

Constitution & Bylaw Changes

First Baptist Church of Marshville

PREAMBLE

In accordance with the scriptural admonition that all things in the church be done in decency and in order, and in the spirit of love, we establish the following Bylaws.

The church is a unique organization, different from secular corporations in its divine origin, sensitivity, responsibility and objectives. It is a corporation only in its legal relationships. Its tasks of ministry require the broadest base of voluntary involvement and support from its membership. Its motivation is spiritual, and the church is most fully alive to the degree that its members permit the love of Christ to be expressed through their attitudes and behavior. (Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 1 John 4:16-19).

ARTICLE 1: NAME

This body shall be known as First Baptist Church of Marshville, a non-profit corporation, having its address in Marshville, North Carolina. Wherein these Bylaws the word "Church" appears, the same shall also mean "nonprofit corporation."

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

The general purposes of this organization are stated in the Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws. It shall be the specific purpose of this body to: **Proclaim and embody the Good News of God's kingdom by becoming a family of faith that worships God, grows in Christ and serves others.**

ARTICLE 3: STATEMENT OF FAITH

We affirm that the Bible contains the inspired Word of God, and with the Spirit's guidance, forms the basis for our beliefs. We steadfastly maintain the divine privilege, given to every believer, to hear and receive God's Word under the direction of God's Spirit. We hold fast to the autonomy of the local church body, and the priesthood of every believer. The church adopts as its statement of faith the "Baptist Faith and Message" adopted in 1963. This statement, though respected, should not be regarded as complete, final, infallible, or binding on the conscience of the individual. We have no creed but Christ.

ARTICLE 4: CHURCH POLITY

This church is a free, autonomous, independent body, congregational in nature, with authority to determine for itself in the manner set forth in the Articles of Incorporation and by these Bylaws, free of any outside control, authority or power, whether governmental or otherwise, all church policies and the use of its property.

First Baptist Church of Marshville is a cooperating church. We are affiliated and share in the mission endeavors of several Christian organizations. They include, but are not limited to: the Union Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. In addition, First Baptist Church works with, and in the future may work with, other churches and groups in projects of mutual interest.

ARTICLE 5: CHURCH COVENANT

We the members of First Baptist Church of Marshville, having been led by the Holy Spirit to embrace the grace and love that are offered to us in Jesus Christ, do acknowledge that God has called us together to proclaim and embody the Good News of God's kingdom.

Scripture alone can fully express the blessings and responsibilities inherent in this call. We acknowledge, however, several key commitments that shape our understanding of what it means to be part of God's church. Therefore, we do solemnly and joyfully covenant together:

We will become a family of faith. We will participate faithfully in the life of our church. We will act in love toward one another. We will refuse to gossip and will guard each other's reputation. When we disagree we will avoid a divisive spirit. We encourage each other and bear each other's burdens. We will expand the boundaries of our fellowship by inviting others and offering hospitality.

We will worship God. We will live in a manner that brings glory to God. We will gather regularly to celebrate the grace of Christ our Savior, the love of God our Father, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the call to join in God's redemptive mission to the world. We will offer our abilities and financial support to advance the work of God's kingdom through our church.

We will grow in Christ. We will make it our aim, individually and corporately, to mature in the character of Christ. Through teaching and personal study, we will commit our hearts and minds to understanding and obeying God's Word. We will nurture our children in faith.

We will serve others. We will find the ministries to which God calls us, both as individuals and as a church. We will spread the love of God by meeting needs in our community, our nation and our world.

ARTICLE 6: MEMBERSHIP

1. Admission

An invitation for membership shall be extended at the close of each worship service or at any other service deemed appropriate. Anyone desiring membership shall come forward and declare by what method he/she seeks to unite with the church, whether by baptism, letter, or statement. Each candidate shall state truly his/her reasons for seeking membership and his/her prior relationship with other churches. The Pastor shall present the names for affirmation by the congregation. At the close of the service, members shall come forward and extend the hand of fellowship to all new members. New members shall be encouraged to attend classes offered in a member orientation.

Members shall be received by the following methods:

- Baptism: Anyone who has never been baptized shall be immersed in the manner practiced by this congregation.
- Letter: Members of churches of like faith and practice shall be accepted by transfer of letter of membership.
- Statement: Members may be accepted by a statement of faith and believer's baptism.

