

Constitution

First Baptist Church Strongsville, Ohio

October 2024

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - Name

The name of this organization shall be the First Baptist Church of Strongsville, Ohio.

ARTICLE II - Mission

The mission of this local church shall be to enjoy God and make the name of Jesus famous for all the right reasons.

ARTICLE III - Vision

The vision of this local church shall be to multiply disciples, multiply leaders and multiply churches.

ARTICLE IV - Statement of Faith

The Statement of Faith of this local church shall always be in agreement with the revealed Word of God.

The Scriptures

We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, as originally written; that it was verbally and plenary inspired and is the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore is infallible and inerrant in all matters of which it speaks. We believe the Bible to be the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed, and opinions shall be tried. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19-21

The True God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, the Maker and supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. Exodus 20:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Revelation 4:11

The Father

We believe God the Father is the first Person of the Trinity and the source of all that God is and does; that He orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace as Ruler of the Universe. He demonstrates headship in the Godhead as the Son and Spirit both submissively carry out acts of obedience to the Father while always remaining one with Him. He is the Creator of all but He is spiritual Father only to believers as He adopts all those who come to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. In His sovereignty He neither authors nor approves of sin. Genesis 1:31; Psalm 103:19, 145:9; John 16:3, 17:4; Romans 8:14, 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5

The Son

We believe that the Son of God is the second Person of the Trinity and that everything was created through Him. He was incarnated in the human race as Jesus Christ, conceived in a virgin by the Holy Spirit. He lived a sinless life, was crucified as the Lamb of God to provide atonement of infinite value, died and was buried. On the third day, Jesus was raised from death in His same body in glorified form, was seen alive by hundreds of witnesses, and ascended to Heaven to be enthroned there to intercede for His people until His return to earth.

All of this was in fulfillment of ancient prophecy. The death of Christ, the Just One for the unjust ones, fully satisfied the offended holiness of God, so that all who entrust their eternal welfare to Jesus Christ as their Advocate and Savior will be saved eternally. Isaiah 53; Matthew 1:22-24, 28:5; John 1:14, 10: 28; Acts 2:24; Romans 4:25, 8:30, 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 10:12-14, 13:5; 1 Peter 3:18

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the new birth; that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies, and helps the believer. We believe that the sign/revelatory gifts of the Holy Spirit have fulfilled their purpose and are not applicable to the work of the Holy Spirit today. Genesis 1:1-3; Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8; Luke 1:35, 24:49; John 1:33, 3:5-6, 14:16-17, 14:26, 16:8-11; Acts 5:30-32, 11:16; Romans 8:14, 16, 26, 27; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 12:28-30, 13:8-10, 14:1-40; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 1:13-14; Hebrews 2:2-4; Hebrews 9:14

The Devil, or Satan

We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, the Devil; and that he was created by God as an angel but through pride and rebellion became the enemy of his Creator; that he became the unholy god of this age and the ruler of all the powers of darkness and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the Lake of Fire. Matthew 4:1-11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:10

Creation

Overview

We believe the Biblical account of the creation of the physical universe, angels, and humanity; that this account is neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of the direct, immediate creative acts of God without any evolutionary process; that Adam and Eve were created by a direct work of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all people are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race. Genesis 1; 2; Colossians 1:16, 17; John 1:3

Gender

We believe that our Creator established human gender biologically in fixed, binary categories: male and female. Seeking to confuse or change the God-given distinction of the two genders violates God's creative design and revealed will.

