothly. The Interim Senior Pastor is required to provide regular updates to the Church Leadership Council.
- e) Return to Office – Upon recovery, confirmed by a medical professional, the Senior Pastor shall resume their duties with a transition period agreed upon by the Church Leadership Council to ensure continuity and stability.
- f) Documentation – All actions taken under this section shall be documented and reported in the minutes of the Church Leadership Council.

This Bylaw ensures continuity of spiritual leadership and operational stability during any temporary incapacity of the Senior Pastor.

Section 7 – Executive Pastor

The Executive Pastor is a Ministerial position and a direct report to the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor may recommend to the Church Leadership Council for approval; adjustments to the Executive Pastor's title and specific duties, as well as the hiring and/or termination of the Executive Pastor.

The Executive Pastor is a role whose duties are to support the Senior Pastor in fulfilling the churches vision, mission and purpose by managing the day-to-day operations of the church and staff along with the execution of the ministry strategy and plans. Other duties may be assigned by the Senior Pastor. The Executive Pastor will serve on the leadership groups as specified in these bylaws.

Section 8 – Other Ministerial/Commissioned Staff

The Senior Pastor and Personnel Committee will regularly review the ministerial/commissioned staff roles needed to effectively carry out the Mission, Vision, and Strategy of the church.

Upon recommendation from the Senior Pastor and Personnel Committee, the Church Leadership Council will establish, adjust and/or eliminate all ministerial/commissioned staff positions (Article 4, Section 3). The Church Leadership Council will coordinate with the Personnel and Stewardship Committees regarding compensation, benefits and any other matter as needed.

Section 9 - Support Staff

Upon recommendation of the Senior Pastor or his designee, the Personnel Committee will establish all support staff positions including job descriptions and required qualifications in keeping with the church mission, vision and strategy. The Personnel Committee will coordinate with the Stewardship Committee and Church Leadership Council regarding compensation, benefits, and any other matters as needed. The Senior Pastor or his designee may hire support staff to fill the positions created above.

Article Six - Deacons

Section 1 – General Information

For clarification purposes, the word "Deacons" as used herein will refer to active Deacons only, unless clearly indicated otherwise. A Deacon shall be considered an Officer of the church only when he is serving as an active member of the Deacon Fellowship.

As spiritual leaders and servants of the church, the Deacon Fellowship shall assist the Senior Pastor in:

- a) Ministering to the needs of church members and advancing the mission of the church.
- b) Covering the church with prayer and facilitating cooperative prayer gatherings.
- c) Protecting the harmony and spiritual health of the church.
- d) Preparing and administering the Lord's Supper (Article 3, Section 2)

The Deacon Fellowship may organize itself as needed to fulfill its ministry.

The Deacon Fellowship may, on its own, advise or make recommendations to the church on any matter and the church may refer any matter to the Deacon Fellowship for study, report and recommendation.

Article 5, Section 1, states the Senior Pastor shall be a voting ex-officio member of the Deacon Fellowship. All other ordained ministers of the church shall be non-voting ex-officio members of the Fellowship.

Section 2 – Qualifications

Deacons shall meet the spiritual qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, as well as additional qualifications established by the church and expressed in these Bylaws.

Spiritual Qualifications:

- a) Respected - A deacon is a man who takes seriously his responsibilities and duties. He is a mature man with a good reputation in both the church and community, living an exemplary life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- b) Spirit-filled - A deacon is a man whose life and actions are motivated by the Holy Spirit on a consistent basis in his daily walk with the Lord.
- c) Not Double-Tongued - A deacon is a man who does not say one thing to one person and something different to another. He does not "talk out of both sides of his mouth." He is truthful, consistent, and does not spread rumors, gossip, or complain.
- d) Not Addicted to Wine - A deacon is a man who is committed to the concept of total abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages. This is done out of a desire to be a positive witness and example to the world and not be a stumbling block to others. This is also done because of the pervasive problems of alcoholism and its abuse in our society.
- e) Not Pursuing Dishonest Gain - A deacon is a man who is not employed in illegal or immoral work nor is he deceitful in his financial dealings.

