

CONSTITUTION
of the
First Baptist Church
Freeport, Illinois

ARTICLE I – NAME

This church shall be called the First Baptist Church of Freeport, Illinois, and is independent and self-governing, not affiliated with any other organization.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE, GOAL, PASSION, MISSION, & DISTINCTIVES

1. The overarching *purpose* of this church shall be to carry out as fully as possible the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has made the Church to be His earthly Body; to witness for Him in our community and to the fullest possible extent throughout the whole world; to observe His ordinances; and to seek to build up His people in all spiritual grace.
2. The overarching *goal* of this church is not only to lead other sinners to Jesus (2 Cor. 5:18-21) but, by God's grace, to present every believer complete in Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 1:28-29; Eph. 4:11-16).
3. The overarching *passion* of this church is to know Christ and to make Christ known (Phil. 3:8-11; Acts 1:8).
4. The overarching *mission* of this church is to do the will of Him who saved us and by God's grace to accomplish His work (John 4:34; Mt. 28:18-20).
5. The overarching *distinctives* of this church are as follows:

The Supremacy of God Over All Things

- HIGH VIEW OF GOD: We proclaim a God-exalting theology, God-centered worldview, and God-glorifying approach to life and ministry.
- GOD-HONORING WORSHIP: We cultivate a transcendent worship which produces the fear of God and great joy.
- GOD-DRIVEN CONVICTIONS: We promote a passion for God's holy name and a defense of His glorious reputation.

The Sufficiency of Scripture in All of Life

- DIVINE REVELATION: We affirm the full inspiration, complete inerrancy, and total infallibility of Scripture.
- BIBLICAL AUTHORITY: We uphold that the Scripture alone is ultimately authoritative for the life of the church and for every believer.
- FULL COUNSEL OF GOD: We acknowledge that the Scripture is sufficient for all matters of life and godliness, including equipping the saints for spiritual growth, guidance, counseling, and ministry.

- **EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING:** We insist that the Scripture should be accurately preached and taught in the power of the Holy Spirit, giving careful attention to sound doctrine and defense of the faith.

The Sovereignty of God in All Aspects of Salvation

- **RADICAL DEPRAVITY:** We hold that man is utterly fallen in sin through Adam's original rebellion, resulting in the total depravity of the entire human race.
- **SOVEREIGN GRACE:** We believe that salvation is rooted in God's gracious choice of undeserving sinners in eternity past, guaranteeing their conversion within time and their glorification for all eternity.
- **LORDSHIP SALVATION:** We proclaim repentance and faith—calling for a decisive break from sin and a surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, inevitably leading to a transformed life.
- **HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY:** We assert that every person is individually accountable to God for believing upon Jesus Christ.
- **GLOBAL PROCLAMATION:** We declare that the gospel should be preached in the entire world to every living creature.

ARTICLE III – DECLARATION OF FAITH AND COVENANT: WHAT WE TEACH

1. We accept and declare the Holy Scriptures to be the ultimate authority as we submit to Christ's Lordship over the Church.
2. We accept the following truths as basic for fellowship and practice:
 - a. **The Holy Scripture:** We believe both the Old and New Testaments to be the verbal, plenary, inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, and our authoritative guide to faith and practice. The Bible is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving faith, knowledge, and obedience. (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21).

In view of these convictions we affirm the *Chicago Biblical Statement on Inerrancy* as well as the *Chicago Biblical Statement on Hermeneutics*.

- b. **Creation and Biblical History:** The phenomenon of biological life did not develop by natural processes from inanimate systems but was specially and supernaturally created by the Creator in six literal days (Genesis 1-2).

The first human beings, Adam and Eve, were specially created by God, and all other men and women are their descendants. In Adam, mankind was instructed to exercise "dominion" over all other created organisms, and over the earth itself, but the temptation by Satan and the entrance of sin brought God's curse on that dominion and on mankind, culminating in death and separation from God as the natural and proper consequence.

