
CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OLNEY, TEXAS

Constitution of First Baptist Church, Olney, Texas

PREAMBLE

This Constitution and these Bylaws are made to:

1. Preserve and secure the principles of our faith;
2. Preserve the autonomy of each individual member of the church under the Lordship of Christ;
3. Ensure autonomy from any other religious body or
4. independent and autonomous, First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, is a Southern Baptist Church, and shall be voluntarily affiliated with the Salt-Fork Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Southern Baptist Convention. As set forth in the Articles of Incorporation of this church dated March 20, 1996, First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, is a nonprofit religious organization, exempt from income taxation pursuant to the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and Regulations as they now exist or as they may be amended in the future.

ARTICLE II

PRINCIPLE PLACE OF BUSINESS

The address of the principal office of this church shall be: 201 West Main Street, Olney, Young County, Texas 76374.

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas is to make Christian disciples of all the nations; to provide a place or places where all members of the church, their families, friends and others may worship God and study the Holy Bible; to hold and sponsor regular and special services of worship and Bible study; to encourage one another and other Christians to regularly worship God in family devotion in the home and to attend and participate in corporate worship services and Bible studies held in and sponsored by the church; to tithe; to proclaim the gospel; to teach others concerning matters of the Christian faith; to aid members by providing opportunities for spiritual growth in the Christian faith; to minister to the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of one another, and of other people in the name and character of Jesus Christ; to hold one another accountable for behavior unbecoming of a follower of Jesus Christ; to adhere to the doctrines taught by the Bible as understood by the church; to promote, aid, and assist in Christian mission endeavors in all the world; and to do all such other lawful related activities.

ARTICLE IV

ARTICLES OF FAITH

First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, believing that the Holy Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, shall adopt and revise from time articles of faith detailing the biblical doctrinal convictions of the church consistent with scripture. The church has adopted the following articles of faith:

1. The New Hampshire Confession of 1833, adopted on the day the church was constituted, June 12, 1898 (1853 version by J. Newton Brown found in the Pendleton Church Manual). The church properly amended Article XV Church Reporting Fellowship October 22, 2017 to read as follows:

XV. OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH We believe that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, and is to be kept sacred to religious purpose. Activities Sunday should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

2. The following statement regarding Marriage and Family was adopted on October 22, 2017:

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

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

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

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

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

ARTICLE V

CHURCH COVENANT

The Church Covenant was revised on October 22, 2017.

The purpose of this covenant is to state the virtues we as members will strive to attain. We have all been led by the Holy Spirit to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and on the profession of our faith, have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. 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 empowerment 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 spirituality and prosperity; to sustain its worship, ordinances, disciplines, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministries, the expenses of the church, and the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout the nations of the world. The church's material stewardship shall be through the receiving of tithes, offerings, and gifts based on New Testament teachings.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in the way of the Lord Jesus Christ; to seek the salvation of all people; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings with others, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to seek God's help in abstaining from the use of any drug, food, or drink in such a way that harms the body or jeopardizes our own or another's faith; to flee from sexual immorality in any form; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling 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 remove from this place 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

GOVERNMENT

The government of First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, is vested in its members. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government, subject to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in all phases of its life and organization. The assembled congregation holds the

right to govern the church. The terms “congregation” and “church” shall be synonymous throughout this Constitution and these Bylaws.

ARTICLE VII

NON-PROFIT STATUS LIQUIDATION

First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, is a Texas Non-Profit Corporation. Its assets are pledged for use in performing its religious functions. On the discontinuance of this organization by dissolution or otherwise, all of its assets and property of every nature and description whatsoever are to be paid over and transferred, at the direction of the trustees of the church, to the Salt Fork Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, or both, so long as these organizations remain religious organizations exempt from income taxation pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and Regulations as they now exist or as they may be amended in the future.

ARTICLE VIII

SOLE AUTHORITY – (CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS PREVAIL)

In the event that this church shall approve any action, document, or policy that shall conflict with this Constitution and these Bylaws as most recently amended, this Constitution and these Bylaws as most recently amended shall prevail over such action, document, or policy as the governing authority of the church.