- f) Doctrinally Sound - A deacon is a man who can explain what he believes from the scriptures, supports this church's Statement of Faith, and knows how to introduce people to Jesus Christ.
- g) Proven - A deacon is a man who is already active and participates in the ministries of the church. He has demonstrated over time faithfulness to Jesus and godliness in his lifestyle.
- h) Husband of One Wife - A deacon is a man who is a loyal husband living in a pure marriage relationship with his wife without adulterous relationships or attitudes. If a man is unmarried, he must be living a lifestyle of celibacy.
- i) Manages his Household Well - A deacon is a man who is leading his family spiritually and meeting their emotional and material needs to the best of his ability. This does not mean he has a "perfect family" or that his children will not go through the normal phases of growth, but that he is basically in control of his household.

Additional Qualifications:

- a) He must have made a personal commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) He must be at least 21 years of age.
- c) He must have been a member of First Baptist Church for at least one (1) year.
- d) He must be a regular tither to the church's ministries and offerings.
- e) He must regularly attend the church's Bible study and worship services.
- f) He must be willing to share the gospel and his personal testimony with those who are not yet followers of Christ.
- g) He must be willing to actively participate in the ministry structure and organization of the Deacon Fellowship to meet the needs of church members.
- h) He must endeavor to protect the harmony and unity of the church
- i) He must be supportive of the Senior Pastor and the church's mission/vision/strategy.

Section 3 - Meetings and Leaders

As a general practice, the Deacon Fellowship shall meet monthly. Special meetings may be called by the Chairman or the Senior Pastor when needed.

The Deacon Fellowship shall have a Chairman and Vice Chairman. The Chairman will then appoint other leaders as needed in the organization of the Fellowship and its ministry structure.

Section 4 – Election

Annually, at a time prior to the Deacon election process, the Deacon ministry needs for the upcoming church year will be reviewed by the Deacon Fellowship and the Senior Pastor. The number of active Deacons needed to meet ministry needs will be determined by the Deacon leadership. During the Deacon election process, information about the Deacon ministry and the qualifications for Deacon service will be presented to the church membership. Individual church members will nominate men they believe are qualified to serve as Deacons. Nomination forms will be available on Sundays at the church and in church publications during the nomination period.

Nominees who meet the above stated church qualifications will be notified and mailed a self-examination packet. After prayerful consideration, men who are willing to serve if elected are asked to submit a commitment form and provide requested information.

The Deacon Nominating Committee, an ad-hoc committee of the Deacon Fellowship consisting of all third-year Deacons and the Senior Pastor, will review the nominees' information and develop a list of men to be recommended as Deacons. To assist in the process, the committee may interview nominees and/or seek the assistance of church members who serve with the nominated men.

The Deacon Nominating Committee will then present the list of nominees as a group to the church for approval. A profile of each recommended nominee will be made available to the church family two weeks prior to the Deacon election.

The election will be held during Sunday morning worship services prior to September 1 of each year and the vote will be by secret ballot. Voting requirements (Article 2, Section 5) is required to affirm the list of men as Deacons.

Section 5 – Ordination and Installation

Men elected as Deacon who have been previously ordained as a Deacon in this church or another church of like faith and practice will be installed to a new term of service. Those men elected as a Deacon who are not qualified for installation will need to be ordained as a Deacon.

A service of installation and/or ordination will be scheduled by the Senior Pastor in consultation with Deacon leadership and must be held on/or before the first meeting of the Deacon Fellowship in the new church year.

Section 6 – Terms of Service and Resignations

The term of service for a Deacon will be three (3) years. No man will be eligible for re-election as a Deacon until the lapse of at least one year. Vacancies that occur during the church year will not be filled until the next Deacon election cycle.

Section 7 – Honorary Life Deacon

Upon recommendation of the Deacon Fellowship, the church may elect and set apart as Honorary Life Deacons, not to exceed three (3) in service at any time, men who at a minimum possess the following qualifications:

- a) Shall have the love, respect and confidence of the church.
- b) Shall have given not less than twenty-five (25) years of dedicated service in the life of the church.
- c) Shall have served not less than fifteen (15) years as active Deacon in this church.
- d) Shall be seventy (70) years of age or older.
- e) Shall meet the New Testament qualifications of a Deacon.