The biblical record of primeval earth history in Genesis 1-11 is fully historical and perspicuous, including the creation and Fall of man, the Curse on the Creation and its subjection to the bondage of decay, the promised Redeemer, the worldwide cataclysmic deluge in the days of Noah, and the origin of nations and languages at the tower of Babel.

- c. **The Godhead Three in One:** We believe in but one living and true God, existing in three persons – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, eternal in being, identical in nature, equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections. (Matthew 28:18-19; II Corinthians 13:14; I Peter 1:2; Titus 2:13; Acts 5:3-4; I John 5:7; Galatians 4:6)

We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinities, but one uncreated; and one infinite. So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity; to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden to say, "There are three Gods, or three Lords." The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

- d. **The Person and Work of Jesus Christ:** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became a real man, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. This was done in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. We believe that He purchased our redemption through His death on the cross, His blood being the purchase price, His perfect obedience our righteousness, and that our redemption was secured forever by His literal resurrection from the dead. (John 1:1, 3, 14, 18; 3:16; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-25, 4:25; Matthew 1:21-23; Hebrews 9:26-28)

We further believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted at the right hand of God; where, as the High Priest for His people, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor and Advocate. Jesus Christ is Head and Savior of His Church. (Isaiah 42:1; Mark 16:19; Acts 3:22; Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Hebrew 9:24, 7:25; I John 2:1-2)

- e. **The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit:** We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost, according to the divine promise, and now indwells every believer; and by His baptism unites every believer to Christ in one body, and as the indwelling One, is the source of all power and acceptable worship and service.

We believe that the Holy Spirit's ministry to the world is one of conviction respecting sin, righteousness, and judgment. (Acts 2:1-4; I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:12-13; John 14:16-17, 16:7-11)

We believe that the presence and fullness of the Holy Spirit in the lives of genuine believers are evidenced by the fruits of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

- f. **The Total Depravity of Man:** We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he disobeyed God in Adam; and that he thereby incurred spiritual death, which is separation from God, and also physical death as a consequence. Post-fall, pre-conversion human beings are sinners by nature, choice, and practice. We also teach that man is totally unable, within himself, to retrieve his former condition. Fallen man is helplessly hopeless and hopelessly helpless. (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:17; 3:6-7; Ephesians 2:1, 4:18-19; Romans 5:12, 3:10; Jeremiah 17:9)
- g. **Salvation:** We believe that salvation is the gift of God, by the grace of God, and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith alone.

Regeneration & Election: We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict, negate, or lessen the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord. (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17)

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification: We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification: Any good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith, and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, and glorify God.

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ. (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23)

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin. (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16)

The Eternal Security of the Believer: We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). True believers will persevere to the end (John 10:27-30, Jude 24-25, Philippians 1:6).

- h. **The Church:** We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from the nation Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), and was a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We teach that these men lead as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their biblical leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2) and, mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We believe the local church is to be supported by the tithes and offerings of believing members (I Corinthians 9:6-14). It is through the church that we are to give our tithes and offerings as God has prospered us (I Corinthians 16:1-2). God has given us all that we have and tells us to give back to Him what already belongs to Him (Malachi 3:8-10). Giving is the measure of our heart's attitude, our obedience, and our love for Him (II Corinthians 8:7-8; 9:6-7).

- i. **Church Ordinances:** We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only ordinances of the church and that they are a scriptural means for testimony of the Church in this age.

We believe that baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit setting forth the believer's identification with the Lord in His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is an outward sign of inward faith and repentance. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41, 8:36-38; Romans 6:1-5)

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of His death until He comes again and is to be practiced by all believers. Communion is a memorial of that one offering up of Himself by Himself upon the cross, once for all. (Luke 22:17-19; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Hebrews 9:25-28)

- j. **The Christian Life:** We believe that it is the prime responsibility of every person who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; Titus 3:5) to yield daily to Him their desires and will, that He may produce spiritual fruit of character in the life of the believer (Romans 6:11-13, 8:14; Galatians 5:17, 22, 23) and thus fulfill the divine purpose in predestination, molding the believer to the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:29; II Corinthians 3:18) and to the glory of God (I Peter 2:9f; Ephesians 1:4-6).