ARTICLE IX

AMENDMENT

This Constitution and Bylaws may be amended by means of the following procedure:

1. Any proposed amendment shall be presented in writing at a regular church business meeting. If the proposed amendment receives a second it shall be automatically referred to the In-Service Deacon Body for further consideration and recommendation at a future business meeting.
2. The proposed amendment shall undergo an edit-review process in which it shall be discussed between the In-Service Deacon Body and the author(s) of the proposed amendment. A final draft that preserves the intent of the original intent of the proposed amendment, based on these discussions, shall be constructed by the In-Service Deacon Body.
3. The leadership of the church shall make the proposed amendment available to the congregation, at Sunday morning public worship services, for no fewer than two consecutive Sundays prior to the time on which the amendment will be voted.
4. The date, time and location of the business meeting at which the proposed amendment will be considered for adoption shall be reasonably publicized. 1) Written publication of such an announcement in an order of service for two consecutive Sundays, or 2) a public spoken

announcement in morning worship service regarding the business meeting for two consecutive Sundays, shall constitute reasonable publication.

5. During the business meeting the final draft of the proposed amendment shall be presented by the chairman of deacons, or his designee, with either support or lack of support from the In-Service Deacon Body. The moderator and congregation shall provide reasonable time for discussion of any proposed amendment before a vote is taken.
6. Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws shall require an affirmative vote by two-thirds of the members of the church in good standing who are qualified to vote and who are present at the business meeting.

ARTICLE X RATIFICATION

This Constitution and these By-Laws are hereby ordained and established for First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas by vote of the membership on March 9, 2014.

Signed on March 9, 2014

WILLIAM LITTLE, Moderator

THE STATE OF TEXAS

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COUNTY OF YOUNG

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This document was acknowledged before me by **WILLAM LITTLE**, in his capacity as the Moderator of the First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas on March, 9, 2014.

Notary Public, State of Texas

Notary's Printed Name:

My Commission Expires:

Bylaws of First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas

PREAMBLE

These Bylaws constitute the rules adopted by the First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, for the regulation and management of its affairs.

ARTICLE I CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. *Qualifications*

First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas is a body of Christian believers under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Membership of First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, shall consist of people who have made a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and who have been baptized by immersion. The congregation regulates its own membership. Membership in the church may be attained by the majority vote of the church in any of its regular business meetings in recognition that the candidate for membership is joining by one of the following means:

- a.* By baptism by immersion pursuant to a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- b.* By letter of recommendation attesting that the candidate is a member in good standing of another Baptist church of like faith and order.
- c.* By the candidate's own testimony (statement of faith) of prior conversion to Christianity followed by baptism by immersion.
- d.* By proxy for any person who is unable to present himself/herself and wishes to be received into the membership by any of the above methods.

Section 2. *Associate Membership*

- a.* Persons who wish to formally identify with this church in worship and fellowship without transferring their letter of membership from another Baptist Church of like faith and order shall be considered Associate Members. Associate membership shall only be granted to those who are temporary residents of the area or to those who have other justifiable reasons for not joining the church in the manner set forth in Section 1 of this article.
- b.* Associate Members shall, except as qualified below, have the same rights and privileges as those ordinarily afforded to members of this church such as the right to receive pastoral care, to participate in worship services, and to receive the Lord's Supper. However, Associate Members shall not vote in church business meetings nor shall they

hold any office or position that is filled by vote of the general church membership. Associate Members will be accepted based on their statement of faith and may be presented to the church for the purpose of formally extending the hand of fellowship and establishing general accountability between the associate member and the church.

c. All matters of discipline shall be referred to the Associate Member's church of resident membership. Associate Members may be removed from the Associate Membership Roll for good cause by the majority vote of the church at a regular business meeting.

Section 3. *Candidacy for Membership*

Candidates shall initially be presented to the church for fellowship during any church service and will be presented for membership, with confirmation by voting, at a regularly scheduled business meeting. The presentation at a business meeting will take place after one or more of the following criteria have been met:

- a. Receipt of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist church, or
- b. A meeting between the candidate and pastor and/or church leader has taken place. The purpose of this meeting is for the pastor/church leader to confirm that the candidate shares the beliefs of our congregation and desires to become a member, and
- c. The candidate has been baptized in accordance with our church ordinances.

Should there be any dissent to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the pastor or deacon body for consideration. The pastor or deacon representative will make a recommendation to the church at a regularly scheduled business meeting. Of the eligible members present at a regular business meeting, two-thirds must vote in the affirmative in order to approve such candidates for membership.

Section 4. *Standing*

- a. Members excluded by the process detailed in Article VII (Church Discipline) shall not be considered members in good standing and shall not be entitled to a vote in church meetings nor to any of the privileges of membership.
- b. Members restored after being excluded as detailed in Article VII § 2 shall be considered members in good standing with all of the privileges appertaining thereunto.
- c. Although good standing in membership is prerequisite to many positions of service within the congregation, it is not a guarantee of eligibility for any position of service. The congregation retains unto itself the right to exclude members in good standing from

positions of service for reasons including, but not limited to, questions of fitness raised by pending or past actions of church discipline.

