

# BYLAWS

## I. Church Membership

### A. Qualifications

Membership of First Baptist Church Old Jonesboro shall consist of people who have made a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and who having been baptized by immersion if physically able, and are in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Covenant of the Church.

### B. Reception

Membership in the church may be attained by one of the following manners:

1. By scriptural baptism by immersion after the profession of faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.
2. By transfer of Church letter from another evangelical church.
3. By a statement of faith of their prior experience of conversion and scriptural baptism by immersion in another evangelical church of like faith and practice.
4. By restoration in the church membership after having undergone church discipline or termination.

### C. Termination

Membership in the church shall be terminated when a member:

1. Has transitioned from labor to reward (I.e. deceased).
2. Requests a letter of transfer or he/she joins another church.
3. When a member is dismissed by a vote of the church due to reasons and circumstances provided in church discipline (See Section VI).

### D. Orientation of New Member

Candidates for membership and new members should attend the Church Membership Class as provided by the church to learn and understand the privileges and responsibilities of members to God and the Church.

### E. Biblical Member of a local church

The New Testament provides an implicit model for Church Membership along with explicit responsibilities for the believer. A Biblical Church member is defined as the following:

1. Someone who has submitted to the leadership and authority of the leaders governing the local church (Hebrews 13:17).

2. Someone who displays evidence of an increasing application of the word of God to their lives, a daily devotion to repentance, and a life reflecting the holiness of God (Matthew 4:4; Romans 12:1-2).
3. Someone who regularly attend and serves the local church (Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:25).
4. Someone who demonstrates an ability to exercise self-examination, self-control, and the ability to consider the needs of one another above their own (2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 5:23-24; Philippians 2:3).
5. Someone who supports the local church with his or her time, gifting, and finances (2 Corinthians 9: 6-8, Romans 12:4-8).

#### F. Inactive Members

A member shall be deemed inactive if he/she has no church involvement, attendance, or ministry participation for a period of six (6) consecutive months. In such cases the member shall be contacted for explanation of inactivity, and, if no legitimate excuse is provided (e.g. hospitalization, medical home confinement, military deployment, etc.), shall be placed on the inactive roll.

1. Inactive members lose all voting and use of facilities privileges.
2. Inactive members shall only be reinstated when consistent attendance and service is demonstrated for a period of three (3) months.
3. Inactivity exceeding the time period of a year would require that the inactive member interviews with an elder to regain membership.

#### G. Membership Privileges

Active members of the local Church the rights and privileges are as stated:

1. The right to participate in the Lord's Table (Holy Communion).
2. The right to vote and participate in the church meetings.
3. The right to use of the facilities contingent upon approval of the Deacons.

## II. Church Officers

### A. Summary

1. The Biblical offices in the church are that of Elders and Deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13).
2. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under these by-laws of Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and Trustees.

3. Should the need arise for additional staff, the staff member(s) shall be recommended for employment by the Senior Pastor, chairman of the Deacons' ministry, and chairperson of the Trustees' ministry, and be provided with a written job description and mutual contract/agreement.

## B. Elders

1. Qualifications:
  - a) The Elders shall be comprised of men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
  - b) The Elders shall be members of the church for a minimum of one (1) year prior to serving, (1 Timothy 3:6; 5:22), with the exception of the initial Elders.
2. The majority of the active Elders shall be members not in the regular pay of the church.
3. No Elder shall hold the office of Deacon during his tenure (Acts 6:1-4).
4. Responsibilities of Elders:
  - a) The Elders shall, first and foremost, devote their time to prayer and the ministry of the Word by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine and practice, and by shepherding God's flock (Acts 6:2, 4; 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).
  - b) The Elders must be able to teach, and/or preach, at the request of the Pastor, or in the absence of the Senior Pastor (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2).
  - c) The Elders must consistently model Christ-like character, attitudes, values, and behavior among the congregation (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3).
  - d) The Elders must give aid in procuring speakers either at the Senior Pastor's request or in his absence (Titus 1:9-11).
  - e) The Elders shall appoint Deacons (subsequent to the nominations of the congregation) in accordance with the guidelines set forth in these by-laws (see below).
5. Selection of Elders:
  - a) The Elders shall set aside men that they determine have met the qualifications of the office of Elder (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). They shall be declared as being under consideration.
  - b) The elders shall then make it known to the church that a particular individual is being considered as a candidate for the office of elder.
  - c) For a period of time, not less than thirty (30) days, the congregation shall have the opportunity to prayerfully consider the individual's qualifications for the office of elder. If members for any reason feel that the person may be unqualified, they should go to him in love and discretion and privately discuss their concerns (Matthew 18:15-18, Titus 1:7). If after a discussion with the nominee, the members feel that their concern is unresolved, then they should approach the elders with their concern. During the time that a man is under consideration, there are several options:
    - Option 1: The man under consideration can withdraw himself from consideration and the process shall cease.