We believe that all true believers should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior; they should be separated from all religious apostasy, and all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations as commanded by the Word of God. (II Timothy 3:1-5; I John 2:17-18; II Corinthians 6:14, 7:1)

We believe that it is a chief responsibility and privilege of all who are saved to witness of their Savior seeking to win the lost to Him. Evangelism should be a priority for every member of Christ's Church. (Matthew 28; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:14-20; John 15:16, 17:18)

- k. **The Roles of Men and Women in the Church and Home:** Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we teach the following: Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood. The idea of distinct genders (male and female) proceeds from the mind of God (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).

Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).

Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin. (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9)

The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women. (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16)

- In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
- In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.

The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the local church (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men. (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15)

In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin. (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2)

We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these Scriptural principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

- I. **Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality:** We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4).

We teach that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10)

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of First Baptist as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the First Baptist members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by First Baptist in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22)

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11). We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31).

- m. **The Personality of Satan:** We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).
- n. **The Return of Jesus Christ:** We believe in the imminent, personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own, and His subsequent premillennial return to the earth to set up His Kingdom. (Acts 15:16-17; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4; Revelation 20)
- o. **The Eternal State:** We believe that at death the spirits and souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence, and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming, whereupon soul and body will be reunited to enjoy the glories of heaven forever. We believe also that the souls of those who have rejected Jesus Christ as Savior remain after death in a conscious misery until the final judgment of the Great White Throne, when soul and body shall be cast into the lake of fire to be punished with an everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord forever. (II Corinthians 5:6-8; Luke 16:19-26; II Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 20:11-15).
- p. **Summary Statement:** The declaration of faith (Article IV) and core values (Article V) do not exhaust the extent of all of our convictions. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with the final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of First Baptist Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Senior Pastor and board of deacons are First Baptist's final interpretative authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

ARTICLE V- CORE VALUES

1. Scripture alone has ultimate authority and sufficiency; therefore, our doctrine comes from God's Word: the Bible.
2. We seek, by God's grace, to equip and educate God's people for the work of service.
3. We must declare God's glory both near and far. In doing this, we must ensure that the gospel we proclaim is the biblical gospel.
4. We are committed to strengthen marriages and the family. We uphold covenant marriage and family as the first God-ordained unit of nurture and instruction in godliness. In this, we seek also to uphold the sanctity of life in our culture of death. Marriage is the monogamous and life-long relationship between one man and one woman.

5. Worship of God should be both thoroughly biblical as well as deeply joyful; it must be God-centered, not man-centered.
6. We uphold a regenerate church membership. Covenantal care and church discipline are parts of this membership.
7. The church is always being reformed according to the Word of God. Hence, we uphold the importance of the expositional preaching and teaching of God's Word.
8. We seek, by God's grace, to be a model church and a sending church.
9. We long to be a prayerful church, deeply aware of God's call upon His people to pray and His promise to answer prayer offered in faith and in accord with His will.
10. We are committed to a godly and biblical leadership, composed of pastors/elders and deacons, with lay ministry teams carrying out many aspects of the work of ministry.
11. We are a neighborhood church in the Freeport community. We seek to know and care for the needs of people in this particular community.
12. We are committed to provide a place of worship and spiritual instruction that is safe, Biblical, and honoring to God as a light to the community.
13. We affirm the sufficiency of God's Word (Sola Scriptura). Holy Scripture teaches us that our eternal salvation is by grace alone (Sola Gratia), through faith alone (Sola Fide), in Christ Jesus alone (Sola Christus). God's sovereign plan of redemption brings all the glory back to our Triune God (Soli Deo Gloria).

