**First Baptist Church**

**Constitution**

# **Preamble**

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call some of His servants to unite here in Newberry, Michigan, under the name First Baptist Church, to worship God and spread the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ, we, the members of First Baptist Church adopt this Constitution as our bylaws, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of Jesus Christ and bring Him glory, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

# **Article 1 – Name**

1.1 This church shall be known as First Baptist Church.

# **Article 2 – Purpose**

**Section 1 - Mission**

2.1 We exist to lead all people into a transformed relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ – Romans 12:1-2

**Section 2 - Purpose**

2.2 This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

* Worshipping Him
* Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study and example
* Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of the Holy Scripture
* Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international
* Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion
* Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers
* Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ

**Section 3 - Doctrine**

2.3.1 This church accepts the Holy Bible as the Word of God and recognizes that the New Testament, in particular, is the infallible guide of the faith and practices for the church. We hold the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith with pre-millennial revision as a declaration of the principle tenets of our belief. A detailed statement of our beliefs follows:

2.3.2 Of the Scriptures: We believe that the Holy Bible as originally written was verbally inspired and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore, as truth without any admixture of error for its matter. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions shall be tried. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21

2.3.3 Of the True God: We believer there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, and 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 Ghost, 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; 1 John 5:7

2.3.4 Of 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. John 14:16-17; Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Genesis 1:1-3; John 16:8-11; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5-6; Ephesians 1:13-14; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Luke 24:49; Romans 8:14, 16, 26, 27.

2.3.5 Of the Devil, or Satan: We believe in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, and the author of all the powers of darkness, and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire. Matthew 4:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:10

2.3.6 Of Creation: We believe the Biblical account of the creation of the physical universe, angels, and man; 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 God created the world in six literal 24-hour days as stated in the Genesis record; and that all men 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. 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 immoral and a perversion of God’s gracious will. Genesis 2:18, 24, 25; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:24-29; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4.

2.3.7 Of the Fall of Man: We believe that man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not only by constraint, but of choice; and therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse. Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 5:10-19; Romans 1:18-32.

2.3.8 Of the Virgin Birth: We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of a 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 1:4.

2.3.9 Of the Atonement for Sin: We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin, honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for sin; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but as a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner’s place, the Just dying for the unjust; Christ, the Lord, bearing our sin 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 and tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; John 3:16; Matthew 18:11; Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:14; Isaiah 53:4-7; Romans 3:25; 1 John 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

2.3.10 Of Grace in the New Creation: We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Jesus Christ; 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 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 and faith and newness of life. John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:27; 1 John 5:1; John 3:6-7; Acts 16:30-33; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:13; John 3:8

2.3.11 Of Justification: We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification. That justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life, on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done; but solely through faith in the Redeemer’s blood, His righteousness imputed to us. Acts 13:39; Isaiah 53:11; Zechariah 3:1; Romans 8:1; Romans 5:1, 9

2.3.12 Of Faith and Salvation: We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Acts 16:31

2.3.13 Of the Local Church: We believe that a local church is a 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 privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We believe the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity. 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; on all matters of membership, of polity, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, and will of the local church is final. Acts 2:41-42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23-24; Acts 15:13-18.

2.3.14 Of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper: We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation. We believe that the Lord’s Supper is the commemoration of His death until He come, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. Acts 8:26-39; John 3:23; Romans 6:3-5; Matthew 3:16; Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

2.3.15 Of 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.

2.3.16 Of the Righteous and the Wicked: We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the 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 men both in life and after death in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost. Malachi 3:18; Genesis 18:23; Romans 6:17-18; 1 John 5:19; Romans 7:6; Romans 6:23; Proverbs 14:23; Luke 6:25; Matthew 25:24-41; John 8:21.

2.3.17 Of 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 things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming Prince of the kings of the earth. Romans 13:1-7; 2 Samuel 23:3; Exodus 18:21-22; Acts 23:5; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:20; Acts 4:19-20; Daniel 3:17-18.