2. Deletion

- A. Letter: Upon request of a member desiring to unite with another church, a letter shall be sent to the designated church confirming the membership of that person in First Baptist Church.
- B. Death: The clerk shall remove the names of those persons who are deceased and shall report their removal to the church.
- C. Removal: The clerk, upon recommendation of the church in conference, shall remove from the roll:
 - a. The names of members who cannot be found.
 - b. The names of members requesting removal of their names.
 - c. The names of those whose actions are considered sufficient to warrant their removal.

3. Rights

Members of First Baptist Church shall have a voice in all church affairs and are entitled to vote in all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present and has fulfilled the responsibilities of membership set forth in Section 4 below.

4. Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of members of First Baptist Church to pattern their lives after the teachings of Christ, to attend regularly the services of the church, to give regularly and systematically to its support, to share in its work, and to assume the mutual obligations set forth in the Church Covenant.

5. Publication of Membership Rights and Responsibilities

At the beginning of each business conference, the moderator or a person appointed by the moderator, shall remind those present of the rights and responsibilities of membership as described in Sections 3 and 4, under Article 6, as outlined by the Bylaws.

ARTICLE 7: PASTOR-CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

1. The Call of a Pastor

The call of a Pastor shall take place in a business conference called specifically for that purpose, for which at least one week's notice has been given. The nomination of a prospective pastor shall come from a Pastor Search Committee nominated by the Deacons and elected by the church. The committee shall seek as Pastor a minister of the gospel whose character and qualifications fit the person for the office. The committee shall bring only one name at a time. Election shall be by ballot with an affirmative vote of two-thirds of those present and voting necessary for extending a call. The call of a Pastor shall be for an indefinite term. Should the recommendation fail, the meeting will be adjourned without debate. The Deacons shall then instruct the Pastor Search Committee or nominate another Pastor Search Committee.

2. The Pastor-Church Covenant

The First Baptist Church of Marshville (the "Church") and the Pastor acknowledge that they have been led to each other by the Holy Spirit to join in a ministry that is profitable to the spiritual interests of the Church and fruitful for the kingdom of our Lord. In order to further this shared ministry, the Church and the Pastor agree to this statement of covenant relationship.

A. Principles

- a. Scripture affirms that the relationship we have entered into jointly is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-12, Ephesians 4:11-13).
- b. Scripture affirms that those who labor for the Gospel of our Lord deserve support (Luke 10:4-7, 1 Corinthians 9:14, 1 Timothy 5:17-18).
- c. Scripture affirms that all relationships within God's church will be undertaken in a spirit of love, unity and mutual concern (Ephesians 4:1-3, Philippians 2:1-4).
- d. The professional called as Pastor is recognized as a skilled person with high responsibility for which preparation and training have been required.
- e. The Pastor is expected to develop skills and knowledge in the tradition of the training already experienced and, to that end, such time as is necessary and reasonable shall be made available for this pursuit.
- f. The compensation to be paid and the benefits to be afforded shall appear reasonable, just and fair to the leaders of the Church, a majority of the members of the Church, and to the Pastor.
- g. For the peace, unity and effectiveness of the Church, general acceptance of each of these principles is essential so that the Minister and the members of the congregation may be able to work together to carry out the mission of the Church.

B. Covenant Concerning Expectations

a. The Pastor's Responsibility to the Church

- i. To proclaim the gospel with the goal of reaching persons for and nurturing them toward maturity in Christ.
- ii. To love and affirm persons and families within the Church without bias or prejudice.
- iii. To be an encourager to persons and ministries of the Church family.
- iv. To provide counsel to members and non-members and to keep confidential such communication.
- v. To administer and guide church programs and ministries by facilitating communication and recommending ministries, resources and opportunities to the appropriate committees and individuals.
- vi. To work with committees, organizations, teams and individuals in the development and implementation of the congregation's ministry and mission. Chairpersons of committees, organizations and teams are to have the responsibility of their offices with the counsel of the Pastor as desired or needed. All committees, organizations and teams are responsible to the church from which their authority is derived and by whom their responsibilities are defined.
- vii. To guide the functioning of the Church office, overseeing maintenance of records and calendars, advising other leaders of information needed to carry out their duties, and serving in other reasonable activities related to church administration.
- viii. To supervise members of the staff as outlined in the Church's personnel, policy and procedure guidelines.
- ix. To maintain regular office hours for the benefit of all Church members and the related business of the Church. When away from the office, the Pastor shall carry a cell phone (provided by the Church) or shall inform the church secretary of other appropriate means of contact.
- x. To visit the sick, the elderly, and the bereaved and to maintain contact with the membership as a whole.
- xi. To represent the Church to visitors, the Marshville community, the Union Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and other regional and national entities with which the Church chooses to affiliate.
- xii. To provide the church with not less than 30 days notice in the event of resignation.