The purpose of making one an Honorary Life Deacon is to honor a Deacon for lifelong faithful service to God through the church. Honorary Life Deacons shall have the rights and privileges of an active Deacon, with the exception that they may not serve as a Deacon chair or vice chair. They may attend all Deacon meetings and serve in the Deacon ministry, though this is not a requirement or expectation.

The Deacon Fellowship may recommend to the church to elect and set apart only one Honorary Life Deacon in any one calendar year.

Article Seven - Church Officers

Section 1 – Church Officers

The leadership structure of First Baptist Church is based upon the nature of the church as revealed in Scripture and the necessary legal requirements for a recognized religious organization. The intentional design of the church's leadership structure accommodates simplicity, growth, unity, and biblical teaching.

The Officers of this church shall be Senior Pastor, active Deacons (Article 6, Section 2) Trustees, Clerk, and Treasurer, whose election, tenure, and duties shall be as provided for in the Bylaws and considered corporate Officers of the church.

All Officers of the church shall be active members of the church and must be elected by the church. Characteristics defined in Scripture serve as the basis for Officer/leadership qualifications (John 12:26; 1 Cor. 11:1; Luke 22:22; 1 Peter 5:2-5).

Section 2 – Officers' Functions

Senior Pastor or his designee – Shall preside at all Church business meetings consistent with the guidelines for a presiding Officer in the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

Clerk – Shall be responsible for recording minutes of business meetings and assisting the church office in preserving historical records and preparing annual denominational reports. Records will be filed and maintained in the church office.

Treasurer – Shall be responsible for the receipt and disbursement of all monies of the church. This shall be done in accordance with financial policies of the church, the annual budget, and/or the direction of the Stewardship committee. An Assistant Treasurer shall also be elected annually to serve/assist in the absence of the Treasurer.

Trustees – Shall, at the direction and discretion of the church, hold legal title to church property, and sign all contracts/documents as approved by the church. The trustees shall have no power to sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber or dispose of church property unless specifically authorized by the church. The trustees shall be responsible for the official copies of the church Incorporation, Bylaws, and Policies and Procedures documents. These documents shall be filed and maintained in the church office.

Section 3 – Enlistment, Election, and Rotation

Clerk and Treasurer – Shall be elected by the church annually, upon nomination by the Nominating Committee, to serve a one-year term and shall be eligible to succeed himself/herself.

Trustees – Shall serve on a rotation basis. Each year the term of one trustee shall expire, and the vacancy shall be filled by church vote (Article 2, Section 5), upon nomination by the Nominating Committee. After serving a term of three years, no trustee shall be eligible for re-election until the lapse of at least one year.

Senior Pastor and Deacons – The duties, method of selection or elections and terms of office of the Senior Pastor (Article 5) and the Deacons (Article 6) shall be as stated in these Bylaws.

Section 4 – Resignation and/or Removal

Any Officer may resign by written notification to the Senior Pastor.

The removal from office of any Officer may occur for:

- a) physical incapacitation
- b) spiritual or moral issues
- c) doctrinal issues
- d) failure to fulfill responsibilities of the office
- e) criminal conduct or
- f) a change in the Officer's status as an active member of this church.

Matthew 18 will serve as the basis to implement dismissal of Officers by the Senior Pastor and the Church Leadership Council. Removal of the Senior Pastor shall be as authorized in (Article 5, Section 2) of these Bylaws.

Section 5 – Vacancies

Vacancies for church Officers will be filled as follows:

Clerk, Trustees or Treasurer – The Church Leadership Council shall approve the Nominating Committee recommendations to fill these vacancies until such time as the Nominating Committee presents its annual nominations report to the church for approval.

An unexpired term should not disqualify a member from re-enlistment or re-election through the Nominating Committee process.

Senior Pastor – as authorized in Article Five of these Bylaws.

Deacons – as authorized in Article Six of these Bylaws.