2.3.18 Of the Resurrection: Personal, Visible, Premillennial Return of Christ and Related Events: We believe in the bodily resurrection – Matthew 28:6-7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; 1 Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6; the ascension – Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19; Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 12:2; the high priesthood – Hebrews 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 5:9-10; the second coming – John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; James 5:8; Hebrews 9:28; the resurrection of the righteous dead – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 52; the change of the living in Christ – 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20-31; The throne of David – Luke 1:32, Isaiah 9:6-7; Acts 2:29-30; the millennial reign – 1 Corinthians 15:25; Isaiah 32:1; Isaiah 11:4-5; Salm 72:8; Revelation 20:6, 14.

# **Article 3 – Membership**

**Section 1 – Requirements**

3.1.1 Members of this church will be believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

* Who give evidence of regeneration
* Who have been baptized by immersion after salvation
* Who are in essential agreement with the Statement of Faith and are committed to uphold all the beliefs and doctrines described therein
* Who commit to keep the church covenant
* Who seek to glorify God with their lives and do not harbor known sin

3.1.2 The normal process for becoming a member is completion of all sessions of the First Baptist Church membership class, an assessment of a person’s qualifications for membership in an interview with an elder, and a vote by the entire church on the basis of the elders recommendation and the person’s profession of faith.

**Section 2 – Reception**

3.2.1 A member is a person who, upon public profession of faith, baptism, and affirmation of the members, has placed themselves under the accountability of this church, promising together with this church to uphold our covenant and statement of faith.

3.2.2 Persons may be received into church membership in one of the following ways:

* Upon baptism by this church following profession of faith
* By testimony of faith and prior baptism
* By restoration

3.2.3 To be received into membership, applicants will be recommended by the elders and affirmed by at least ¾ majority of members present and voting at any regularly scheduled meeting. Members are expected to relinquish their membership in other churches.

**Section 3 – Responsibilities and Privileges**

3.3.1 In accord with the duties listed in the Church Covenant, each member shall be expected to participate actively in the life of the church by

* Regularly attending its Lord’s Day meetings
* By faithfully observing its ordinances, namely, baptism and the Lord’s Supper
* By submitting to its discipline and instruction
* By attending its Members’ Meetings
* By voting on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership, the proposed budget annually, and on any other action necessary as proposed by the elders.

Members 16 years of age or older have one vote on any voting matter. No person who is not a Member shall lead any ministry or hold any office of the church.

**Section 4 – Church Covenant**

3.4.1 I have received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and have been baptized by immersion in obedience to Him. I am in agreement with the mission, vision, strategy, structure, values and doctrine of First Baptist Church. I have decided to unite with the First Baptist family through membership, and in so doing, I commit myself to Jesus Christ and to other First Baptist family members. With the Lord’s help, I will endeavor to do the following:

* I will faithfully attend the gatherings of this church and support its worship, ordinances, ministries, discipline, doctrine, and leaders.
* I will contribute willingly and faithfully of my time and money as acts of worship
* I will pursue unity, love, wholesome and edifying speech, and will seek to serve others as I exercise genuine concern and spiritual care
* I will rejoice with those who rejoice, and will bear the burdens of those who suffer
* I will faithfully admonish and encourage others to live holy lives, considering their spiritual needs to be more important than my own desires
* I will devote myself to the Word, prayer, and the faithful proclamation of the Gospel.
* I will seek to be a faithful member of this or another authentic New Testament local church until the Lord returns or calls me home

**Section 5 – Conflict Between Members**

3.5.1 Believing the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (See, e.g., Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), the church shall urge its members to resolve conflicts among themselves according to Biblically based principles, without resorting to the civil courts.

3.5.2 An important exception to this principle exists for alleged criminal behavior (see Romans 13:1-4), not least because such behavior may in some cases legally be required to be reported to government authorities.

**Section 6 – Church Discipline**

3.6.1 Formative church discipline is inherent in the preaching, teaching, and exercise of other ministries in the church. When formative discipline fails due to unrepentant sin, corrective discipline is then necessary. Corrective discipline is for the good of the church and the member who has sinned. It is never to be entered into lightly or rashly. The goal of corrective discipline is always remedial, that is, the goal is always the salvation and holiness and good of the one being disciplined.