Marriage, Sex and the Value of Human Life

In light of God's creative design, we believe that the Bible teaches that marriage is the joining of one man and one woman and that sexual intimacy is to be expressed only within the bonds of a Biblically defined marriage. Any other form of marriage or sexual intimacy is Biblically immoral and outside of God's gracious will. For the believer, marriage is to be in the Lord and only to another believer. God's order of authority in the Christian family is Christ is the Head, followed by the husband, then the wife and finally the children. Children are a blessing from the Lord. Thus, human life is sacred and worthy of protection from the moment of conception.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18, 24, 25; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:24-29; 7:2; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 7:1-5; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:4; Hebrews 13:4; Psalm 127, 128, 129, 139:13:16

Divorce

We believe that any marriage is to last a lifetime and that death breaks the marriage bond. Divorce or annulment of a marriage is contrary to the divine will of God. At the same time, God's word recognizes the hardness of the human heart and allows for divorce in specific instances. Those instances include: when a spouse deserts the relationship, commits adultery or is dangerously abusive. In instances between sinning spouses, forgiveness and reconciliation is preferable to separation or divorce even where adultery has occurred. Hosea 2:14-24; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:21-35; 19:8-9, 60; 1 Corinthians 7:11

The Fall of Mankind

We believe that mankind was created in innocence (in the image and likeness of God) under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression Adam fell from his sinless and happy state, and all human beings sinned in him, in consequence of which all human beings are totally depraved, are partakers of Adam's fallen nature, and are sinners by nature and by conduct, and therefore are under just condemnation without defense or excuse. Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 1:18, 32; 3:10-19; 5:12, 19

The Virgin Birth

We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other person was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God, the Son. Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 1:14

Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by the appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His personal obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ the Lord bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith. Jonah 2:9; Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24, 25; John 3:16; Matthew 18:11; Philippians 2:7, 8; Hebrews 2:14-17; Isaiah 53:4-7; 1 John 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24

Resurrection and Priesthood of Christ

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and in His ascension into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest interceding for us. Matthew 28:6, 7;

Luke 24:39; John 20:27; 1 Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6, 51; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 8:6; 12:2; 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 2:17; 5:9, 10

Grace and the New Birth

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about by our sovereign God in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to The Gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith, and newness of life. John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:1; Acts 16:20-33; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13; John 3:8

Justification

We believe that justification is that judicial act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous upon the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any work of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's shed blood. Romans 3:24; 4:5; 5:1, 9; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9

Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the divine setting apart of the believer unto God accomplished in a threefold manner: first, an eternal act of God, based upon redemption in Christ, establishing the believer in a position of holiness at the moment he trusts the Savior; second, a continuing process in the saint as the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to the life; third, the final accomplishment of this process at the Lord's return. Hebrews 10:10-14; 3:1; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4; 5:23, 24; 1 John 3:2; Jude 24, 25; Revelation 22:11

The Security of the Saints

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6; John 10:28, 29; Romans 8:35-39; Jude 1

The Church

We believe that a local church is an organized congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privilege invested in them by His Word. We believe the true mission of the church is to enjoy God and make the name of Jesus famous for all the right reasons. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is Scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of The Gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; that on all matters of membership, of polity, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final. We hold that the Biblical offices the Lord established to lead and serve the church are Elders (also referred to as overseers, and pastors in the New Testament) and Deacons. These are to be godly men whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. Elders primarily lead the church. Deacons primarily assist the Elders and serve the church. Elders may be paid or unpaid. Deacons are not paid. Other offices,

though not Biblically specified, may be added based on wisdom, best practice or requirements for the function of a local church as a recognized institution. The church shall not add offices that stand against scripture. 1 Corinthians 11:2; Acts 2:41, 42; 20:17-28; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Romans 13:1-7; Acts 4:19-20

We believe in the unity of all New Testament believers in the Church which is the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 3:1-6; 4:11; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; Acts 15:13-18

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian baptism is the single immersion of a believer in water to show our identification with the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, through Whom we died to sin and rose to a new life; that baptism is to be performed under the authority of the local church; and that it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is for believers as it is the commemoration of His death until He comes and that it should always be preceded by self-examination. Acts 8:36, 38, 39; John 3:23; Romans 6:3-5; Matthew 3:16; Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42

Separation

We believe in obedience to the Biblical commands to separate ourselves unto God from worldliness and ecclesiastical apostasy. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Romans 16:17; 2 John 9-11

Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed except in those things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming King of Kings. Romans 13:1-7; 2 Samuel 23:3; Exodus 18:21, 22; Acts 23:5; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:29; 4:19-20; Daniel 3:17, 18

The Final Events

We believe that God's agenda for the world will complete His promised dealings with the Jewish chosen nation and involve the entire world. No one can know or calculate the starting point of the final events mentioned in the Bible.