Section 5. *Responsibilities and Rights of Members*

a. The responsibilities of members shall be established in the Holy Bible and are generally expressed in the church constitution in the "Church Covenant." Members are expected to regularly attend the services of the church, faithfully give to its support and work, and share in its life and ministry. Members shall be witnesses for Christ in all walks of life and should pray for the leadership of this church and fellow believers in Jesus Christ.

b. Every member of the church sixteen (16) years of age or older is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church, provided the member is present and with the understanding that children are under the parent's authority and the expression of this right shall not serve to undermine parental authority.

c. Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church so long as they are in good standing.

Section 6. *Termination of Membership*

a. Membership in this church shall be terminated by one of the following means:

i. The granting of a letter of recommendation.

1. The church shall only grant a letter of recommendation to another church of like faith and order upon that church's request.

2. The church shall only grant a letter of recommendation for members who are in good standing. Otherwise, the church shall reply to the requesting church with a letter stating only that member in question is not in good standing and no letter of recommendation may be granted.

ii. Upon the death of the member.

iii. Upon termination of membership by vote of the congregation following the disciplinary process set forth in Article VII.

iv. The erasure of the member from the membership rolls upon under the following conditions:

1. Request of the member;

2. Membership in a church of another denomination is confirmed; or

3. If the member cannot be located following a diligent search occurs;
- b.* Except in cases of death, all terminations of membership shall be by a two-thirds vote of all eligible members present a business meeting.
- c.* The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

Section 7. *Orientation of New Members*

The church membership reserves unto itself the right to specify procedures for the orientation of new church members.

Section 8. *Member's Right to Inspect Books and Records*

A member, on written demand stating the purpose of the demand, is entitled to examine and copy, at the member's expense, in person or by agent, accountant, or attorney, at any reasonable time and for a proper purpose, the books and records of the corporation relevant to that purpose.

ARTICLE II CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1. *Member in Good Standing Requirement*

No person shall serve as an officer of this church who is not also a member of this church in good standing.

Section 2. *Biblical Offices and Ordination Practices*

a. Pastors / Elders / Overseers

- i. The biblical titles of *pastor*, *elder*, and *overseer* are three titles that refer to precisely the same office (I Peter 5:1-2; Acts 20:17, 28). It shall be the duty of the men who hold this office to shepherd the flock, oversee the spiritual lives of the membership, and serve as elders in the proclamation and governance of the church as detailed by the job descriptions adopted by the congregation for each pastoral office.
- ii. The church shall restrict this office to males who meet the qualifications and undertake the duties given in I Timothy 2:12-15, 3:1-7, 4:6-16, 5:17, 22; II Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4; I Corinthians 14: 34-36.

iii. Ordination to the Gospel Ministry shall be prerequisite to serving as senior pastor.

iv. The church shall designate one senior pastor and as many associate pastors as the congregation deems appropriate. Females holding staff positions within the church are not considered pastors.

1. The senior pastor shall consult with and give leadership to the associate pastors in the administration of the church.

2. The senior pastor shall be the Administrator of the church and is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament Church. The pastor has the responsibility to lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff to perform their tasks. The pastor will be expected to delegate the appropriate responsibilities to others to insure the work of the church is done in a consistent manner. The pastor is the leader of the pastoral ministries of the church. As such, he works with the deacons and the church staff to:

- a) lead the church to carry out the principles of the faith and the purpose of the church;

- b) proclaim the gospel both inside and outside the church; and

- c) provide appropriate care for both church members and persons in the community.

v. The senior pastor shall serve as Moderator of the congregation during business meetings whenever present and able unless another member is designated to do so.

vi. Pastors shall come to serve in this church by the election of the congregation whenever a vacancy occurs.

vii. Election of the senior pastor.

1. The process of electing a new senior pastor shall commence upon the direction of the congregation.

2. The congregation shall select a Pastor Search Committee to search for a new senior pastor by the following means:

- a) Each eligible church member present at a special called business meeting will receive a blank ballot. Up to seven (7) members'

names may be placed on the ballot. If more than seven (7) names are placed in the ballot, the ballot will not be counted.

b) The deacon officers will be responsible for the collection and counting of the ballots. If an officer is not available at the time of collection, another deacon may be chosen to serve in his place.

c) The deacon officers will review the ballots and determine which candidates are most qualified to serve on the search committee. The deacons will then present a slate of committee candidates to the church to be presented for approval at the next regularly scheduled business meeting.

d) The Pastor Search Committee shall consist of five (5) or seven (7) members. No less than two women shall serve on the committee. No more than one member of a household will be on the committee.