3.6.2 Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, removal from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

3.6.3 The purpose of such discipline should be:

1. For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (Hebrews 12:1-11; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1).
2. For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; Hebrews 10:24-25).
3. For the purity of the church as a whole (1 Corinthians 5:6-7; Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 21:2).
4. For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (Matthew 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14)
5. Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (Deuteronomy 5:11; John 15:8; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:12).

3.6.4 Any member who has undergone discipline by the local congregation, resulting in removal of membership, who wishes to rejoin the membership of the local church, must satisfactorily be interviewed by the elders as to their current relationship with the Lord. Upon approval by the elders, it is desirable in the case of public sin that a confession be made at an appointed meeting of the church, so that the church can freely extend forgiveness. Such public confession is especially necessary in the case of elders and deacons (1 Timothy 5:19-20; Galatians 2:11-14).

**Section 7 – Termination**

3.7.1 Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death, transfer of membership, or voluntary resignation of any church member who is in good standing. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline and with the vote of ¾ of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members, recognizing that members of Christ’s church should strive for unity in all things (Ephesians 4:1-6). The name of any member who may be absent from the services of the church for a period of approximately six months, as determined by the elders, without giving satisfactory reasons for such absence, may be excluded from membership.

# **Article 4 – Officers**

**Section 1 – Purpose of Church Government**

4.1.1 The church is the family of God and its Head is Jesus Christ. Just as God has given us the structure and the function of each person in a family, He has also given instructions for the proper functioning of His church (Ephesians 4:11-16; Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12). The purpose of such structure is to foster spiritual maturity both individually and collectively as a New Testament church. A healthy church encourages the continual growth of all its members toward maturity.

**Section 2 – Structure of Church Government**

4.2.1 All authority is in Jesus Christ, and Scripture teaches that He is the Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). He has revealed His will for us, as the church, through His Word, the Bible. Each local church is governed by its members, led by its elders, and served by its deacons. Elders lead and deacons serve in a complementary yet equally important manner. Elders primarily teach the Word and pray, while deacons focus mainly on physical and practical needs of the body (Acts 6:1-7).

4.1.3 In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church for at least one year before assuming their responsibilities. No officer of this church shall be less than 21 years of age and shall not hold more than one office at a time.

**Section 3 – Elders**

4.3.1 Jesus Christ, as Head of the Church, mediates His rule over the Church by giving elders to shepherd, oversee, lead, and equip the church. These leaders are directly responsible to Jesus Christ for the governing of the church according to His Word (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; 1 Peter 5:1-2).

4.3.2 The New Testament Scripture is clear about those who have the responsibility of rule, oversight, and care of the church. These men are called pastors, elders, overseers, or bishops. All four titles are used to refer to the same spiritual office of leadership in the church and are interchangeable. Whether in a formal staff position or not, all men affirmed to this Biblical role are equally elders (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

4.3.4 God gives elders to the church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11). The Biblical qualifications for elders are as follows:

1. He must be a male (1 Timothy 2:11-3:7)
2. He must desire the office (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2)
3. He must be a spiritually mature man whose lifestyle is marked by moral integrity (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
4. He must be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:1-2)
5. He must be able to lead (1 Timothy 3:4-5)

Furthermore, an elder shall be a member of First Baptist and in full agreement with the statement of faith and church covenant.

4.3.5 Elders are given to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11). The primary biblical duties of an elder are as follows:

* To study, teach, and preach God’s Word (Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 4:13; 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; 4:2)
* To pray (Acts 6:4; James 5:14)
* To protect the church from false doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16; Titus 1:9; Acts 20:28-30)
* To equip the saints (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Additionally, the elders shall provide broad oversight to the ministry, financial management, and resources of the church. The elders shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as they undertake the work of shepherding God’s flock. They shall take particular responsibility to oversee worship services; administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; officiate weddings and funerals; equip the membership for the work of the ministry; encourage and teach sound doctrine; admonish and correct error; oversee the process of church discipline; coordinate and promote the ministries of the church; mobilize the church for world missions; examine and instruct prospective members; examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions; and oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and ministries. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions. The elders oversee the establishment of the church budget.