ARTICLE IV – CHURCH COVENANT

We accept the following truths as a covenant which binds us together as a local church.

We covenant to live our lives according to New Testament principles and guidelines.

Having been led by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; we do now in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations. We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to evangelize and disciple our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord; to seek the salvation of our friends and our neighbors; to walk carefully in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, exemplary in our behavior and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior. We will seek, by God's grace, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and in sorrow; to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy in speech;

to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay. We moreover engage that, when we leave this church fellowship, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. RECEPTION OF MEMBERS INTO THIS CHURCH:

Members shall be received into this church:

- i. By baptism. Such persons as confess Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord, and have been baptized by immersion.
- ii. By letter. Those who present letters of transfer and recommendation from other like-minded churches.
- iii. By experience. Those who have once been members of like-minded churches and have no regular letters of dismission may be received by vote of the church upon recommendation from the Board of Deacons.

All candidates must be willing to attend a membership class which will consider the doctrines listed above.

All candidates shall be approved by the Pastor and Board of Deacons before coming before the congregation for inclusion into membership. Prospective membership candidates shall give personal testimony to faith in Christ, baptism, agreement to the doctrinal statement of the church, and the spirit of the church covenant.

Section 2. DISMISSION FROM THIS CHURCH

- a. By death.
- b. By letter. A letter of transfer will be given to any member who desires to unite with another like-minded church so long as they are not currently going through the Matthew 18 process.
- c. By erasure. Any person, by their own request, may have their name erased from the roll so long as they are not currently going through the Matthew 18 process. Any member uniting with any other church, not requesting a letter, will have their name erased from the roll.
- d. By discipline. Any member who disregards the church covenant and/or First Baptist's declaration of faith is subject to church discipline (see Addendum I).

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Cor 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin and promoting purity (1 Tim 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Gal 6:1).

The Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for flagrant unrepentant sin or serious doctrinal error, with the goal of the restoration of the offender. This discipline is entrusted to the Pastor and Board of Deacons and is to follow the biblical pattern as set forth in Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:7-8; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10-11; and 2 John 7-11.

Any member of this church who practices or affirms a doctrine or conduct that, in the judgment of the Pastor and Board of Deacons is opposed to the teaching of the Word of God, or is threatening to the testimony of this church, or is divisive to the body, shall be subject to church discipline.

Discipline will follow the said biblical pattern, and is an effort to bring the individual to repentance and protect the church from unrepentant sin (1 Corinthians 5). Discipline may involve exclusion from participation in ministry and communion, as well as dismissal from the fellowship of this church.

The Pastor and Board of Deacons, as is required by Scripture, may report to the congregation the names of those who have lost membership by reason of church discipline, and the reason for that discipline, as described in Matthew 18:15-20.

The members of this church further knowingly and voluntarily agree that a member cannot voluntarily withdraw or resign his or her membership in the midst of the discipline process, and may only voluntarily withdraw or resign his or her membership if they are not the subject of a discipline proceeding at the time or only after a disciplinary process, of which they are the subject, has been concluded as determined by the Board of Deacons. Members under discipline shall not be counted as active members and shall have no right of membership.

Section 3. INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

Any member who is absent from the church without manifesting covenant faithfulness by attendance, service, communication and contribution may be placed on the Inactive Roll by the Board of Deacons. Such persons should be notified of their status. Persons carried on the Inactive Roll shall not be counted as active members and shall have no right of membership. Inactive members may have their names placed on the Active Roll, upon recommendation of the deacons, and by vote of the congregation when interest in the church is manifested through renewed covenant commitment.

ARTICLE VII – OFFICERS

GENERAL:

1. All officers of this church and its auxiliary organizations shall be members of this church.
2. The officers of this church shall consist of the Senior Pastor, the church Clerk, the Financial Secretary, the Chairman of Deacons, and the Chairman of Trustees.