b. The Church's Responsibility to the Pastor

- i. To show sensitivity to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the Pastor and family.
- ii. To pray for, affirm and work with the Pastor toward the end of accomplishing God's purposes in the Church and the community.
- iii. To allow the Pastor full responsibility for the preaching ministry of the Church with the privilege of calling on others for participation.
- iv. To allow the Pastor responsibility for the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and for receiving new members and assisting in their orientation.
- v. To support the Pastor through participation in the Church's ministries and provision of constructive feedback.
- vi. To communicate openly and honestly with the Pastor so that misunderstandings can be avoided and conflicts can be resolved.

C. Covenant Concerning Performance of Duties

- a. The Pastor is directly responsible to the congregation in the performance of ministry.
- b. The Pastor shall, with the Deacons and Ministry Teams, oversee the pastoral care and nurture of the Church members and provide for a continuing, diversified program of ministries among the members.
- c. The Pastor is to be on call for emergencies twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week.
- d. If the Pastor is to be gone overnight from the Church field, he shall inform the secretary as to the location.

- e. If the Pastor is to be away for more than thirty-six hours, Church leaders should be told how to reach him, or he should provide a qualified person to serve during the absence.

D. Covenant Concerning Financial Care

- a. **Pastor Call Agreement:** So that the Pastor may be devoted full-time to the ministry of the Word among the congregation, the Church shall obligate itself to provide compensation agreeable to both the Church and the Pastor. The compensation arrangement shall be approved by the Pastor Search Committee and the Deacons, and shall be voted on by the church at the time a call is extended. The compensation arrangement may include but is not limited to: salary, housing, retirement, travel allowance, reimbursable business expense allowance, health insurance, vacation, and appropriate one-time benefits associated with the Pastor's move to Marshville.
- b. **Annual Review:** The financial matters related to the Pastoral Call shall be reviewed annually by the Leadership Team and shall be adjusted where necessary. Any adjustments shall be agreed upon in writing.
- c. **Sabbatical:** At the completion of each six year's service under the covenant, the Pastor shall be afforded one month for a sabbatical, during which time the Pastor shall continue to receive full compensation, including salary and all benefits, but shall not be expected to perform the responsibilities outlined above.

E. Covenant Concerning Conflict Resolution

- a. **Grievance Procedures:** Any grievance concerning the Pastor and Church shall be brought to the attention of the Deacons. The Deacons shall be advised of the specific complaints and the identity of the people making them. The Deacons shall facilitate communication among the Pastor, the Church and the disenchanted individual(s), and specific accusations shall be presented to the Pastor with the identity of the accuser. After hearing the complaint and giving ample time and opportunity for all sides of the issue to be presented, the Deacons shall propose a solution. If the parties involved do not accept the proposed solution, the matter shall be submitted to a mutually agreed upon mediator.
- b. **Termination of Employment:** In the event that a majority of the congregation, or a minority substantial enough to affect the continued viability of the church, becomes disenchanted with the Pastor's performance, the Pastor may be asked to resign.

The Deacons can initiate a request that the Pastor resign. They must apprise the Pastor of the problem, counsel with the Pastor, and give the Pastor adequate opportunity for defense. A vote of the majority of the Deacons will constitute a formal request for resignation.

Members of the Church can initiate a request that the Pastor resign. This request must be taken to the Deacons in writing and must be signed by twenty percent or more of the resident members of the Church. The pastor must be apprised of the situation and be given adequate opportunity for defense. A vote of the majority of the Deacons will constitute a formal request for resignation.

If the Pastor agrees to honor a formal request for resignation, he shall receive a severance package of not less than three months and not more than 6 months salary and benefits, with the exact amount to be determined by the Deacons and approved by the Church.