3. The Pastor Search Committee shall have the following responsibilities:

a) The Pastor Search Committee shall receive recommendations and prayerfully perform the necessary investigations to recommend one candidate at a time for the congregation's consideration as senior pastor.

b) The Pastor Search Committee shall present a candidate for the office of senior pastor to the congregation for consideration and approval at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's notice shall be given publicly in the worship services. The recommendation of the pastor search committee will constitute a nomination.

c) An affirmative ballot vote of at least three-fourths (75%) of all members in good standing voting shall be necessary to extend a call to a pastor, although the congregation may stipulate prior to the vote an even higher affirmative percentage necessary to extend a call. The Pastor Search Committee shall provide the precise numeric breakdown of the vote at the request of the candidate.

d) Upon his acceptance of an extended call, the candidate shall be considered elected as senior pastor of the congregation.

viii. Election of Associate Pastors.

1. The Personnel Committee is authorized to make recommendations to the church regarding the number and job descriptions of associate pastors and to advise the congregation of vacancies in associate pastor positions.
2. The Personnel Committee will serve as the Associate Pastor Search Committee to search for a new associate pastor unless the church votes elect a separate Associate Pastor Search Committee.
3. The Personnel Committee shall present recommendations to call candidates for associate pastor to the congregation for approval during a business meeting.
4. License to Preach or Ordination to the Gospel Ministry shall be a requirement to serving the church as an associate pastor. If the candidate is unlicensed when he is called to serve, he shall arranged to be licensed by the church as soon as it is practicable.

ix. Pastors and associate pastors shall cease to serve in this church by one of the means listed below:

1. By the death of the pastor.
2. By the congregation's acceptance of the pastor's resignation and following a two-week notice period that shall be given to the congregation, if reasonably possible.
3. By the removal of the pastor by the vote of the congregation.
 - a) A motion to remove a pastor (senior or associate) must be made in writing at a regular church business meeting. At this first meeting the motion shall not be eligible for discussion or voting.
 - b) The written motion to remove a pastor may be referred to mediation upon a majority vote of the members present at a business meeting.
 - i) Motions to remove the senior pastor shall be referred to the In-Service Deacon body. Motions to remove an associate pastor shall be referred to the senior pastor and the deacon body.
 - ii) The mediators shall consult with the pastor in question, the author of the motion, and any other parties it deems to be relevant, in an attempt to resolve the issues involved, following the instructions of 1Timothy 5:19-21.

iii) Mediators shall be selected by the deacon body, and compensated by the church, if necessary. However, the pastor subject of the motion, and the author of the motion to remove shall be presented with the names of the proposed mediators prior to the mediation process and be given the opportunity to raise objections, in writing, to the proposed mediators. The deacon body may consider the objections of either party to the proposed mediators. The mediators may be church members or independent third-party mediators.

c) The mediators shall promptly conclude their work and bring a full and thorough report including recommendations to the In-Service Deacon Body. After receiving the findings of the mediator, the deacons may call a special business meeting for the purpose of removing the pastor from office. The deacons shall promptly distribute the full findings of the mediator(s) publicly in accord with I Timothy 5:19-20 following the receipt of the report.

d) If the In-Service Deacon Body does not call a special business meeting for the purpose of removing the pastor from office after receiving the mediator's recommendation, a two-thirds vote of eligible members present at a regular scheduled business meeting shall be required to call a special business meeting for the purpose of removing the pastor from office.

e) Any special called business meeting called for the purpose of removing the pastor from office shall take place no sooner than one week after it is called. Public notice of the meeting shall be given in at least one Sunday morning service.

f) An affirmative two-thirds ballot vote of a majority of all members in good standing voting shall be necessary to remove a pastor from office.

g) While a pastor is involved in mediation pursuant to this Bylaw, the church may vote to suspend him with full pay from the performance of his duties pending the outcome of mediation.

h) Except in cases of gross misconduct by the pastor, the church will compensate the pastor with not less than one twelfth of the pastors annual compensation if he is removed from office. The termination from office shall be immediate and the compensation

shall be paid in not more than thirty (30) days. The pastor shall also be paid for any accrued vacation time and sick leave.