Section 1. SENIOR PASTOR (Ref. Article VII, Section 1)

Section 2. CHURCH CLERK

The Church Clerk shall keep a correct and permanent record of all the business meetings of the church and maintain a register of active members. The Clerk shall enter upon the records of the church current events in the life of the church that are likely to be of historical value, thus making the church records a continuous story of the history of the church. The Clerk shall be appointed annually by the Board of Deacons.

Section 3. FINANCIAL SECRETARY

The Financial Secretary shall receive all funds given to the church for expenses through the regular channels and through special offerings. This servant shall keep a complete record of individual contributions through envelopes and checks. All monies should be counted by the Financial

Secretary and at least one other church member (one who is not a relative of the Financial Secretary) and shall be deposited weekly. The Financial Secretary shall send a yearly financial statement to all contributing members showing their individual financial contributions and they shall make annual and semi-annual reports to the church.

Section 4. CHAIRMAN BOARD OF DEACONS
(Ref. ARTICLE IX, General)

Section 5. CHAIRMAN BOARD OF TRUSTEES
(Ref. ARTICLE IX, General)

ARTICLE VIII – PASTOR AND PASTORAL STAFF

Section 1. SENIOR PASTOR

- a. The Senior Pastor shall have charge of the church in all things spiritual, shall preach and teach the Word of God, administer the ordinances, and watch over, guide, and advance the religious interests of the people. He shall be a member of the church. He shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees. The Pastor must continue to meet the biblical qualifications as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- b. His pastoral relationship with the church may be dissolved upon two months' notice given by either the church to the Pastor or the Pastor to the church. The senior pastor shall give notice in writing to the church of his intention to terminate his service as senior pastor at least sixty days in advance. Upon recommendation from the deacons, the church may, by a two-thirds majority vote at a called business meeting, declare the pulpit vacant. The church shall give sixty days notice as to the effective date of such termination of the Senior Pastor's service. However, upon mutual agreement between Senior Pastor and church, the length of time of notice required may be altered.
- c. The calling of the Senior Pastor shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, notice of which shall have been given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays. A vote by ballot of three-fourths of the members present and voting shall be necessary to constitute a call.
- d. The Senior Pastor will moderate all business meetings of the church. In his absence or at his discretion, the Chairman of the Board of Deacons becomes moderator.

Section 2. PASTORAL STAFF

- a. Qualifications of pastoral staff members shall always be in harmony with the New Testament standards (1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9). Responsibilities of the pastoral staff will be determined by the Senior Pastor and the Board of Deacons.
- b. All staff must be (or become) a church member if they are to serve the flock in this capacity.
- c. The call of the pastoral staff shall be the same as that described in Article VIII, Section 1c.
- d. The pastoral staff shall be directly responsible to the Senior Pastor and Board of Deacons.
- e. The call may be terminated at any time by a thirty (30) day written notice by either the pastoral staff member or the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE IX – BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

GENERAL:

1. The Chairman of all boards and committees shall continue in office until their successors are elected.
2. Any board member who fails to perform his responsibilities as a member may have his office declared vacant by the Board of Deacons.
3. A simple majority of the board's members shall be a quorum.
4. Ex-officio members of boards will have all privileges as elected members.
5. No person shall serve on more than one board at a time (except the Senior Pastor per Article VIII, Section 1a).