If the Pastor does not agree to honor a formal request for resignation, the matter shall be presented to the Church in a special conference called for that purpose. Voting shall be by ballot with an affirmative vote of two-thirds of those present and voting necessary for termination.

A Pastor whose tenure is terminated by a vote of the church shall not be guaranteed a severance package.

- c. **Accusations of Illegal or Immoral Activity:** If members of the Church accuse the Pastor of illegal or immoral activity, such accusations shall first be brought to the Deacons, who shall conduct a confidential investigation, including informing the Pastor of the nature of the accusations and the names of the accusers. If the Deacons feel that the accusations raise questions that are not satisfactorily answered, they may recommend to the Church any of the following actions, either singularly or in sequence, depending on the circumstances involved: continued employment on probation; administrative leave with full or partial pay; administrative leave with no pay.

If, after the investigation, the Deacons believe that a majority of the congregation has concluded that a change in ministerial leadership is necessary, the Deacons shall recommend to the Church that the call of the Pastor be terminated at the end of a three month period unless there is mutual agreement to continue the Pastor's services on some basis, and the Pastor's salary and benefits shall continue for three months at the rate in effect at the commencement of the three month period.

If the Deacons make a specific finding that there is convincing proof that the accusations are true, the Church reserves the right to terminate the Pastor's employment immediately, taking care to minimize harm to the Pastor's family and to the Church's witness.

- d. **Fairness and Due Process:** In making decisions described in this section, the Deacons shall act in the best interests of both the Church and the Pastor, and shall be guided by the principles of fairness, redemption and mercy. Unless waived by the Pastor, no adverse action concerning the Pastor shall be taken without a hearing before the Church's Leadership Team at which the Pastor may face his accusers, present evidence in defense or mitigation, and be represented by a person of his choice.

ARTICLE 8: CHURCH LEADERSHIP

1. Leadership Team

The Leadership Team shall provide primary leadership for Church, attending to the spiritual welfare of the congregation, coordinating ministries and programs and maintaining the financial stability of the Church.

The Leadership Team shall be composed of the Deacons, the Treasurer and the Clerk. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team shall meet monthly. At the first meeting of the church year, the Leadership Team shall elect officers to include a Chair and Vice-Chair. The Chair, the Pastor, or a majority of Team members may call the Leadership Team into special session when the need arises.

The Leadership Team shall have specific responsibility in the following areas:

- The Team shall coordinate the overall ministry program of the church. They shall have the authority to create and modify structures for pursuing the congregation's goals and to connect individuals with opportunities for ministry in the church.
- The Team shall address spiritual issues that emerge within the life of the congregation.
- The Team shall prepare an annual budget to submit to the Church for its approval.
- The Team shall have the authority to approve non-budgeted expenses not exceeding \$500 for each expense item.

Leadership Team members shall be elected by the congregation in the following manner. During April and May, members of the Church shall recommend individuals whom they feel would serve well in the positions for which there are vacancies. During June and July, a nominating committee consisting of the current Deacon Chair, Treasurer, Clerk and the Pastor shall interview each candidate, assessing whether the candidate meets the qualifications and is willing to serve. On the basis of these interviews, the nominating committee will nominate a slate of individuals to fill the vacancies. This slate shall be publicized at least one week prior to the August church conference. At the August church conference, members shall, by ballot, vote "yes" or "no" on each name that has been placed in nomination. Nominees who are affirmed by a majority of members present and voting

will be elected. In the event that a nominee is not affirmed, additional nominations will be accepted from the floor, provided that these nominees were recommended previously by the congregation and that they meet the qualifications for service. Voting will continue by ballot until the vacancies are filled.

2. Deacons

There shall be six deacons, each of whom will serve as the chair of a Ministry Team that has responsibility for one core area of the Church's mission. These teams shall be the Outreach Team, the Church Life Team, the Worship Team, the Discipleship Team, the Mission Team, and the Ministry Support Team. Ministry descriptions for each team can be found in the Organizational Manual for First Baptist Church.