x. The successful election of any pastor shall, if the pastor or any members of his household are members of another congregation, constitute a *de facto* request by the new pastor and consent of the congregation to add the new pastor and all eligible members of his household to the membership of the church by some appropriate means specified in Article I (Church Membership).

b. Deacons

i. The congregation shall adopt and maintain policies governing the deacons. These policies shall specify the procedures governing the election and activation of new deacons; establishing and defining the roles and terms of any deacon officers; stipulating the frequency, parameters, and procedures for the calling of deacons' meetings; and the procedures for the removal of inactive or disqualified deacons from the active deacon body.

ii. The deacons shall annually elect a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary to serve as the deacon officers.

iii. Deacons' meetings shall be open to any member of the congregation in good standing as an observer except in those situations of a sensitive nature in which the senior pastor or the chairman of deacons has called the body into executive session.

c. Ordination

i. Ordination is generally understood to be requirement to serve in one of the biblical offices. When the church senses that one of its men in good standing has been called to serve in one of the biblical offices, then the church may acknowledge and confirm the calling by convening an ordination counsel.

1. The congregation shall perform ordinations in the following manner.

a) An ordination council shall examine candidates for ordination.

b) The ordination council shall question each candidate individually as to doctrinal soundness, certainty of calling, and qualification for office.

c) The ordination council shall deliver to the church a recommendation either to ordain or not to ordain the candidate.

d) The members of the ordination council are by virtue of their position invited to attend and participate in the ordination service.

e) The congregation shall conduct an ordination service consisting at least of the following elements:

1) The candidates for ordination shall each give public testimony before the congregation of their conversion to Christianity, their sense of God's calling upon the candidate, and the vitality of their present life as a Christian disciple.

2) The ordination council shall bring its recommendations to the congregation. Members in good standing shall, pursuant to receiving the recommendations of the ordination council, vote either to ordain or not to ordain each man who has come before the congregation as a candidate.

3) The congregation shall, upon as many of the candidates as it has voted to ordain, lay hands in prayer and exhortation for their ministries.

ii. Special Ordination Provisions

1. The congregation shall not ordain any man to the office of deacon except to activate him immediately as a serving deacon within the congregation.

2. The congregation takes upon itself no active responsibility for monitoring the behavior of those who leave its fellowship to serve in other congregations, those congregations being autonomous and empowered to govern their own fellowships. Men ordained by this congregation do not act as the congregation's agents or in any way under the congregation's authority once they leave the fellowship.

iii. License to the Gospel Ministry

The congregation may vote to license such a member for the gospel ministry, thereby acknowledging to other congregations and religious institutions that the church recognizes the man's gifts and a calling to minister and that the church commends the man to other congregations as a minister. The church may also issue a license to encourage a man potentially bound for eventual ordination to exercise his gifts among other congregations in preparation for eventual service as an ordained gospel minister.

Section 3. Corporate Offices

a. Church Clerk

i. The church clerk shall be elected by the congregation to serve a term of office, not to exceed three years.

1. In the event that the church clerk is unavailable or incapacitated at the time of a church business meeting, the congregation shall, as its first item of business, elect an interim church clerk to serve for the duration of that meeting.

2. The church clerk shall at the beginning of each business meeting present for correction and approval the minutes of the previous business meeting.

3. The church clerk shall correspond with affiliated cooperative organizations, keep a record of transactions and current status of church membership, issue and request letters of recommendation for membership transfers, and maintain current contact information for church members.

b. Church Treasurer/Financial Secretary

i. The church treasurer shall be elected by the congregation to serve for a term of office not to exceed three years. The treasurer shall not serve more than one consecutive term.

ii. The church treasurer shall work with the staff and other volunteers to oversee the receipt, counting, recording, and depositing of all church offerings.

iii. The church treasurer shall work with the staff to provide to each contributor a quarterly and/or annual record of contributions made by that contributor.

iv. The church treasurer shall be the custodian of the financial records of the church, shall oversee the disbursements of funds as authorized by the church.

v. The church treasurer, or his or her agent, shall keep at all times and provide, upon proper request, to any church member in good standing an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.

vi. The church treasurer, or his agent, shall render and publish monthly and annual reports detailing the financial position of the church.

c. Moderator

- i. The church shall elect annually a moderator as its presiding officer. In the absence of the moderator, the pastor or the chairman of the deacons shall preside, or in the absence of an acting moderator, the church clerk shall call the church to order and preside for the election of an acting moderator.
- ii. The moderator shall preside over all business meetings of the congregation, executing all functions of a presiding officer as specified in the congregation's current parliamentary rules.

d. Trustees

- i. The church shall elect three or more trustees, or elect to designate the deacon officers, to serve as legal officers for the church. They shall hold in trust the property of the church.
- ii. The trustees shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property of the congregation without a specific vote of the congregation authorizing each action.
- iii. The trustees shall sign any and all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or lease of church property or any other legal documents requiring the signature of the trustees for and in behalf of the church.

e. Vacancies

In case of vacancy in any corporate office, the vacancy shall be filled by the church at a regular or special meeting as soon as possible after such vacancy has occurred.