- Option 2: The Elders may deem the man unqualified for whatever reason and the process shall cease.
  - Option 3: The man and the Elders agree that the process should continue.
- d) After the time of consideration, the Elders shall call a special meeting for the purpose of a formal affirmation of the congregation regarding the man under consideration.
  - e) After prayerful consideration of the counsel of the congregation, the Elders shall vote and make known their decision regarding the man.
  - f) Upon Elder body approval, the man shall immediately assume his position as an elder.
6. An Elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated, or spiritually unqualified (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-9).

## B. Senior Pastor

### 1. Senior Pastor as Elder

- a) The Senior Pastor shall be an Elder of the church. He shall perform the duties of an Elder (see "Responsibilities of Elders" above) and other such duties as usually pertain to that office. These generally fall into the following areas: preaching; teaching; Pastoral counseling; administration; planning; guiding the church to grow and fulfill its purposes; leading the church, the organization, and all leaders of the church in performing their tasks in worship, proclamation, education, and evangelism; and serving as an ex officio of all church standing committees, with the exception of the Pastor's Selection Committee.
- b) In the absence or incapacity of the Senior Pastor the Elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.
- c) At various times, the Senior Pastor may call for the formation of Church Committees at his discretion.

### 2. Call

- a) The Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called whenever a vacancy occurs.
- b) A Pastor's Selection Committee shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and this committee's recommendations shall serve as a nomination.
- c) The Pastor's Selection Committee shall recommend only one candidate at a time.
- d) The Senior Pastor's election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week notice shall be given to the members.
- e) An affirmative vote of three-fourths (75 %) of active members (See Section I, Part E) present is necessary for a choice.

### 3. Terms of Service

- a) The chosen Senior Pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated by either his request or that of the church. This can occur in one of the following ways:
  - 1) By Resignation: A Pastor, after sensing the call of God in a new direction of ministry, may submit his resignation to the congregation, provided that fourteen (14) days' notice is given.

- 2) By Grievance: When a grievance exists against a Pastor, either due to his preaching or teaching contrary to the beliefs of this church or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an Elder, any member may bring such grievance before the Elders, provided the grievance is accompanied with two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). If the Elders, after thorough investigation and consideration, believe the grievance to be true and substantial, a Special Members' Meeting shall be called. The vocational call of the Pastor may be terminated at such a meeting given the following:
  - (i) A recommendation of the Elders for removal, and,
  - (ii) That attendance of at least one-fourth (25 %) of the active membership is present, and,
  - (iii) A three-fourths (75 %) majority vote for termination is reached.

#### D. Deacons

1. Number, term of office: There shall be deacons for the resident members. Deacons shall be elected for a term of service that is determined and voted upon by the church.
2. Selection, election, and ordination of the deacons is a privilege of the local church.
3. Qualifications:
  - a) A deacon must meet the qualifications listed in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
  - b) A deacon shall demonstrate an exemplary Christian testimony in private, family, and public life; a committed Christian leader and partner of the pastor; supporter and promoter of the church faith, practice, programs, and ministries.
4. Election:
  - a) When a deacon vacancy occurs, the chairman of the Deacons' ministry shall announce that an election of a deacon shall be held during a named church business meeting.
  - b) The deacons shall be nominated by the members of the church. The Elders shall compile and confirm the nominations of the church as candidates for ordination (Acts 6:3, 5-6).
5. Ordination:
  - a) The duties, qualifications, and importance of the office of a deacon shall be interpreted to the candidates and be reviewed prior to the scheduled ordination of deacons.
  - b) The ordination services of deacons shall be scheduled and led by the Senior Pastor and Elders.
6. Duties:
  - a) Elected deacons shall elect the chairman of their ministry.
  - b) The deacons shall be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word and Prayer and the care for the members of the congregation (Acts 6:1-4).
  - c) Assist the Elders in ministering to the members by implementing the Deacon Family Ministry.
  - d) Overseeing the gathering of monetary offerings.
  - e) Assist the Elders in administering the church ordinances.

- f) Administering the Benevolence Fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crises or distress.
- g) Assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church.
- h) In the absence of the Elders, the chairman of the Deacons' Ministry shall serve as an advisory member to all organizations, departments, and committees of the church.