Section 1. BOARD OF DEACONS

- a. The number of deacons shall be determined by the size of the church membership and the particular needs of the congregation. Deacons shall meet all the biblical qualifications as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- b. Terms shall last four years.
- c. Any qualified deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13) who desires to serve additional term(s) must go through the entire nomination process again before serving an additional term.
- d. It shall be the duty of the deacons to distribute the elements of the Lord's Supper; to receive and disburse the deacon's fund offerings there taken; to assist the Senior Pastor in matters of discipline, the examination of candidates, and the ordinance of baptism; to engage in visitation; to appoint an usher chairman and approve all ushers; and in general to counsel, cooperate with, and aid the Senior Pastor in the spiritual interests of the church.
- e. They, along with the Pastor, shall determine for what purposes, other than the regular religious and social gatherings of the church, the buildings may be used. Church facilities may be used for weddings only where both prospective spouses are church members in good standing; church facilities are not available to the general public for that purpose. Building usage is generally reserved for members in good standing.
- f. The Board of Deacons shall receive monthly the minutes of each other board. They shall appoint three of their members to the Church Budget Committee.
- g. The Board, along with the Senior Pastor, shall have the authority to restrain the action of any board.
- h. The Board, along with the Senior Pastor, shall approve the appointment of music and secretarial staff, Sunday School staff, youth leaders and those filling any other position of ministry within the church. They shall supervise the activities and curriculum of these individuals and groups.
- i. All matters that are to be presented before the church body shall be first presented to the Board of Deacons for consideration and approval.

Section 2. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- a. The number of trustees shall be determined by the size and the particular needs of the congregation.
- b. Terms shall last three years.
- c. The trustees shall have charge of the church property, keeping the same insured and in repair, and shall approve the purchase of all necessary supplies and equipment. They shall monthly hear a financial report and act on all bills presented. They shall employ a custodian if sufficient funds are available to do so.
- d. They shall have no power, except as specially conferred by the church, to mortgage or sell the property; nor to incur any indebtedness. All expenditures must receive prior approval of the trustees except those individuals authorized by the budget committee may make expenditures within budgetary limits not to exceed \$750. Expenditures from a budget category shall have the approval of the individual held responsible for said category. Any expenditure exceeding the annual budget allotment in excess of \$750 must be authorized by the church by either a specific approval or a budget revision.
- e. They shall appoint annually three of their members to the Church Budget Committee.

Section 3. BOARD OF DEACONESSES

- a. The number of deaconesses shall be determined by the size and the particular needs of the congregation.
- b. Deaconesses must meet the biblical qualifications as laid out in 1 Timothy 3:11.
- c. Terms shall last three years.
- d. They shall cooperate with the pastor(s) and the deacons in the spiritual interests of the church, in the care of the sick and needy, especially among women and children; they shall be the custodians of the baptismal robes and assist at baptisms; they shall be responsible for the preparation of the Lord's Supper and the care of all the communion ware. They shall be actively engaged in the visitation ministry of the church.
- e. They shall annually appoint a Baptismal Committee, a Communion Committee and a Hospitality Committee.
 - 1) The Baptismal Committee shall consist of an appropriate number of deaconesses and shall be responsible for the care of the baptismal robes and for assisting female baptismal candidates.
 - 2) The Communion Committee shall consist of an appropriate number of deaconesses and shall be responsible for the preparation of the Lord's Supper.
 - 3) The Hospitality Committee shall consist of an appropriate number of deaconesses and be responsible for the lodging and meals of guest speakers.

Section 4. BOARD OF MISSIONS

- a. The number of Missions Board members shall be determined by the size and the particular needs of the congregation.
- b. Terms shall last three years.
- c. The Mission Fund Treasurer shall be appointed by the Board of Deacons and shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Missions. The Mission Fund Treasurer shall receive special mission offering, shall disperse the same as directed by the Board of Missions and make a monthly report to the Board of Missions and an annual report to the church.
- d. The Board, along with the Pastor, shall have general supervision of the missionary program of the church and have authority to expend funds as approved in the annual budget.
- e. They shall only recommend candidates to the church for support who have agreed unreservedly to the doctrinal statement of the church.
- f. The Church shall commit 15% of the weekly church offerings (general fund) to financially support gospel outreach ministries and missionaries at home and around the world.