In broad outline, we believe that God's agenda will realize the following events:

1. The Rapture - The taking up to Heaven of the Church, comprising all true believers regardless of denomination. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17
2. The Tribulation - A period of about seven years when judgment is poured out on unbelieving Jews and Gentiles on earth. Revelation 6-19, Daniel 9:27
3. The Judgment Seat - Meanwhile, the Church in Heaven will face the judgment seat of Christ and enjoy the marriage feast of the Lamb. Revelation 19, 2 Corinthians 5:10
4. The Second Coming - Jesus Christ will return to earth with His hosts of angels and believers to interrupt the Battle of Armageddon by conquering both sides and establishing His promised Messianic Kingdom, which will last 1000 years, with Satan bound and unable to influence earthly life. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, Revelation 20

5. The Final Judgment - After a brief release and uprising, Satan and his demonic hordes will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. Unbelievers who rebelled with Satan, and other resurrected unsaved persons, will face the Great White Throne judgment and be consigned to Hell for eternity. Revelation 20
6. The New Creation - God will create a new heavens and a new earth for His people where they will live joyfully in His presence forever. Revelation 21-22

The Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that only those who are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse; and this distinction holds among all people both in and after death, in the everlasting blessedness of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in the Lake of Fire. Malachi 3:18; Genesis 18:23; Romans 6:17, 18; 1 John 5:19; Romans 7:6; 6:23; Proverbs 14:32; Luke 16:25; Matthew 25:34-41; John 8:21; Revelation 20:14, 15.

In all these things we believe that our church should minister in a gracious, forgiving and Christ-like spirit and seek to bring the non-believer into a right relationship with God and to restore the believer to fellowship. Galatians 6:1-3; Isaiah 54:1-10

ARTICLE V - Associations

This church declares itself to desire fellowship with Regular Baptist Ministries (Formerly: General Association of Regular Baptist Churches), the OARBC (Ohio Association of Regular Baptist Churches), the Hebron Fellowship of Regular Baptist Churches, and other fellowships of like faith.

ARTICLE VI - Membership

Admission

Any person who wishes to be a member of this church must:

1. Give personal testimony of personal saving faith in Jesus Christ
2. Give proclamation of this faith through baptism by immersion
3. Declare themselves in accord with the Mission, Vision, Statement of Faith, Responsibilities of Members of this church and the intent and purposes set forth in general terms in this Constitution.
4. Attend a new members orientation
5. Be interviewed by a member of the Elders and/or Deacons, to give satisfactory testimony of personal salvation and their accordance with the Mission, Vision, Statement of Faith, Responsibilities of Members of this church, and the intent and purposes set forth in general terms in this Constitution.
6. Be encouraged to give a testimony of their Christian experience before the church
7. After completing all these, if the candidate is qualified, the Elders shall make a recommendation to the church at any scheduled meeting and upon approval by a majority of the members at said meeting, the candidate will be a member of the church.

Any person who desires membership that is coming from another church must also walk through the aforementioned admission process. If membership is approved, a letter will be sent by the Clerk of the church to the previous church to remove membership at said church.

Responsibilities of Members

The responsibilities of church membership, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are summarized as follows:

- Gather faithfully with the church
- Read and meditate on the Bible daily
- Pray daily
- Serve outside and inside the church
- Evangelize the lost
- Resist sin and Satan
- Forgive others and seek forgiveness from others and God
- Give financially to the work of this church, the relief of the needy and world evangelism
- Be willing to be made into a disciple and go out and make disciples
- Encourage all others in the church toward all of the aforementioned

These responsibilities come with all kinds of grace; however, the grace given does not lower the standard presented in these responsibilities.