4.3.6 Elders shall be selected as follows: The elders themselves shall at any regular members’ meeting present to the church a list of nominees to the office of elder. For a period of at two weeks, the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders, who may after investigating the allegations of disqualification, remove names from the list of nominees. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the elders shall at the next regular members’ meeting present a final list of nominees to the church, who shall vote yea or nay on each of the nominees in turn. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of at least ¾ of the members present and voting on his nomination shall be an elder, which men the church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.

At least once in every year, the elders shall at any regular members’ meeting solicit from the congregation recommendations for the office of elder, which recommendations shall be given to the elders in private, and not publicly. The elders shall give due consideration to any recommendation received. Nominations should be made with prayerful consideration to the talents, gifts, and abilities of the individuals.

The number of elders shall be as many as are qualified and recognized. If the number of recognized elders is fewer than three, the remaining elder(s) will involve the deacons in the evaluation, recognition and reevaluation process.

Upon affirmation, an elder shall be licensed by the church to the gospel ministry, as recognized by the State of Michigan, and the license shall be valid as long as he remains an elder at this church. The license terminates when a man is no longer an elder of this church.

4.3.7 Whether paid or not, all men affirmed to this biblical role are equally elders. But the church has the privilege of freeing some elders from their secular vocation through financial support in order to receive the blessing of their devotion to the ministry of the church. When it is determined that there is a need for a staff elder, and the church has the resources, the elders shall inform the membership of the desire to fill such a position. Once this man has been identified and evaluated by the elders, the man proposed to fill the ministry position will be presented to the membership. The elders shall seek opportunities for membership interaction and consideration for a period not less than 30 days. The elders will only present one potential candidate at a time.

After public consideration, the elders shall call a special meeting for the purpose of a formal affirmation of the membership regarding the hiring of this man as a staff elder. This process shall affirm the elders’ evaluation, the man’s unique giftedness to this church, the job description, and his compensation package. The decision to compensate an elder financially will be handled by the elders and the membership in the same way as any other major financial commitment. Recognizing a staff elder requires affirmation of ¾ of members present and voting by written ballot. Upon affirmation, candidates from outside of First Baptist will become a member of First Baptist Church.

Each staff elder shall be provided a job description that defines his intended duties and responsibilities, compensation, expectation for office hours and ministry availability. The job description shall clearly convey his accountability to other staff and elders and describe the structure for mentoring in ministry growth and experience.

4.3.8 An elder shall serve indefinitely unless he becomes spiritually disqualified, incapable of serving, resigns, or desires a temporary leave for personal, health, or other reasons. Every three years, and at the discretion of the elders’ collectively any time before the conclusion of three years, the elders collectively will conduct a thorough review of each elder. The review will address the elder’s biblical qualifications, character, competence, and theological conviction. As a result of this review a man may be encouraged by his fellow elders toward areas of spiritual growth, specific study, and accountability and mentoring.

4.3.9 An elder shall be removed from office upon the vote of 3/4 of the members present and voting on the question at any members’ meeting. Any accusation or action against an elder must be presented to the elders in accordance with Scripture (1 Timothy 5:17-21).

4.3.10 As a shepherd and caregiver of the body, with the desire to maintain unity in the church, elders are requested to give reasonable notice (no less than 30 days) if they intend to resign or retire.

**Section 4 – Deacons**

4.4.1 The office of deacons is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. They are to serve the church in an official capacity in order to free elders for ministry of the Word and prayer.

4.4.2 The church shall recognize men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess gifts of ministry, and who are called to further service and care for the church’s members. The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and the call and qualifications of men and women in the church. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons.