Article Eight - Standing Committees

Section 1 – General Overview

Standing committees, along with their duties and responsibilities, shall be those authorized in these Bylaws or approved by separate vote (Article 2, Section 5) of the church during a properly noticed business meeting.

Standing committees are advisory groups and have no powers except those authorized in these Bylaws or approved by separate action of the church. The duties and responsibilities of each standing committee shall be those stated in these Bylaws and/or those approved by church vote upon recommendation by the Nominating Committee. Standing committees will have a Chairman and Vice Chairman.

The Nominating Committee, the Deacon Fellowship or the Church Leadership Council may recommend to the church the creation of additional standing and/or ad hoc Committees, along with their duties and responsibilities.

All committee members shall be active church members (Article 2, Section 3).

Section 2 – General Responsibilities

All standing committees will make a written report to the church at the annual business meeting. Each committee is responsible for electing its own Chairman and Vice Chairman for one-year terms, and maintaining a record of the minutes of its meetings and any rules adopted by the committee to be passed on from year to year. Said records will also be filed and maintained in the church office. Standing committees are responsible for recommending any changes to policies and procedures from their respective committees to the Church Leadership Council.

Nominating Committee – In close cooperation with the church staff and Officers, annually identify and nominate to the church for election active members to serve:

- a) On each of the standing committees
- b) As Trustees, Treasurers and Clerk (Article 7, Section 4 and 6)

The Nominating Committee may recommend to the church the formation of additional standing and/or ad hoc committees (Article 8, Section 1).

Personnel Committee – The Personnel Committee will work with the Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor on the development and maintenance of personnel policies, procedures and job descriptions. As it relates to ordained/commissioned staff, the Personnel Committee will work with the Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor through the hiring process. Once a candidate is properly vetted, the committee will make a formal recommendation to the Church Leadership Council for their approval. In matters of termination, the committee will work with the Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor to present a recommendation to the Church Leadership Council for their approval. As it relates to non-ordained/non-commissioned staff, the Personnel Committee has the final authority to call or terminate staff members in concert with the recommendation of the Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor. Where conflict with a staff member cannot be resolved within the staff structure, the personnel committee may be called upon to assist in the resolution of said conflict. Matthew 18 is our guide to handling any and all conflict.

Stewardship Committee – The Committee develops the annual budget of the church, manages the expenditures of all funds, develops written guidelines, and establishes internal policies and procedures for the conduct and operation of the financial business of the church. The Committee establishes accounts and other financial arrangements with banks and other fiduciaries in the church's best interest. The Committee assumes responsibility for arranging and reporting on all church financial audits. The Committee establishes and monitors the procedures of collecting, handling, managing, monitoring, and reporting on all funds.

Section 3 – Committee Membership

Nomination for Committee Membership – Individuals shall be in accordance with both active member status (Article 2, Section 3) and voting status (Article 2, Section 5) and have no pending discipline issues (Article 2, Section 7).

Nominating Committee – Shall consist of nine (9) members, eight (8) of whom must be elected by the church, with the Senior Pastor or his designee serving as the ninth member.

Personnel Committee – Shall consist of nine (9) members, eight (8) of whom are elected by the church, with the Senior Pastor or his designee serving as the ninth member.

Stewardship Committee – Shall consist of twelve (12) members, ten (10) of whom shall be elected by the church, with the Treasurer and the Senior Pastor or his designee serving as the eleventh and twelfth members.

Section 4 – Election and Rotation

Standing committee members shall be elected by the church upon nomination by the Nominating Committee.

Standing committee members shall serve three-year terms on a rotation basis and, upon the completion of a term, shall be ineligible for re-election to any standing committee for a period of one year (unless the member is filling an unexpired term of 18 months or less). All nominees may serve on one standing committee at a time.

Section 5 – Vacancies and Removal

Candidates to fill vacancies shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee to the Church Leadership Council for approval until such time as the Nominating Committee presents its annual nominations report to the church for approval in August.

A member may be removed from membership on a standing committee in the case of 1) physical incapacitation, 2) spiritual or moral issues, 3) doctrinal issues, 4) failure to fulfill the responsibilities of the committee, 5) criminal conduct, and 6) a change in the members' status as an active member of this church.