Renewal

There shall be an annual renewal of membership. Such renewal procedures shall be adopted and approved by the Elders of the church.

Kinds of Membership

Active Members

Any person who has been received into the church by the Church Body and is faithfully attending the church shall be considered an active member. Active members, 18 years and older shall be considered voting members. Those members under 18 years of age shall be considered non-voting members. The church may grant rights and privileges of membership to persons who are serving the church on a temporary basis.

Inactive Members

Any person who possesses membership in the church and who no longer resides in the area of the church, but who wishes to remain a part of this church may be retained as an Inactive Member. This category of membership is designed primarily for those who plan to return to this area in the future (e.g., students or military personnel) and for others who may wish to maintain a close connection with the church (e.g., missionaries from the church). Inactive Members are not allowed to vote or hold office in the church.

Delinquent Members

1. Members who for six (6) months have shown a lack of interest in the church and/or continued consistently in non-attendance or non-support of the church shall be contacted in an effort to rekindle interest. Exceptions may be made in the case of unusual circumstances, such as: sickness, missionary service, military service, student, etc. Each case shall be considered individually by the Elders and Deacons.
2. If this effort is unsuccessful, after an additional three (3) months, said members shall be

considered Delinquent Members. The Elders and Deacons shall place such members on the Delinquent Member List, and a report of this action shall be given at a regular business meeting of the church.

3. All members placed on the Delinquent Member List shall be notified by the Elders and Deacons at the place of the last known residence.
4. If after a total period of one (1) year, the delinquent member has not sought and received restoration, upon the approval of the church's membership, that member's name will be dropped from the membership roll, and they will be sent a letter of dismissal.

Those on the Delinquent Member List shall be ineligible to vote or hold office in the church. Delinquent Members may be restored to active membership after such members have given the Elders and Deacons satisfactory explanation or acceptable evidence of honest repentance and confession.

Transfer of Membership

Letters of recommendation and dismissal may be granted to any member in good and regular standing. Such letters must be addressed to some particular church of the same faith and order as this church and sent by the Clerk to the Pastor or Clerk of the church to which the member will affiliate.

Death of a Member

A member's name shall be removed from the membership roll by the Church Clerk, without any church action, upon the death of a member.

Discipline of Church Membership

The purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a Biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs (Galatians 6:1), to maintain purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6) and to deter sin (1 Timothy 5:20).

Any member of this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine and persistently conducts himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church shall be dealt with as follows, according to Matthew 18:15-18:

1. It is the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
2. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
3. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church encouraging the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member.
4. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the Elders and the church, he or she shall be dismissed from the church pursuant to the Scriptures and treated as an unbeliever. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any court. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member.

It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.

ARTICLE VII - Church Officers and Staff

Officers and Staff of this church shall be servants of the church and not its lords, but serving cheerfully and courteously as unto God. They shall be spiritually mature men and women of unquestionable Christian character, faithful to all public services of the church, separated from the world, dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the full welfare of this church. The church shall not elect anyone to office or hire anyone who does not accord with the Mission, Vision, Statement of Faith, Responsibilities of Members, and the intent and purposes set forth in general terms in this Constitution.

The Officers of this church shall be: Elders, Deacons, Trustees, Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Church Clerk. For distinction purposes, paid Elders shall be referred to as Pastors and unpaid Elders shall be referred to as Lay Elders.

The Staff of this church shall be defined as needed per the Selection of Other Pastoral and Church Staff section below.

Lead Pastor

His Qualifications

The Pastor shall be an ordained minister of the Gospel and meet the Scriptural standards as set forth in Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; and 1 Peter 5:1-3.

His Call

The Pastor shall be called for an indeterminate term, He shall continue in office until terminated by death, deposition, or resignation. Both the calling and deposing of a Lead Pastor (1 Timothy 5:19- 20) shall require a three-fourths (3/4) vote of all members present at a meeting specially called for that purpose; previous notice of which must be given by public announcement from the pulpit in the morning service on two Sundays immediately preceding said meeting. A Pastor, when resigning, shall give the church a minimum of thirty days' notice. The church, when deposing a Pastor, must give him one month's notice. Other arrangements may be made by mutual consent.