4.4.3 Deacons/deaconesses shall advise and assist the elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the church, and the care of the members in the congregation. The deacons/deaconesses may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Scripture, deacons/deaconesses shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority, but work to support the elders ministry of the Word, work to maintain the unity of the church, and care for the physical needs of the church. Specifically, they shall

1. Provide for the temporal needs of the church family
2. Lead hospitality ministries in the church
3. Appoint three of their number to act as trustees for First Baptist Church in all legal matters
4. Receive and dispense the benevolent fund, according to the written guidelines established by the deacons
5. Assist in dispensing the elements of the Lord’s Supper
6. Shall, in co-operation with the treasurer, collect and count all church offerings.
7. Oversee the maintenance and care of all church property, including oversight of the janitorial service.
8. Coordinate with the elders concerning the use of the church building for other than regularly scheduled activities, including groups from outside the congregation.
9. To organize themselves and assemble teams as they feel necessary in carrying out their responsibilities.

4.4.4 Deacons and Deaconesses shall be selected as follows: The elders shall at any regular members’ meeting present to the church a list of nominees to the office of deacon/deaconess. For a period of at least two weeks, the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders, who may, after investigating the allegations of disqualification, remove names from the list of nominees. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the elders shall at the next regular members’ meeting present a final list of nominees to the church, who shall vote yea or nay on each of the nominees in turn. The Moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of ¾ of the members present and voting on his nomination shall be a deacon/deaconess, which men or women the church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.

At least once in every year, the elders shall at any regular members’ meeting solicit from the congregation recommendations for new diaconate positions and for qualified persons to fill new or vacant positions, which recommendation shall be given to the elders in private, and not publicly. The elders shall give due consideration to any recommendation received. Nominations should be made with prayerful consideration to the talents, gifts, and abilities of the individuals.

4.4.5 A deacon/deaconess shall serve indefinitely unless he or she becomes spiritually disqualified, incapable of serving, resigns, or desires a temporary leave for personal health or other reasons. A thorough re-evaluation of each deacon/deaconess shall be conducted at least once every two years by the elders to determine that he or she continues to be biblically qualified and fit for service. As a result of this evaluation a man or woman may be encouraged by the elders toward areas of spiritual growth, specific study or service, and accountability or mentoring.

4.4.6 A deacon/deaconess may be removed from office by a decision of the elders, or upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members’ meeting. In the event a diaconate position becomes vacant, the elders may appoint a person to fill that position and assume its responsibilities, until such time as some person can be duly recognized by the church as a deacon/deaconess.

**Section 5 – Elder and Deacon Interaction**

4.5.1 The elders have the responsibility to lead, but will delegate certain responsibilities to the deacons. The elders and deacons may share responsibilities as appropriate for their particular ministry roles. Elders and deacons will meet together at least once a quarter for the purpose of ensuring collaboration, unity, and accountability of their different areas of ministry. Elders will meet collectively, apart from the deacons, at least once a month to address the spiritual health, maturity, and growth of the church, and to consider actions necessary to carry out. All decisions of the elders shall be made in a spirit of unity. When a decision of the elders involves or impacts the deacons, the elders will seek collaboration with them before acting. Deacons will also meet collectively, apart from the elders, to focus on practical matters of service to the church. All decisions of the deacons shall be made in a spirit of unity, with consultation of the elders for items of major consideration.

**Section 6 – Treasurer**

4.6.1 The treasurer shall not dispense any funds except on order of the deacons or elders.

4.6.2 The treasurer shall make records available to the deacons or elders for an audit on demand.

4.6.3 The treasurer shall not be an active elder and shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the church. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular members meetings and provide annual reports at the annual members’ meeting. The treasurer shall also pay bills and conduct disbursements for missions, payroll, and special needs as directed by the leadership; accept funds from the offerings and generate deposits with at least one deacon; and support an audit of financial records at minimum every three years, conducted independently of church staff, leadership, and officers.

4.6.4 Nominations for this office should be made with prayerful consideration to the talents, gifts, and abilities of the individuals and may be received at any time of the fiscal year. The final list of nominations will be supplied by the elders at the annual meeting and are to be received by a ¾ vote of members’ present.