Section 5. PULPIT COMMITTEE

Whenever a vacancy shall occur in the pastorate, the Board of Deacons shall become a Pulpit Committee which, as soon as possible, shall recommend to the church a biblically qualified minister to fill such vacancy. Pastoral candidates must be in harmony with the purpose, goal, passion, mission, distinctives, and doctrine of First Baptist Church.

Section 6. BUDGET COMMITTEE

- a. The church Budget Committee shall be composed of the Senior Pastor, three members appointed by the Board of Trustees, and three members appointed by the Board of Deacons. It shall be the duty of this committee to recommend to the congregation a proposed budget of anticipated receipts and expenditures covering all the regular work of the church for the coming year.

Section 7. AUDITING COMMITTEE

It shall be the duty of the Board of Deacons to appoint annually an Auditing Committee to audit the books of the General Treasurer (Bookkeeper), and the Mission Board Treasurer and to make a written report of same to the church.

Section 8. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- a. The Nominating Committee shall be the Board of Deacons.
- b. Their duty shall be to recommend persons to fill vacancies as they may arise throughout the year and to recommend candidates for the offices of the church at the next annual meeting.

Section 9. UNDESIGNATED FUNDS COMMITTEE

- a. The Undesignated Funds Committee will be comprised of the Senior Pastor, the Chairman of the Deacon, Mission, and Trustee Boards, plus two Deacon board members, two Trustee Board members, and a member at large (who must be appointed annually by the Board of Deacons).

- b. The moderator of this committee will be the Senior Pastor. In his absence or at his discretion the chairman of the Board of Deacons becomes moderator.
- c. All decisions shall be decided by a majority vote of the entire committee.
- d. Single requests by any group, committee, or person equal to or in excess of \$3000 needs to be approved by the UFC along with a congregational vote before funds are disbursed.
- e. Multiple requests by any group, board, or individual that occur within a twelve month period of time and that are equal to or in excess of \$5,000 will need to be approved by the Undesignated Funds Committee along with a congregational vote before disbursement.

ARTICLE X – MEETINGS

Section 1. DEVOTIONAL MEETINGS

- a. The church shall meet regularly each Lord’s Day for worship, fellowship, and the preaching of God’s Word.
- b. The church shall meet for the regular observation of the Lord’s Supper.
- c. The church shall be committed to prayer (individually and corporately).

Section 2. BUSINESS MEETING

- a. Church Year. The fiscal year of the church shall begin on the first day of January and closed on the last day of December.
- b. Quorum. At regular or special business meetings of the church, twenty (20) members of the active membership over eighteen (18) years of age shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All questions shall be decided by a majority vote, except in cases otherwise designated.
- c. Annual Business Meeting. It shall be held by the final week in January for the purpose of receiving the annual reports of individual officers, boards, and committees of the church, and its auxiliary organizations, the appointment of officers and the election of board members and the transaction of such other business as is proper to come before this meeting.
- d. Church Budget Meeting. It shall be held by the third Sunday in November for the purpose of voting on the annual church budget.

Section 3. SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

Special meetings will generally occur after being announced by leadership at two successive Sunday morning services. In circumstances which pose a unique concern to the spiritual health of the fellowship, the deacons may authorize a meeting with one week’s notice.

ARTICLE XI – AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1. OFFICERS

The officers of all adult and young people's auxiliary organizations shall be members of the church, elected by their respective organizations.

Section 2. CONSTITUTIONS

The constitutions of auxiliary organizations shall be drawn so as not to conflict with the constitution of this church and be approved by the Board of Deacons.