His Responsibilities

In addition to the responsibilities of being a member of the church, the Lead Pastor shall:

- Serve as presiding Elder (1 Peter 5:1-5; Ephesians 5:23-32) and overseer of the paid and volunteer staff.
- With the other Elders of the Church, exercise spiritual watch-care over the congregation and shall work patiently with the church officers in all matters of decision affecting the corporate life of the congregation.
- Devote all of his God-given abilities to the ministry of bringing the lost in sin to a saving knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ and equipping of the saints.
- Serve as moderator of all business meetings of the church unless he appoints/designates someone else to lead.
- Have the duty and responsibility to supply an appropriate minister of the gospel to preach in his stead during his temporary absence from the church.

- Become a member of the church at the earliest possible moment.
- Have in his charge stated services of public worship; and he shall administer the ordinances and perform the usual duties of a Baptist minister.
- Meet with the Officers of the church (chairman of the Deacons, Trustees, Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Church Clerk) and Leaders of church programs altogether, along with anyone else the Lead Pastor decides to invite no less than two (2) times per year for the purpose of assuring the church is moving forward in its Mission and Vision.
- Assure a nomination form for officers of the church is available to the congregation no less than four (4) Sundays prior to the Annual Business Meeting.

His Deposition

In the event that there are serious accusations against the Pastor, these shall be submitted to the other Elders and Deacons and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of two (2) or more witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). If he is in error in doctrine or conduct, the remaining Elders and Deacons shall, in love, attempt to correct him (Galatians 6:1). If appropriate, the matter shall be referred to the church body.

If the matter is brought before the church body, a three-fourths (3/4) vote by secret ballot shall be required at a specifically called business meeting that has been announced two (2) weeks in advance for a pastor's removal. The chairman of the Deacons shall preside at the special business meeting.

If the church body votes to terminate the Pastor's ministry in the best interest of the church, in such case a minimum of one month's salary shall be allowed, plus any vacation pay due him.

Outside Invitations

The Lead Pastor shall be free to accept invitations to preach the Word of God to other groups or organizations, provided such engagements do not interfere with the work of the church.

Lay Elders and Other Pastoral and Church Staff

Addition of a Position

From time to time it may be expedient to add Lay Elders or additional members to the pastoral staff or church staff. Lay Elders must be approved by the church with a majority vote of those members present and voting, at a meeting called and announced for that purpose. If a staff position requires an addition to the annual budget, the Lead Pastor will present to the church the need, a job description of the position and approximate budget needs. This position must be approved by the church with a majority vote of those members present and voting, at a meeting called and announced for that purpose. All paid Pastoral Staff shall be considered Elders of the Church.

Selection

The seeking and choosing of personnel for these positions will be the responsibility of the Elders, with the approval of the Deacons. Any person selected to Lay Eldership, a pastoral position, or as an employee of the Church, must become a member of the church unless otherwise decided by the Elders and Deacons.

Responsibilities

In addition to the responsibilities of being a member of the church, responsibilities of each Lay Elder, additional Pastoral or Church Staff member shall be determined by the Lead Pastor

along with the Deacons. All Lay Elders, Pastoral and Church Staff shall be responsible to and under the direction and authority of the Lead Pastor.

In the absence of a Lead Pastor, all other Pastoral and Church Staff shall be under the authority of the remaining Elders and the Deacons or their appointee.

Termination

Pastoral staff and church employees are hired as at will employees. Termination shall be decided by the Lead Pastor and with approval of the Deacons, or, in his vacancy, by remaining Elders and Deacons. Pastoral staff and church employees generally will be given one (1) month severance.

Deacons

Qualifications of a Deacon

To be eligible, a candidate must meet the Biblical requirements contained in Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The candidate must be a member in good standing of this church for a period of at least six months. All nominees of this office must never have been divorced or a participant to a marriage annulment.