4.6.5 The failure of the treasurer to fulfill the responsibilities of his or her office for a period of one month for any reason other than illness, valid absence, or employment may be considered sufficient reason for the church to declare the office vacant and appoint a successor according to the normal appointment procedures outlined above in 4.6.4. Removal of treasurer requires a ¾ vote of the members present at any regular members’ meeting. Treasurer may also be removed for spiritual failures.

4.6.6 The term of an elected treasurer will be from January 1st to December 31 and shall last for three years. Treasurers may serve consecutive terms if they are nominated and reappointed.

**Section 7 – Clerk**

4.7.1 The clerk shall record the minutes of all regular and special members’ meetings of the church, preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and provide reports as requested by the elders, deacons, or the church.

4.7.2 The clerk shall present minutes of prior meetings at subsequent meetings

4.7.3 The clerk shall have custody of all church records except those of the treasurer.

4.7.4 Nominations for this office should be made with prayerful consideration to the talents, gifts, and abilities of the individuals and may be received at any time of the fiscal year. The final list of nominations will be supplied by the elders at the annual meeting and are to be received by a ¾ vote of members’ present.

4.7.5 The failure of the clerk to fulfill the responsibilities of his or her office for a period of one month for any reason other than illness, valid absence, or employment may be considered sufficient reason for the church to declare the office vacant and appoint a successor according to the normal appointment procedures outlined above in 4.7.4. Removal of clerk requires a ¾ vote of the members present at any regular members’ meeting. Clerk’s may also be removed for spiritual failures.

4.7.6 The term of an elected clerk will be from January 1st to December 31 and shall last for three years. Clerks may serve consecutive terms if they are nominated and reappointed.

# **Article 5 – Administration**

**Section 1 – Members Meetings**

5.1.1 In every meeting together, members shall act in a spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5.1.2 There shall be regular members’ meetings at least every quarter, at some time apart from the Sunday morning service, and at a time acceptable to the membership. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

5.1.3 Special members’ meetings may be called as requested by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of 1/3 of the membership. In the event of a written request from the members, the pastors shall call a special meeting to be held within one month after receiving the request.

5.1.4 The elders shall present at a members’ meeting a budget to be approved by the membership no more than three nor less than one month before the start of the fiscal year.

5.1.5 The elders shall designate a moderator at all members’ meetings of the church. The date, time, and purpose of any regular or special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church at least two weeks preceding the meeting. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present.

5.1.6 Resolutions adopted by the elders shall be reported to the church at members’ meetings and may be reversed by the church by a 2/3 vote of the members present.

5.1.7 The annual meeting will be early in the new year. All officers shall submit annual reports.

5.1.8 All business of the church shall be conducted in accordance with *Roberts Rules of Orders* except when in conflict with the constitution.

**Section Two – Fiscal Year**

5.2.1 The church fiscal year shall be from January 1st to December 31st

**Section Three – Financial Matters**

5.3.1 All funds of the church shall be raised on a voluntary basis. No promotional means of fund raising will be permitted without permission of the deacons. The elders, in collaboration with the deacons, shall develop and present a detailed budget of spending from the General Fund that is in keeping with the projected income for the upcoming year at the Annual Meeting. The proposed budget shall be affirmed by the majority of the members present and voting. Any unbudgeted expenses that exceed 2% of the annual budget shall be affirmed by the majority of the members present and voting at any regular or special members meeting.

5.3.2 A benevolent fund may be established out of special giving to support specific needs of the membership and those connected with this church. Such a fund will be managed by and disbursed at the discretion of the deacons upon substantiation of need. A report of total contributions and disbursements from this fund shall be provided to the membership on a quarterly basis.

**Section Four – Change of Constitution**

5.4.1 The church may make any necessary change in the constitution or bylaws but such changes shall be made available to all members at least 30 days previous to the regular or special members meeting and a ¾ vote majority vote of members present shall be required for adoption. It will be the responsibility of the strategic leadership team to review the constitution and draft any necessary changes every three years.