7. Organization of Deacons

- a) The deacons shall organize themselves however they determine to be best to achieve the mission of the church. The Senior Pastor or the deacons may designate any specific deacon or group of deacons to specialize in some particular diaconal function.
- b) Meetings of the deacons, or teams thereof, shall be held monthly or more often as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the deacons.

8. Termination of Service:

- a) A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated, or spiritually unqualified (Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

E. Church Staff

This church shall employ or call staff, as needed.

- 1. The staff members, other than that of the Senior Pastor, shall be recommended for employment by the Senior Pastor.
- 2. A written job description and mutual contract/agreement shall be prepared when the need for church staff is determined.

F. Moderator

- 1. The church moderator may be the Senior Pastor, Elder or a lay leader elected to this position.
- 2. The moderator shall preside at all regular and called business meetings of the church.
- 3. In the absence of the moderator, the chairman of the deacons shall preside over the regular and called business meetings of the church.
- 4. In the absence of the moderator and the chairman of the deacons, the church clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator shall be elected.

G. Clerk

- 1. The church clerk shall be elected and responsible for keeping an accurate record of all business meeting transactions of the church and preparing the annual report to the church.
- 2. He/she shall keep a register of the names and addresses of the church members, with dates of admission, dismissal, dedication of children, and deaths of members of the church.

3. He/she shall issue letters of dismissal to members dismissed by vote of the church or due to inactivity, write letters of transfer of membership upon request, and keep an accurate history of the church.
4. An assistant church clerk may be elected or the clerk's responsibilities shall be delegated to a church secretary if and when the church can afford to employ one.

#### H. Treasurer

1. The church treasurer shall be elected as the custodian of all money of the church and shall disburse these monies by checks as authorized by the church.
2. He/she shall be responsible for seeing that the offerings are properly received, counted, and deposited in the church's bank account.
3. The treasurer's report shall be submitted to the congregation annually prior to the Annual Church Business Meeting.
4. He/she must be bondable.

#### I. Financial Secretary

1. The church financial secretary shall be elected and shall keep at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements, and shall render a monthly and annually written report of this account to the church.
2. He/she shall properly credit each contributor and their offerings.
3. He/she shall be responsible for preparing for mailing an annual record of contribution to donors.

#### J. Trustees

1. At least six (6) trustees shall be elected by the church to hold trust the property of the church.
2. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property of the church without the specific vote of the church authorizing each action.
3. It shall be the function of the trustees to 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 on behalf, of the church.
4. The trustees shall serve as the budget and finance committee at the will of the church.

5. The chairperson of the trustees shall direct the maintenance program of the church, working with the Senior Pastor and custodian/janitor to establish a maintenance schedule and housekeeping schedule.

#### K. Church Council

1. The church council shall have as regular members the Senior Pastor, clerk, treasurer, chairman of deacons, Sunday School director, financial secretary, chairperson of trustees, and Youth director.
2. The Church Council shall exist to recommend to the church objectives and goals; review the coordinated program plans recommended by the Senior Pastor, church officers, organizations, and committees; to recommend to the church the use of leadership, calendar time, and other resources according to program priorities; and to evaluate program achievements in terms of church goals and objectives.
3. All matters agreed on by the Church Council calling for action not already provided for shall be referred to the church to be voted upon.

#### L. Vacancies

In case of vacancy of any elected office, except that of the Senior Pastor and staff members, the vacancy shall be filled by the church at a regular or special meeting as soon as possible after such vacancy has occurred.

### III. Church Meetings

#### A. Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning and/or evening for the worship of God, for preaching, instruction, evangelism, and at least one night designated for prayer and Bible study. These meetings shall be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the Senior Pastor, or designated church officer in the absence of the Senior Pastor.

#### B. Regular Business Meetings

Regular business meetings shall be held annually during the month of December. The agenda shall be circulated or made known to the church one week prior to the business meeting.

#### C. Special Business Meeting

A special called business meeting may be called by the Senior Pastor, and with other church officers, or by action of the church to consider special matters of significant nature. A one week written notice or announcement must be given for the specially called business meeting.

#### D. Quorum

The quorum consists of those who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called. At least one-fourth (25 %) of the active membership (members in good standing) shall constitute a quorum. (See Section I, Part E of the Bylaws for description of member in good standing.)

#### E. Parliamentary Rules

*Robert's Rules of Order* (revised edition) is adopted as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedures for all business meetings of the church and for all other meetings that demand voting of the church members, including committee meetings.