When any of the issues listed above exist, the Church Leadership Council is authorized to remove a committee member upon recommendation from the standing committee on which the member serves (Article 4, Section 3).

Article Nine - Church Ministries and Teams

Section 1 – Ministries

The church will have ministries focused on discipleship, missions, evangelism and worship. The Senior Pastor and ministerial staff will be responsible for leading these ministries and may create such organizations and teams as needed to accomplish these ministries.

Section 2 – Ministry Teams

The church authorizes the Church Leadership Council to form or discontinue on behalf of the church lay lead ministries to address needs and opportunities that are not a function of an existing ministry, committee, or staff member. A staff member will be assigned by the Senior Pastor or his designee to liaison with each lay led ministry team as needed.

Additionally, all staff members may enlist volunteers and create teams as needed to help them fulfill their ministry responsibilities.

Section 3 – Ad Hoc Groups

The Church Leadership Council may form on behalf of the church or recommend to the church the formation of special ad hoc committees, groups or teams as needed for short term purposes. The Deacon Fellowship may also recommend to the church the formation of special ad hoc committees, groups or teams as needed for short term purposes. The Nominating Committee may recommend to the church the formation of additional standing and/or ad hoc committees (Article 8, Section 1).

Article Ten - Licensing, Ordaining, and Commissioning

Section 1 – Licensing and Ordaining Ministers

Licensing – When a man announces to the church that he feels the call to the ministry, the Senior Pastor and Deacon Fellowship, after examination, may recommend him to the church. The church then may vote at properly noticed business meeting (Article 2, Section 5) to license him to the ministry.

Note: Licensing is a designation indicating the candidate is a minister for tax purposes and complies with federal income tax reporting and withholding rules.

Ordaining – The church shall observe the following procedures when asked to ordain a man called to serve as a Minister of the Gospel:

- a) The church will express its approval by a vote at any properly noticed business meeting (Article 2, Section 5).
- b) The Pastor shall organize a council, of Deacons and other ordained ministers, to examine the candidate concerning his fitness for the ministry. Upon receiving a favorable report from the ordination council, the church may vote on the recommendation at a properly called business meeting.

Section 2 – Commissioning

Separate from ordination as a Pastor and upon recommendation by the Senior Pastor and Deacon Fellowship, the church may vote at any properly noticed business meeting (Article 2, Section 5; Article 3, Section 5) to commission a woman called by God to serve full-time on the ministry staff of First Baptist Church.

Commissioning is not ordination to the Pastoral ministry. It is an affirmation of the church that such persons are called of God to serve in ministry and authorizes them to fulfill that calling. It designates for tax purposes that the person commissioned complies with federal income tax reporting and withholding rules as a minister.

Article Eleven – Records and Compliance

Section 1 – Accounts and Records

The fiscal year and church year of First Baptist Church begins on September 1 and ends on August 31 of each year.

The church shall have an annual budget to serve as the guide for the financial operation of the church. Copies of the budget shall be published and distributed in a summary format. The budget presentation to the church at the annual business meeting shall include discussion. The vote for the adoption of the budget shall be the following Sunday without discussion.

Section 2 – Policy and Procedure

Policy and Procedures for First Baptist Church, cross-referenced with First Baptist Church Bylaws, consists of the following sections and groups empowered to recommend any necessary changes for approval by the Church Leadership Council.

- a) Administration/Facilities – Staff
- b) Finance – Stewardship Committee
- c) Leadership – Nominating Committee
- d) Personnel – Personnel Committee

Section 3 – Inspection of Records

A copy of the Incorporation, Bylaws, and Policies and Procedures of First Baptist Church will be available for viewing by church members.

Every active First Baptist Church member, in good standing, has the right to inspect all records, reports, and documentation of every kind, except that which is deemed confidential. No copy of viewed reports of documents will be allowed to leave the church office.

Section 4 – Auditing Program

The Stewardship Committee shall adopt an audit program to provide, at a minimum, an annual review of the finances of the church. This review is to be conducted by an outside, independent accounting firm.