Election of Deacons

At the Annual Business Meeting the church shall elect not less than one (1) for every fifty members, to serve as Deacons. The term of office for each deacon shall be three (3) years, or to serve the unexpired time remaining in a three-year term where a vacancy exists. Deacons may not succeed themselves in office until a period of one year has lapsed unless the church determines that no other eligible deacon is available to serve.

Responsibilities of a Deacon

In addition the responsibilities of being a member of the church, Deacons shall:

- Attend and participate in meetings of Deacons.
- Assist in preparing and distributing the elements of our Lord's Supper.
- Together with the Elders, interview and examine applicants for baptism and membership.
- Give assistance in baptismal services.
- Assist the Elders in caring for members of the church and others as requested by the Elders.
- Together with the Elders, review the church membership roll at least once a year and make necessary recommendations at the Annual Meeting as to members not in good standing and active standing.
- Elect yearly from their own number a chairman and secretary who shall faithfully keep record of important decisions and actions completed.
- When a vacancy occurs in the office of the Lead Pastor, alongside the remaining Elders, the Deacons shall act as a pulpit committee, or may appoint one, and shall continue to function as such until a new Pastor assumes his duties. It shall bring before the church suitable candidates for the pastorate. When it deems it wise, it shall present to the church at a stated meeting the name of one of these candidates and conduct a vote. It shall continue this procedure until a Pastor is chosen. Chairman of the Pulpit Committee shall be the moderator of the church while it is without a Lead Pastor or other pastoral staff.

Trustees

Election of Trustees

At the Annual Business Meeting the church shall elect up to five (5) church members to serve as Trustees. Their term of office shall be for two (2) years. They may be elected for a second term, but after that, such members may not be re-elected for one (1) year unless the church determines that no other eligible Trustee is available to serve. Additional trustees may be added if deemed necessary by the church.

They shall elect yearly from their own number a Chairman and Secretary who shall keep a faithful record of any important work, acts or transactions performed by the body.

One Deacon and the Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the Trustees.

Responsibilities of a Trustee

In addition to the responsibilities of being a member of the church, Trustees shall:

- Care for the property of the church; to hold, repair, invest and preserve the same, to appoint committees as may be necessary for the implementation of their work. To perform such business concerns of the church as shall from time to time be assigned to them.
- Purchase, acquire, lease, sell, exchange or dispose of real property as authorized by the membership through a majority vote at a constitutionally called business meeting.
- Represent the church in matters to fulfill all requirements of civil law respecting the Trustees of a corporation subject always to the instruction of the Elders of the church.
- Hold in trust the property of the church, to sign mortgage notes as the church may require, to see to insurance on all church property. They shall purchase and maintain adequate fire, casualty, auto, public liability and property damage insurance covering said properties. They shall see that all church financial books are audited as specified by the church.
- Give a written report to the church of their work at the Annual Business Meeting.

The Trustees are at all times servants of the church and subject to its corporate action. All actions of the trustees are subject to the approval of the church. This clause is not designed to interfere with the normal functions of the Trustees, but is designed to safeguard the interests of the church in matters of major importance.

Treasurer

Election of the Treasurer

At each Annual Meeting the church may elect from its membership, by majority vote, a Treasurer. The term for a treasurer shall be one year.

Responsibilities of the Treasurer

In addition to the responsibilities of being a member of the church, the Treasurer shall:

- Keep an accurate account of all monies received and deposited; and disburse all funds as directed by the church.
- Keep an accurate record of various accounts in the church budget.

- Make a full monthly report, upon request, to the Elders and Deacons, and a quarterly and annual report to the church.

The treasurer's records, excluding individual giving, shall at all times be open to inspection by the church membership.

Financial Secretary

Election of the Financial Secretary

At each Annual Meeting the church may elect from its membership, by majority vote, a Financial Secretary. The term for a Financial Secretary shall be one year.