**Section Five – Control by Other Corporations**

5.5.1 This corporation shall not be controlled by any other corporation, although we may seek counsel in an advisory manner. A minimum of three elders shall serve as the board of directors in accordance with the Michigan Non-Profit Corporation Act. If the number of recognized and functioning elders is fewer than three, one or more of the deacons shall assist in this capacity.

**Section Six – Right to Vote**

5.6.1 The right to vote upon church affairs is limited to members of the church in good standing, 16 years of age and over. However, this right may be denied to those who have for approximately six months prior failed or neglected to communicate or participate in its activities, as determined by the elders and deacons.

**Section Seven – Petitions**

5.7.1 No one shall circulate a petition in the church without having submitted it to the elders and received their permission.

**Section Eight – Methods of Voting**

5.8.1 All congregational votes concerning the calling of elders will be by ballot. The method of voting, whether by ballot, hand, or voice, in other voting instances, is up to the discretion of the officer moderating the meeting. Applications for absentee ballots may be received from the Clerk. Absence from the city or extreme illness are considered the only viable reasons for approval of said application.

**Section Nine – Other Positions**

5.9.1 The elders may appoint members to spiritual leadership positions such as Christian Education Director, Children’s Sunday School Director, Small Group Leaders, and other roles as needed. The deacons may appoint members to service positions such as Nursery Coordinator, Head Usher, and other roles as needed. Terms of service will be based on the duration of need and willingness of the appointed individuals to continue serving in that capacity. The membership shall be informed of changes to ministry leadership appointments.

5.9.2 The elders may establish ministry teams such as missions, Christian education, hospitality, and others as needed, for the purpose of advising, directing, and/or leading areas of specific ministry focus including aspects of both teaching and service. Terms of service will be based on the duration of need and willingness of the appointed individual to continue serving in that capacity. The membership shall be informed of all changes to ministry teams including creation of new teams, dissolution of existing teams, intended roles and responsibilities, and appointments of team members.

# **Article Six – Missions**

6.1.1 It is the policy of this church to support missions engaged principally in evangelization and establishment of Bible-believing churches. They shall be in hearty agreement with our doctrinal statement, both in doctrine and practice. Christians schools and social agencies such as homes for the aged, children’s homes, etc., shall be considered an appropriate part of the missionary program.

# **Article Seven – Indemnification**

**Section One – Insurance**

7.1.1 The Ministry will purchase and maintain liability insurance on behalf of any and all persons who are or were a director, officer, leader, employee, or volunteer of the Ministry (while serving in their capacity as such). Such insurance will be purchased for the purpose of protecting such persons from covered loss resulting in liability asserted against the above individuals in connection with their activities on behalf of the Ministry.

**Section Two – Indemnification Requests**

7.2.1 Should any director, officer, leader, employee, or volunteer of the Ministry incur any liability as a result of their affiliation with or service to the Ministry that is not covered by the Ministry’s insurance policy, and should such liability result in any out-of-pocket cost to such individual, then such individual may request indemnification from the ministry. The granting of full or partial indemnification shall be at the discretion of the governing board of the Ministry as set forth in Section 3 herein.

**Section Three – Indemnification Decisions**

7.3.1 In relation to any indemnification request that is made pursuant to Section 2 herein, if such request is made by an individual who is not currently serving on the governing board of the Ministry, then the indemnification decision (whether to indemnify the requesting individual, and the dollar amount of such indemnification), will be made by the governing board. Such decisions of the governing board will be final. If the indemnification request is being made by a person who is currently serving on the governing board, then the indemnification decision (whether to indemnify the requesting party, and the dollar amount of such indemnification), will be made by the remaining disinterested members of the governing board. A decision on the indemnification request by a majority of the disinterested members of the Board of Directors will be final.

# **Article Eight – Dissolution**

In the event of dissolution of this corporation, all of its debts shall be fully satisfied. None of its assets or holdings shall be divided among the members, or other individuals, but shall be irrevocably designated by corporate vote, prior to dissolution, to such other non-profit religious corporations as are in agreement with the letter and spirit of the doctrinal statement adopted by this church, and in conformity with the requirements of the United States Internal Revenue Service, Code of 1954 (Section 501.c.3).