Section 4. *Other Staff*

Other staff shall be employed as the church determines need for their services. The church personnel committee shall have the authority to recommend employment and termination of staff members to the church. Such employment and termination of services shall be with the recommendation to the church of the supervising staff member and, as appropriate, with the consultation of related committees of the church.

Section 5. *Employee Health Plan (Church Plan)*

The church shall adopt and maintain an Employee Health Plan, otherwise known as a church plan according to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

ARTICLE III

CHURCH COMMITTEES & MINISTRY TEAMS

Section 1. *Formation of Committees and Ministry Teams*

- a.* The congregation shall form and empower or dissolve standing or *ad hoc* committees and ministry teams as it deems prudent for successfully accomplishing the mission and purpose of the church.
- b.* No committee or ministry team shall have any authority other than that which the congregation has specifically delegated to the committee. The congregation cannot ultimately surrender any point of authority to any committee, as it retains unto itself the right of exclusive self government in all phases of its life and organization.
- c.* Committees shall be elected annually upon the recommendation of the committee of committees.
- d.* The members of the committee on committees shall be nominated and recommended by the In-Service Deacon Body for church approval.

Section 2. *Good Standing Requirement*

No person shall serve on any committee of the church who is not a member in good standing of the congregation.

Section 3. *Terms*

The membership of the committees shall rotate annually with committee members serving one (1), two (2), or three (3) year terms. Members of ministry teams are not required to rotate.

Section 4. *Policies*

The congregation shall adopt and maintain policies and rules governing all committees in accordance with these by-laws. These policies shall include, but will not be limited to the number of committees, the names of the committees, the terms limits of members, membership requirements, duties, functions and any other provisions deemed necessary by the congregation.

Section 5. *Constitutionally Mandated Committees*

The church shall maintain the following committees: Stewardship Committee, Personnel Committee, Property Committee, and Committee on Committees.

ARTICLE IV

CHURCH ORDINANCES

The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper only.

Section 1. *Baptism*

This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

- a.* Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
- b.* The pastor, his designee or any other qualified ordained man shall administer the ordinance of baptism. The deacons shall assist in the preparation for and the observance of baptism.
- c.* Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
- d.* A person who professes Christ and is not baptized within a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastor, an associate pastor, or a deacon. If the individual indicates that they are reluctant to be baptized, their name shall be deleted from the list of those awaiting baptism and they shall not be considered for church membership.
- e.* Baptism does not constitute a request for church membership.

Section 2. *The Lord's Supper*

The church shall observe the Lord's Supper at least quarterly, unless otherwise scheduled by church action. The observance shall be held during any regular worship service, unless otherwise scheduled by church action. The pastor and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper. The Lord's table shall be open to all who profess to be followers and disciples of Christ.

ARTICLE V CHURCH MEETINGS & OTHER SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Section 1. *Regular Worship Services & Programs*

Regular worship services or programs shall be held weekly at a customary, designated time. The senior pastor, associate pastors, or their designees shall conduct all worship services. All programs shall be consistent with the purpose and mission of the church.

Section 2. *Special Services*

Revival meetings or other church meetings essential or deemed beneficial to the advancement of church objectives shall be placed on the church calendar.

Section 3. *Marriage Ceremonies, Wedding Showers, Baby Showers, Funerals, Certain Community Events and Other Activities.*

a. Policies and Procedures

The congregation shall adopt and maintain policies and procedures governing building usage. These policies shall specify the permissible activities which may occur within the church buildings and upon the church grounds for activities including, but not limited to, marriage ceremonies, wedding showers, baby showers, funerals, and other certain community and personal activities. All building usage shall be consistent with the church's statement of faith (see Article IV of the Constitution of First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas), or any other Confession of Faith subsequently adopted by First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas.