### IV. Licensing and Ordaining

#### A. Licensing of Ministers

In the absence of the Senior Pastor, any male member of the church who has shown by his life and has felt the call to the gospel ministry may by majority vote of the membership at a regular meeting be licensed by the church to the Christian ministry after having had evidence to his calling presented in public forum.

#### B. Ordination of Ministers

1. When a member of this church, having been licensed to the work of the gospel ministry and possessing Scriptural qualifications as demonstrated by his skills and training for ordination, shall be recommended by the Senior Pastor for ordination, or request that he be ordained, a special committee shall be convened by the Senior Pastor to conduct the process of his ordination. In the absence of the Senior Pastor and Elders, the chairman of deacons shall lead the ordination process.
2. When a church of Biblical life, faith, and order shall have called as its pastor a member of this church who possesses scriptural qualifications, as demonstrated by his skills and training for ordination to the work of the gospel ministry, and shall request in writing that he be ordained, in the absence of the Senior Pastor a special committee shall be elected to conduct the process of his ordination.

### V. Church Discipline

- A. From time to time, members of the church may become involved in disputes in which one party may sin against the other. Scripture puts the responsibility of reconciliation equally upon both parties involved in the dispute. Neither is to proudly wait for the other to move, for the other may

not know of the offense. There can be no acceptable worship of God where there are offenses between brethren:

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

(Matthew 5:23-24, New King James Version)

B. There are several steps which must be taken before the church has authority to intervene and take action between members involved in a personal dispute. These steps (listed in Matthew 18:15-17) are as follows:

1. When one has been offended by a fellow church member, he/she is to go to that person privately and seek to reconcile that problem. If the offender repents of the offense, the matter is resolved and no further disciplinary action should be taken.
2. If the first attempt (A) is rejected then he/she is to take one or two more with him/her as witnesses, and make a second attempt at reconciliation. These witnesses should be mature, active members of the church who are disinterested parties in the dispute. These witnesses are to be taken in order that the truth of every word from both sides of the matter may be established. If after this second attempt, the offender repents of the offense, the matter is resolved and no further disciplinary action should be taken.
3. If the offender is found guilty of the offense by the disinterested parties and he refuses to repent, then, and only then shall the matter be taken before the church for consideration. Even here, the goal is reconciliation. The church is to: (1) Hear the matter and to sit in judgment upon it. (2) They are to pass judgment as to the right or wrong of the case in the light of the Scriptures, and to submit their findings to the offender. (3) If the offender has the Spirit of Christ, he/she shall submit to the decision of the church, repent of the offense, and be reconciled to his brother. But if he/she rejects the word of the church, then he/she is to be excluded from the fellowship of the church (regarded as a "heathen and tax collector") and shall be regarded as an inactive member (See Section 1, Part F).
4. If all steps of church discipline have been exhausted then the church body shall sever all fellowship with the unrepentant person (2 Thessalonians 3:14- 15). In addition to church discipline, civil authorities must be involved when illegal activity is evident or reported (Romans 13:1 -7). Church staff must also direct members to seek proper professional counseling when they are not trained or qualified to do so themselves.

5. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any reason (or offense) may be restored by vote of the church, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation (2 Corinthians 2:5-8).

C. Public offenses may deal with one's morals, one's spirituality, or a matter of general disorderliness. Anything done publically which is disorderly in nature, and which reflects back unfavorably upon the Lord and upon His church, is to be dealt with by the church (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

#### D. Purpose of Church Discipline

1. To glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6).
2. To edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20).
3. To promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him/her to return to a Biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

### VI. Benevolence

In an effort to be good stewards of the resources God and His people provide, this church shall respond accordingly as needs arise with love and compassion.

#### A. Qualifications

1. Benevolence requests for life essentials (i.e. food, clothing, and shelter) shall receive priority above all other requests.
2. Non-essential requests (e.g. cell phone, cable, etc.) shall be considered as funds are available.
3. All requests must be submitted to the deacons in writing and accompanied by a copy of the bill (if applicable) that clearly states the amount due.
4. No more than one (1) request per 6 months shall be approved.
5. Requests made by active members shall receive priority over all others.
6. Once a request has been received by the deacons, at least five (5) deacons must approve the request before it shall be paid.

## B. Disbursement of Funds

1. Approved benevolence requests shall be paid by check directly to the company, institution, or organization owed.
2. In the event that physical assistance is needed (e.g. food, clothing), a deacon shall accompany the requester to a store and purchase the items on their behalf.
3. At no time shall any funds be given to the requester.