

# **Constitution of First Baptist Church LaBelle, Florida**

## **Article I. Name and Faith**

### **Section 1.**

The name of the Church shall be the First Baptist Church of LaBelle, Florida, constituted February 1912.

### **Section 2.**

Article of Faith: This church, believing in the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, as the inspired Word of God as the sole authority for faith and practice, and acknowledging its adherence to all the teachings of Jesus Christ, declare its purpose.

1. To maintain regular services, both devotional and for public worship.
2. To proclaim earnestly, the Gospel Message, and to urge its personal acceptance.
3. To cooperate heartily, by prayer, gifts and service, in an effort to establish the Kingdom of Christ in human hearts.
4. To promote systematic Bible Study and Training for Christian service, and to encourage in every way possible, enlistment in some form of Christian Church activity.
5. To secure, as far as possible, the practice of true religion and Christian principles and Christian philanthropy revealed and taught in the Scriptures.
6. Baptism by immersion.
7. To observe the Church Covenant.

### **Section 3.**

Admission by Baptism: Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of change in heart, and having accepted the aims and ideals of the Church as expressed in the Church Covenant, upon making a suitable enlistment for worship, service and giving, upon affirmative vote of the Church, after Baptism, will be received into full fellowship of the Church.

## **Article II. Character**

### **Section 1.**

Policy: The government is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognized and sustains the obligations of mutual

council and cooperation, which are common among Churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

## **Section 2.**

Doctrine: It accepts the Scriptures as its sole authority in matters of faith and practice.

## **Article III. Membership**

### **Section 1.**

The membership of the Church shall consist of persons who have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, who have experienced New Testament baptism (immersion), who are in sympathy with the faith and practices of this Church, counseled by the Pastor that they understand the church Covenant, and have fully accepted the Church Covenant. Applicants will be presented to the Church and admitted by a majority vote.

### **Section 2.**

New members shall be accepted after satisfactory questioning by the Deacons and/or Pastor by one of the following methods:

1. By letter from another church of like faith and order.
2. By satisfactory statement of previous religious experience.
3. By baptism by immersion.

### **Section 3.**

Termination of Membership: Membership in this Church shall be terminated after three fourths (3/4) vote of the Church members present as follows:

1. By transfer of letter by request from a church of like faith and order.
2. By death.
3. By letter or dismissal.
4. By exclusion.

## **Article IV. Officers**

### **Section 1.**

The officers of this Church shall be the Pastor, Deacons, Trustees, Church Clerk and Church Treasurer.

## **Section 2.**

The terms of office and duties of the officers shall be prescribed in the By-Laws to the Church Constitution.

## **Article V. Meetings**

### **Section 1.**

Worship Services: Worship Services of this Church shall be each Lord's Day, both morning and evening, and Wednesday evening.

### **Section 2.**

Business Meetings: The regular business meetings of the church shall be held the Wednesday after the second Sunday. This meeting may be changed temporarily as needed by the will of the church. (Changed by the action of the church on December 13, 2000).

### **Section 3.**

Special Business Meetings: A special business meeting of the Church may be called by the Pastor, Chairman of the Deacons and/or Chairman of the Budget & Finance Committee, after their request has been announced at least two (2) times in open worship service on the Lord's Day.

### **Section 4.**

Quorum: A Quorum of the church shall consist of the members present as long as it is a duly called meeting of the church. (Changed by the action of the church on September 17, 1997.) A Quorum of Deacons shall consist of over fifty percent (50 %) of the total ordained Deacons active at the time.

### **Section 5.**

Church Year: The Church organizational year shall begin September 1 and end August 31. The Church fiscal year shall begin January 1 and end December 31. (Changed by the action of the church on December 13, 2000.)

## **Article VI. Elections**

The annual and Special elections of officers shall be held as prescribed in the By-Laws.

## **Section 1.**

Baptism: Baptism shall be by immersion and shall be administered publicly.

## **Section 2.**

The Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper shall be observed the first Sunday of each quarter, with such exceptions as may be necessary. A Fellowship offering shall be taken after such service for the needy and held by the Deacons.

## **Article VIII. Amendments**

### **Section 1.**

Constitution: The Constitution may be amended by a two-third (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at a stated business meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at a previous business meeting at least two (2) weeks before the vote on same. Announcement to the congregation to amend the Constitution shall be made in writing two (2) weeks prior to meeting.

### **Section 2.**

By-laws: The By-laws of the Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership present and voting at any business meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at least two (2) weeks prior to the vote. Announcement to the congregation of meeting to amend By-laws must be in writing two (2) weeks prior to meeting.

### **Section 3.**

Suspension: Any By-Law or part of a By-Law may be temporarily suspended, except the First Article, at any regular meeting by a ninety percent (90 %) vote of the membership present.

## **Article IX. Regarding Will of the Church**

The will of the Church on any given matter, duly expressed by a majority vote of the membership present, shall be carried out by all committees, officers and organizations of the Church.

### **Section 1.**

Licensing: Any member, who in the judgment of the Church, gives evidence of his piety, zeal and aptness to teach, that he is called of God to the work of the Ministry, after preaching in the

hearing of the Church, may be licensed to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, provided a majority of the members present at any regular or called meeting agree thereto.

## **Section 2.**

Ordaining: If the Church by three-fourths (3/4) majority decides that one of its licensed preachers possesses the spiritual qualifications for full ordination, and after being called by a Church of like faith, may call a council of Ministers and brethren from associated Baptist Churches to examine the qualifications of the candidate, to which council the propriety shall be proffered.

## **Article X. Church Covenant**

“Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior,

And the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,

We do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort;

To promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines;

To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;

To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment;

To avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger;

To abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, 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 each other in prayer; to aid each other 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."