Section 5 – Political Activities

To maintain the exemption from Federal Income Taxes, the church and other religious organizations must comply with requirements in Section 501(c)3 of the tax code.

Section 6 – Conflict of Interest

All reasonable efforts will be made to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest involving church staff, church leadership, and church volunteers. This includes involvement with current and potential vendors and bidding organizations. All staff and members must refrain from participating in, or influencing, any decision, ministry, or church action in which the individual or family member is materially affiliated. Potential areas of conflict should be disclosed to the Senior Pastor or his designee prior to finalizing agreements, decisions, or church action.

Section 7 – Screening

All candidates for ministry, administrative or support staff positions are required to submit to screening procedures that may include, but not limited to, credit checks, address verifications, and criminal and academic background checks. Any information obtained during the screening process shall be considered highly confidential and shall be kept in a sealed file and stored in a locked cabinet with access limited to the Officers or staff authorized by the Church Leadership Council and indicated on the exterior of the file.

Article Twelve – Changing Church's Voluntary Cooperation

If at any time the church considers altering its voluntary cooperation with other Baptist churches through the Southern Baptist Convention, the South Carolina Baptist Convention and/or the York Baptist Association, an affirmative vote of 80% of the active members in attendance and voting is required for the alteration to be approved. The business meeting at which the vote is taken must be properly noticed (Article 3, Section 5) with the following additional requirements:

- a) Notice of meeting at which the vote is taken and the content of the motion must be given for four consecutive Sundays prior to the date of the vote.
- b) A properly noticed business meeting will be held at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting at which a vote is taken. This meeting will be for the presentation of appropriate information and to answer questions asked by members. No vote on the motion to alter the church's voluntary cooperation will be taken at this meeting.

Article Thirteen - Article of Dissolution

Being organized and incorporated under the laws of the State of South Carolina, First Baptist Church of Rock Hill operates as a non-profit corporation, tax-exempt organization under the United States Internal Revenue Code and South Carolina statutes. In the event of the dissolution of First Baptist Church of Rock Hill, so much as required of the liquid assets shall be used for payment of outstanding debts and obligations of the Church. Should the liquid assets be insufficient for payment of all outstanding debts and obligations, the non-liquid assets shall be liquidated and the funds used for the payment of such remaining debts and obligations. All remaining assets shall be distributed to the Baptist Foundation of South Carolina, so long as it shall be a tax-exempt organization, to be used by the trustees of such Foundation, in their sole discretion, for the purpose of the spreading of the Gospel and other Kingdom work. Should the Baptist Foundation of South Carolina not be in existence or should it not be a tax-exempt organization, all remaining assets shall be distributed to a Baptist Foundation of like kind for the purpose of spreading the Gospel and other Kingdom work as determined by the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Article Fourteen - Amendment to the Bylaws

Section 1 – General Procedures

Upon recommendation of the Church Leadership Council and/or the Deacon Fellowship, any of these Bylaws may be amended, altered, or replaced by vote (Article 2, Section 5), at the annual business meeting or at a properly noticed business meeting. In addition to the meeting at which a vote is taken being properly noticed (Article 3, Section 5), the proposed amendment, alteration, or repeal must be provided to the church, in writing, thirty days before the scheduled vote.

Section 2 – Amendment Styles

All amendments shall be made by striking through the original Bylaw wording and noting the change in capital lettering.

The bottom of each page that contains an amendment must have a notation of the last revision date.

Amended Bylaws need a complete reprint of the document with a footnote on each page showing the current edition.

Appendix One

Baptist Faith & Message 2000

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

****Note:** This article was amended June 14, 2023, by action of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention******

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

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

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

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke

2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own 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 racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, 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.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9, 38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36, 38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1, 13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant 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 the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; Psalms 127; Psalms 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Read Commentary on Article XVIII – The Family

Appendix Two

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

We believe that matters of marriage, gender, and sexuality are of great importance. With Christian love for all, we submit our biblical convictions on these matters with both clarity and charity, knowing that true abundant life is only granted to those who know Jesus Christ, understand his Word, and order their lives accordingly

We believe Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for sexual behavior: monogamous relations between one man and one woman in marriage or sexual celibacy. Both are a gift from God, given for His glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in His gift to them.

We believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral and therefore sinful.

We believe God created the human race in His image as male (xy chromosomes) and female (xx chromosomes) and that all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is immoral and therefore sinful.

We believe all human existence, including our sexuality, has been deeply damaged by the human race's fall into sin. We are all sinners, broken in some measure by this fall. Everything, from our environment to our bodily genetic code, has been ravaged by sin and the fall.

We believe the homosexual attractions some people experience, whether those attractions are the product of environment, genetics, or another source, are contrary to God's design and are, instead, the product of the human race's fall into sin. Therefore, those attractions do not render homosexual behavior legitimate.

We believe God ordained differences between male and female at creation and those reproductive structures are integral to His design for self-conception and identity. Any physical anomalies or psychological conditions contrary to His original design are a product of the human race's fall into sin and do not nullify God's designed link between biological sex and self-identity as male or female.

We believe persons born with a physical disorder of sex development, such as those rare occasions when a person has an objective medical condition in which their anatomical development may be ambiguous or does not match their genetic chromosomal sex, are created in God's image and have dignity and worth. Jesus acknowledged them when He said, "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it" (Matthew 19:12). As with all others, such persons are called to be faithful followers of Jesus who find their identity in Him, embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known, and live a fruitful and holy life in obedience to Jesus Christ.

We believe that all human beings are created in God's image and still bear that image after the human race's fall into sin. Therefore, all persons deserve to be treated with dignity, including those who reject God's design for human sexuality. This truth compels us to demonstrate compassion in our speech and behavior, and to oppose mistreatment of those who disobey God's design for human sexuality. We mourn with and pray for those who struggle with sexual sin, while encouraging them to obey the gospel and follow God's design for human sexuality and holiness.

We believe the gospel is full of grace and forgiveness. No sin is so small it does not deserve damnation and no sin is so big it cannot be forgiven. There is hope and forgiveness for all sinners who repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus Christ.

We believe the gospel is full of power. It is the power of God to salvation for all who believe and empowers those who truly believe to obey God's call to live a holy life and glorify Him with our bodies. When a person believes the gospel of Jesus Christ, he or she becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus with new desires and new power to resist all sin, including all sexual sins.

In keeping with this statement of faith, First Baptist Church only authorizes and recognizes heterosexual marriages. Therefore, only heterosexual marriages may be conducted on First Baptist Church property and/or officiated by First Baptist Church Pastors, Ministers, Staff, Employees, Deacons, and Officers.

In keeping with this statement of faith, First Baptist Church will not host events, activities, or services which celebrate lifestyles and behavior contrary to God's design for marriage, gender and sexuality.

In keeping with our statement of faith, we regard any and all restrictions and definitions we apply to First Baptist Church to be an exercise of the freedom of religion clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We hold this freedom to be an unalienable right endowed to us by our Creator, whom we know as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and who is revealed to us in the holy scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Genesis 1:26-27; 2:22-25; 3:1-24; 5:1-3; Exodus 20:14, 17; 22:19; Leviticus 18:22-23; 20:13, 15-16; Deuteronomy 5:18, 21; 22:5; Judges 19:22-23; II Samuel 11:1-5; 12:1-15; Job 31:1; Psalm 51:1-19; Proverbs 2:16; 5:15-22; 6:20-29; 7:1-27; Malachi 2:13-17; Matthew 5:27-30; 15:19-20; 19:4-12; Mark 7:21-22; Acts 15:20, 29; Romans 1:16-32; 3:23; 6:23; 10:9-10, 13; I Corinthians 6:9-20; 7:2-9; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:19-24; Ephesians 2:8-10; 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5-14; 4:5-6; I Thessalonians 4:38; I Timothy 1:8-11; II Timothy 2:21-26; Titus 1:9-10; 2:11-14; Hebrews 13:4; James 1:14-15; I Peter 2:11-12; 3:15-18; II Peter 2:6-19; Jude 7

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