b. Constitutionally Mandated Policy Regarding Marriage Ceremonies

Marriage is a union ordained by God. It was first instituted by God in the early chapters of Genesis, codified in the Levitical law. The Old Testament prophets compared it to a relationship between God and his people. Examples of it are in the historical narratives, and the wisdom literature discusses the unique unity of this relationship. Jesus explained the original intention and core elements of marriage, and several New Testament Epistles give explicit instructions on this union. Marriage is a typology of Christ and the Church. As such, the Church views marriage as a profound spiritual institution established by God. Due to the importance of marriage in the biblical witness, this church adopts the following policy:

i. Clergy

1. Only duly ordained or licensed male clergy approved by the senior pastor shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property.
2. Pastors employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal for officiating a same-gender marriage ceremony.

ii. Premises

1. Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the church's policy regarding marriage ceremonies set forth above in this section and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
2. The Senior Pastor or his designee, may in his or her sole discretion, may decline to make church facilities available for, and/or decline to

officiate at, a ceremony when, in his or her judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral or legal reasons.

3. No church facilities may be used by any person to host a same-gender (same-sex) marriage ceremony.

Section 4. *Regular Business Meetings*

Christ being the Sovereign Lord of the church and the congregation being under obligation as His servants to seek His will for the church, the congregation shall make every effort to provide adequate time for members to consider prayerfully and soberly all congregational decisions and to pursue jointly the will of God for the church.

a. Regular business meetings shall occur approximately once each month as the congregation may deem appropriate. Notice of regular business meetings shall be given by oral announcement at a regularly scheduled worship service before the meeting or by other means which shall give fair notice of the meeting to the congregation.

b. Members in good standing of the congregation, church committees, and church program organizations may request that the staff or the moderator place items of business upon the agenda of a regular business meeting on or before the day of the regular business meeting. So long as the proposed item of business has been submitted properly according to the provisions of this document, the right of any member in good standing to place an item of business upon the agenda shall not be abrogated. Items placed upon the agenda must still obtain a second, be ruled in order, and proceed subject to the church's parliamentary rules in order to receive discussion or consideration in business meeting.

Section 5. *Special Business Meetings*

a. Special business meetings may be called from time to time for good cause.

b. The time, location, and subject of a special business meeting shall be given by oral announcement at a regularly scheduled business meeting or by other means which shall give fair notice of the meeting to the congregation.

c. No item may be introduced at a special business meeting that is not closely related to the items on the agenda for the meeting.

Section 6. *Quorum for Church Business Meetings*

The quorum consists of those members of the congregation in good standing who attend the business meeting—provided that it is a valid meeting—the time, location, and agenda of

which have been published as stipulated above. Only members of the congregation in good standing shall be entitled to vote in business meetings.

Section 7. *Act of the Membership, No Proxy Voting*

The membership may act only at a properly called meeting of the membership where a quorum is present. At such a meeting, a member may only vote in person. Except as otherwise specified, a vote of a majority of the members in attendance shall be an act of the membership. Except that a two-thirds majority of the members in attendance shall be required for the church to take the following actions: dissolution of the corporation, merger or consolidation with another corporation, sale of substantially all of the corporation's assets, amendment to the corporation's Certificate of Formation or of its Bylaws. In matters regarding members under the age of sixteen (16) (ex. Hiring of a Youth Minister, Funding of Youth Activities, etc.) there should be ample opportunity for discussion from the younger members prior to the vote.

Section 8. *Parliamentary Rules*

Robert's Rules of Order in its most recent revision shall serve as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the congregation and for all other meetings within the congregation, including committee meetings, at which church members may vote.

ARTICLE VI CHURCH FINANCES

Section 1. *Budget*

The stewardship committee shall, in consultation with all appropriate staff, committees, ministry teams, and members shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget, indicating by line item the projected expenses for the coming year. Members shall approve the budget with an understanding that membership in this church involves the financial obligation to support the church and its ministries with regular tithes and offerings.

Section 2. *Accounting Procedures*

a. All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the financial secretary and be properly recorded. Those who have the responsibility of handling funds shall be bonded. The church shall pay for the cost of the bond.

b. The stewardship committee shall determine and implement a system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling and accounting of funds received.

- c. The financial secretary, or a designated staff member, shall provide an accurate accounting at the end of each year to those members who have contributed during the year.