Responsibilities of the Financial Secretary

In addition to the responsibilities of being a member of the church, the Financial Secretary shall:

- Keep an accurate account of the gifts of each contributor and provide each with an annual statement.
- See that all members are supplied with envelopes for tithes and offerings.
- Assist the treasurer with his/her duties as needed.

Church Clerk

Election of the Church Clerk

At each Annual Meeting the church may elect from its membership, by majority vote, a Church Clerk. The term for a Church Clerk shall be one year.

Responsibilities of the Church Clerk

In addition to the responsibilities of being a member of the church, the Clerk shall:

- Keep a complete and accurate record of the proceedings of all church business meetings and the reading of the minutes of the last business meeting.
- Keep an accurate register of the active, inactive, and delinquent members and promptly issue all letters of transfer, commendation, and dismissal when granted.
- Keep records and deaths of deceased members.
- Be responsible to find a substitute to record all proceedings and read minutes in his/her absence.
- File for safekeeping all important papers such as titles, deeds, mortgages, notes, insurance policies, etc.
- Submit a written statistical report of the church membership at the Annual Meeting.

The Clerk's books shall be open at all times to the inspection of the church membership.

Other Officers

As need may arise, the church may add such other officers as deemed necessary by Elders and Deacons through a majority vote of its membership.

ARTICLE VIII - Finances

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

Raising Funds

All funds shall be raised by freewill giving. There shall be no sales, solicitation of the unsaved or other worldly methods used for the purpose of financing the church or any of its auxiliary organizations.

Obligation

No financial obligation shall be placed on the church except by affirmative vote of the church membership at a regularly called business meeting unless specifically set forth in the by-laws allowing for ordinary operating expenses of the church.

ARTICLE IX - Auxiliary Organizations

Recognizing that such organizations are needed, such as men's and women's missionary groups, the church may vote to approve such activities. Such organizations shall always be amenable to the church, and their officers must be members of the church. Church approval is required before the seating of any auxiliary organization officers.

ARTICLE X - Business Meetings

Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Business Meeting of the church for the election of officers, hearing reports, and transacting any other church business shall be held on a Sunday in October. Notice of this meeting shall be given publicly for two preceding Sundays.

Other Business Meetings

Routine business may be transacted at any regular meetings of the church, or a special business meeting may be called by the Elders and Deacons providing such meeting is announced publicly the preceding Sunday. The regular quarterly business meeting of the church shall be held on a Sunday in January, April and July.

Quorum

Thirty three percent of the active voting members present in a regularly called business meeting shall constitute a quorum for any transaction of church business. Business transacted by them shall be legal and binding upon the church. The minimum voting age shall be eighteen (18) years.

ARTICLE XI - Church Property and Facility Use

First Baptist Church of Strongsville's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. Although the facilities are not generally available for public use, we make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.

However, facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict, contradict or are deemed inconsistent with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in our Statement of Faith. The Lead Pastor or someone he appoints shall be the final decision-maker concerning use of church facilities.

ARTICLE XII - Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the active membership at any quarterly business meeting, provided public notice of the proposed change, which shall be in writing and posted publicly for study, has been made in the church on four (4) preceding Sundays. By-laws to this Constitution may be enacted for the purpose of carrying out purposes therein stated.

ARTICLE XIII - Dissolution of First Baptist Church

Should it become apparent that First Baptist Church of Strongsville can no longer function as an active New Testament Church, a special business meeting shall be called by the active church membership for the purpose of dissolving the church. A three-fourths (3/4) affirmative vote of the active church membership, as defined elsewhere in this Constitution, shall be required for the dissolution to become ratified. Based on the affirmative vote of the active church membership ratifying dissolution, all church assets shall be liquidated and all legal debts and encumbrances shall be satisfied. Any remaining assets will be distributed first to the church supported missionaries through their affiliated missionary agencies in the same dollar amount which the missionaries were receiving support from the church budget at the time of dissolution for up to five (5) years and then secondly to the OARBC (Ohio Association of Regular Baptist Churches) for the purpose of church planting/church revitalization.

This constitution supersedes any previous document and church constitution.