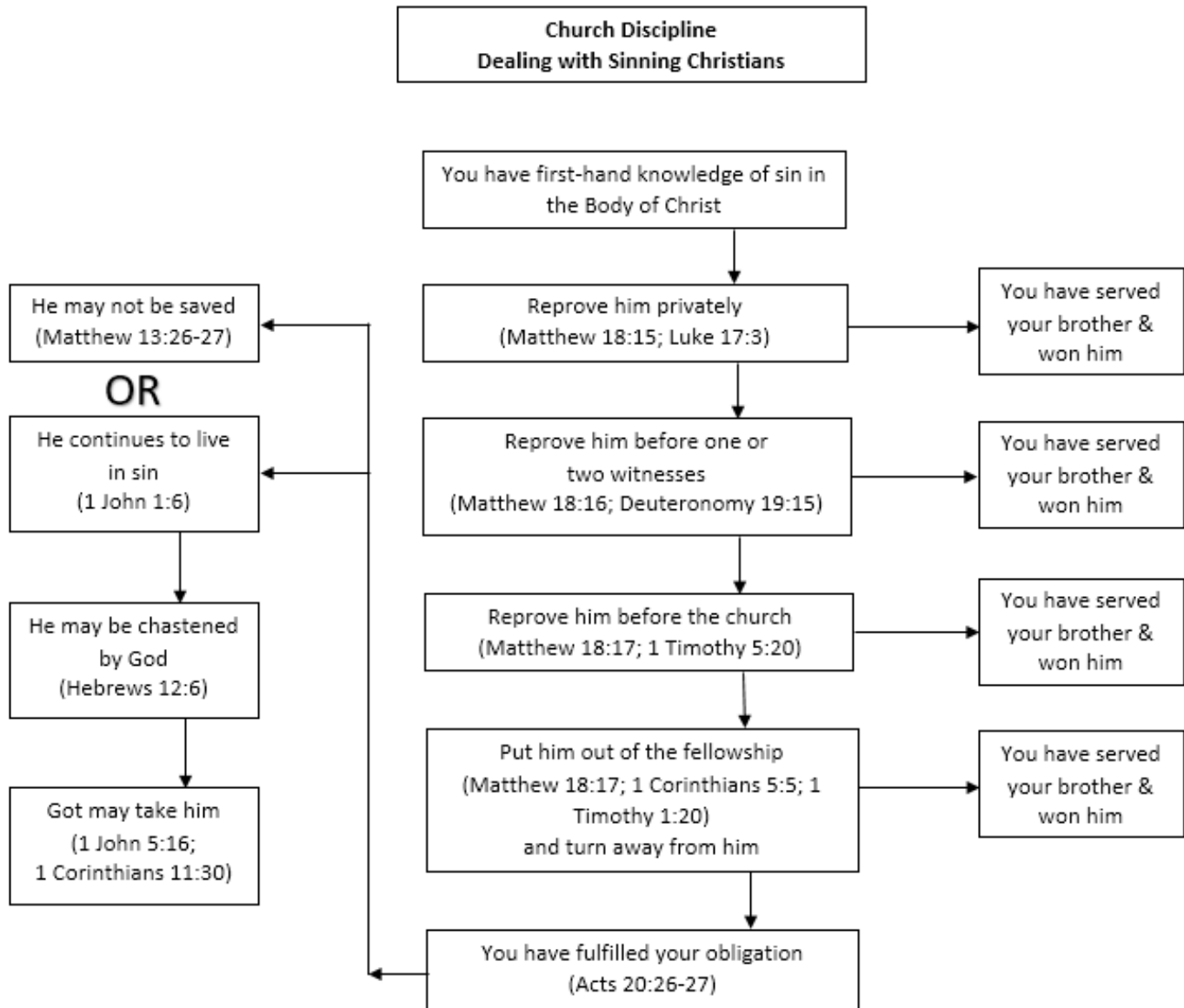
Section 3. MEETINGS

Meetings of auxiliary organizations shall be held at such times as will not conflict with the regular meetings of the church and shall be under the guidance of the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE XII – AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any regular or called business meeting of the church by a three-fourths vote of those present and voting, provided a quorum is present and voting, and that notice of such amendment, stating the proposed change, shall have been given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays.

ADDENDUM 1 (Church Discipline Flow Chart)



1. Private confrontation v.15
2. Witness v.16
3. Tell the church v.17
4. Remove from church v.17