ARTICLE VII

CHURCH DISCIPLINE & INSTANCES OF CONFLICT AMONG MEMBERS

Section 1. *Authority, Purposes, and Scriptural Mandate*

- a. The congregation retains unto itself the right to govern its own membership. Any member who consistently neglects his or her duties or is guilty of conduct which dishonors the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and opposes the welfare of the church shall be subject to the admonition of the pastoral leadership and the discipline of the church. Such discipline shall be administered with a tender spirit, following the scriptural procedure according to Matthew 18:15-18. Church discipline should ordinarily be contemplated only after individual private admonition has failed.
- b. Church discipline can include admonition by the pastors or congregation, suspension from the celebration of the Lord's Supper for a definite period, deposition from office, and exclusion from church membership (see Matthew 18: 15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14–15; 1 Timothy 5: 19–20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4–5).
- c. The primary purpose of such discipline is to bring about the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15: 5; 29: 15; I Corinthians 4: 14; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4–5; Hebrews 12: 1–11; Psalm 119: 115; 141: 5; Proverbs 17: 10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7: 5; Matthew 7: 26–27; 18: 15–17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2: 40; I Corinthians 5: 5; Galatians 6: 1–5; II Thessalonians 3: 6, 14–15; I Timothy 1: 20; Titus 1:13–14; James 1: 22).

Section 2. *Church Discipline Procedure*

- a. The repentance and restoration of a wayward church member shall first be sought by individual private admonition. If restoration is not achieved following individual private admonition, the admonishing member shall return to the wayward member with one or two witnesses and seek his or her repentance and restoration.
- b. Restoration not having been achieved, the member shall, at a business meeting of the congregation, bring a motion to exclude the accused member from the membership of the congregation.
- i. Upon receiving a motion and a second to exclude member from church membership the moderator shall immediately recognize the member making the motion to specify the breach of Christian duty and the time, place, members in attendance, and outcomes of the meetings constituting step *a* described above. If the member cannot satisfactorily provide the details of those meetings, the

moderator shall immediately rule the motion out of order until such time as the provisions of Matthew 18:15-17 have been completed.

ii. The moderator shall next recognize the accused member, if present, for the purpose of presenting a defense against the charges or expressing repentance and seeking restoration.

iii. Once the congregation has pursued whatever discussions, actions, inquiries, or referrals it deems necessary for a sufficiently thorough investigation of the charges, the congregation may vote either to exclude or to retain as a member in good standing the accused member.

iv. Members excluded in this manner shall not be considered members in good standing and shall not be entitled to any of the privileges of membership.

v. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

c. An ongoing pattern of initiating church discipline against fellow members in a frivolous and unsubstantiated manner or in a haughty and arrogant spirit shall itself be considered a breach of Christian duty and subject to an action of church discipline.

Section 3. *Restoration Following Exclusion*

Should any member of the congregation formerly excluded by any action of church discipline seek restoration to membership in good standing, the congregation shall consider whether the member is contrite and repentant and shall vote regarding restoration of the candidate to membership in good standing. A two-thirds vote of eligible members present at a business meeting shall be required to restore membership. Throughout this process the congregation shall follow in a tender spirit the scriptural principles articulated by our Lord in Matthew 18:19-35.

Section 4. *Conflict Among Groups of Members*

a. Should conflict arise within the church that threatens the fellowship and work of the church, an outside mediator should be engaged. Mediators may be engaged by the In-Service Deacon Body based upon their determination of such a need. The mediator shall be compensated if necessary out of the general church account. Mediators may be requested through the state convention or through other Christian mediation service. A mediator shall be engaged before a problem escalates to the point that it causes a break in unity, harmony, and fellowship of the congregation.

b. The mediator shall be charged under these by-laws to work with the parties to resolve the conflict within Biblical guidelines. Failure to participate in the mediation process may be considered grounds for discipline.

Section 5. *Lawsuits Against the Church*

No dispute between a church member and the church may be litigated in a civil court, as this is Biblically forbidden (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

ARTICLE VII CHURCH POLICIES

Section 1. *Development, Implementation & Review*

In addition to the policies set forth in this constitution and by-laws, the church may, from time to time, develop and implement policies that are consistent with this constitution, the purpose of the church, and the church's statement of faith. The church may delegate the development and implementation of certain policies to committees, ministry teams, or the pastor.

Section 2. *Review and Amendment*

Any written or unwritten church policy may be reviewed and/or amended by the members at a regularly scheduled business meeting following a duly made and seconded motion to discuss the policy.

Section 3. *Church Policy Manual*

The church clerk shall be responsible for compiling all written policies developed and implemented by the members into a document entitled *Church Policy Manual*. This manual shall be updated as necessary when new policies are developed. The manual shall be maintained in the church office and made available for use by any member of the church.

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