Deacons shall be held to the qualifications of leaders as described in such places in the New Testament, but not limited to, Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3. In addition, Deacons shall be judged by the congregation to possess gifts for leadership and passion/expertise in the "core mission area" of the Ministry Team to which they are being elected as chair. Finally, no person shall be eligible to serve as a Deacon until he or she has been a member in good standing of the Church for at least one year.

Deacons shall serve a term of two consecutive years, to begin on September 1. Following this two year term, an individual may be elected again to the same position or another position on the Leadership Team. However, after serving four consecutive years in any Leadership Team position, an individual shall not be eligible for re-election until the expiration of one year from the date of their last service on the Leadership Team.

3. Treasurer

It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to work with the financial secretary to insure the receipt, proper care and disbursement by check upon proper authorization all money given to the church in accordance with the instructions of the church. The Treasurer shall ensure the maintenance of an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements and shall see that reports on such matters are given regularly to the church. The Treasurer shall cooperate with an independent audit annually and provide a report of such audit to the Leadership Team and the Church. The church shall elect a Treasurer annually in the August church conference. However, there will be no mandatory limits to the number of consecutive terms that the Treasurer may serve.

4. Clerk

It shall be the duty of the Clerk to attend church conferences and Leadership Team meetings and to serve as recording secretary. The Clerk shall issue all letters concerning membership and preserve all papers and valuable documents from conferences. The Clerk shall work with the church secretary to ensure an accurate roll of the membership of the church is maintained. All records of the Clerk are considered to be church property. The church shall elect a Clerk annually in the August church conference. However, there will be no mandatory limits to the number of consecutive terms that the Clerk may serve.

5. Directors

The currently serving Chair of Deacons, Treasurer and Clerk shall comprise the Board of Directors. The Directors shall be authorized to take actions on behalf of the First Baptist Church of Marshville, a nonprofit corporation incorporated in the state of North Carolina, when such actions have been authorized by the members of the church.

ARTICLE 9: MEETINGS

1. Church Services:

This church shall hold regular meetings for worship, fellowship and instruction. The public shall be invited to all worship services and programs of the church. These meetings may be suspended, or their times changed, upon reasonable notice under the circumstances, by the Pastor and Deacons. The Deacons shall be responsible for the leadership of the worship services in the absence of the Pastor.

- a. **The Lord's Supper** shall be observed at a time agreeable with the Pastor, the Deacons, and the Worship Team. Communion shall be open and offered to all who request to participate.
- b. **Baptism** shall be offered at a time agreeable to the Pastor, Candidates, and the Worship Team.

2. Church Conference:

The members of First Baptist Church of Marshville shall have a vote and a voice in church affairs and conferences provided they are present. A conference shall be held at the time and on the date set by the church. A one week notice of conference, or a call of special conference, shall be given through a worship service announcement or by written notice to each family. The membership may request a special conference by presenting to any Deacon a petition, stating the purpose for such a meeting, signed by at least twenty-five adult members.

- a. **Presiding Officer:** The Pastor shall serve as Moderator. In the Pastor's absence or at a conference called to address the Pastor's continued employment by the Church, the Deacon Chairperson shall serve.
- b. **Parliamentary Procedure:** Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed. The Moderator may, at his or her discretion, deviate from Robert's Rules of Order in the interest of efficiency, justice and Christian fellowship.
- c. **Quorum:** A quorum shall consist of not less than 25 members.

ARTICLE 10: CHURCH STAFF

The church shall have such staff as is necessary to carry out the mission and ministry of First Baptist Church. Church staff shall at all times regard themselves as servants of the church. Staff Policies and Procedures are provided in the Organizational Manual of First Baptist Church.

ARTICLE 11: FISCAL AND CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.
The church year shall begin on September 1 and end on August 31.

ARTICLE 12: ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws shall be considered adopted and in immediate effect, and all previous Bylaws voided, if and when two-thirds of the members present and voting vote in favor. This vote shall be taken not less than thirty days after formal presentation of the Bylaws to the church, and notice of such meeting in which the vote is to be taken shall be given at least one week in advance.

These Bylaws may be amended, altered or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting of the church; provided, however, that such amendment, alteration, or repeal shall have been given to the Clerk in writing; and the proposed change presented to the church at least thirty days prior to the time the vote is taken.

A copy of these Bylaws shall be kept at all times by the Clerk at all business conferences, and by the Secretary in the church office in the Organizational Manual.