# **BY-LAWS TO THE CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

## **Pastor**

- I. Qualifications, Election, Term of Office
  1. Must be a regularly ordained Southern Baptist Minister.
  2. A member of a Southern Baptist Church.
  3. Recommended by the Pulpit Committee, elected by the church.
  4. He is to continue in office as long as the relations of the Pastor and people are mutually agreeable and profitable under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or until called to another pastorate.
  
- II. Duties of the Pastor
  1. Preaching the Gospel.
  2. Administering the Ordinances.
  3. Exercising Pastoral leadership.
  4. Assuming the general guidance and care of the religious interests of the church and people.
  5. To be an ex officio member of all organizations and committees and his leadership shall be recognized in all of them.

## **Deacons**

- I. Qualifications: The Deacons shall be male members of the church who on account of Godliness and fitness for the office, have been elected and ordained in a Southern

Baptist Church. The Deacon is an honored and responsible officer of the church. According to the New Testament he is chosen to this office because of his wisdom, faith and fullness of the Holy Spirit. His moral qualifications require that he be a man serious in purpose, careful in speech, sound in doctrine, the husband of one wife, and a good steward of time and talent, must abstain from the use and sale of intoxicating beverages. (I Timothy 3:11-13) Deacon's wives should so conduct themselves as expressed in I Timothy 3:11-12. A new Christian is ineligible for Deaconship for one year. A previously ordained Deacon in good standing must be a member of First Baptist Church of LaBelle for a period of three (3) months before becoming eligible for Deaconship.

- II. Election of Deacons: The Deacons shall consist of five (5) or more active members of the church. Nominations for Deacons will be made all together by the membership of First Baptist Church of LaBelle. Nominations will be by secret ballots (written) disregarding age. In a regular worship service the Pastor will preach on the qualifications of a Deacon, to be followed by the church nominating the needed number of men. The Pastor and Deacons will then examine those nominated and bring recommendations to the church.
- III. Term of Office: The Deacons shall be elected for a term of three (3) years on a rotating basis and ineligible for re-election the 4th year. Should a vacancy occur, the church may elect a substitute Deacon to complete the unexpired term. A Deacon filling an unexpired term can be elected for an additional term.
- IV. Duties of Deacons: The duties of the Deacon are churchwide, covering Ordinances, stewardship, soul winning, missions, etc. It is his duty to plan and lead out in all matters concerning the welfare of the church, but he is never understood to have any authority over the church, excepting when that authority is delegated to him by the church. Regular attendance at Deacon's meetings is vital, unless providentially hindered. Lack of interest in attending, and subsequent duty to perform his duty, shall constitute sufficient grounds for his release.

## **Baptismal Committee**

- I. Membership and Duties
  1. This committee shall consist of two (2) men and two (2) women.
  2. They are to make all necessary arrangements for the Baptismal Services and assist in every way possible, during the service.
  3. Make sure Baptistery is ready for use whenever needed, and clean after each use.
  4. Arrange for all needed accessories to make ordinances as worshipful as possible.
  5. Provide help for both sexes in dressing for ordinances.
  6. See that robes, towels and handkerchiefs are available.
  7. See that all garments used are properly cared for.
  8. Nominated by the church Nominating Committee.

## **Property and Maintenance Committee**

See that the church grounds are well kept, the grass is well watered, grass is fertilized and kept mowed. Make recommendations to the church concerning purchase of new equipment.

## **Deacon's Meetings**

Meeting shall be held monthly on the first Tuesday of each month, or may be temporarily changed by a majority of the Deacons. Failure to attend three (3) meetings without adequate reason shall cause such Deacon to be placed on the inactive list.

## **Trustees**

The title to all church property shall be held by the trustees, made up of five (5) or more members (this group not to have more than one Deacon for a member). The members shall be nominated by the church Nominating Committee. Their term of office shall be for a period of two (2) years, or until relieved by the church. They are hereby delegated authority to execute any and all contracts, deeds, negotiable papers, insurance and other legal indentures on behalf of the church, when authorized to do so by the church. The Trustees, in entering such contracts may act through its chairman, when he is authorized and directed to sign such indentures on behalf of the Trustees. The Trustees shall be charged with the general oversight of the Property and Maintenance Committee (see above). Trustees to be elected annually on a rotating basis (2 members to be elected one year and 3 members to be elected the following year.)

## **Treasurer**

- I. Qualifications: He or she must be consecrated, efficient, have a knowledge of finances, bookkeeping, parliamentary procedure, be reputable, must be a tither and steward in every respect. Must be a member of First Baptist Church LaBelle for at least one (1) year and have proven his or her loyalty as one of integrity, and should be bonded.
- II. Duties: The treasurer is responsible for keeping a cash receipts and disbursement journal and general journal, and keeping a ledger, make a monthly bank reconciliation, monthly report, and yearly report. The books are to be posted by the church Treasurer. He or she must also be responsible for the preparation of financial section of the church Letter to the Association. The Treasurer is a member of the Budget & Finance Committee and must work closely with the committee and watch carefully receipts and disbursements.

## **Church Secretary**

The Secretary shall be selected by the Pastor and Deacons and elected by the Church. She shall have custody of all Church record, revealing no information therein nor permitting too be removed from the church office by anyone, without special authority of the Pastor. All duties shall be under direct supervision of the Pastor. Said duties being general office and clerical supervision, assisting, whenever she can, all committees and departments in preparing reports. She shall be in charge of visitation files and shall furnish desired information upon request. In her absence, the files may be consulted by the superintendent of enlargement, a member of the church council or some designated person. She shall act as receptionist, maintain all records and reveal progress, needs and opportunities of the various organizations, to include Sunday School, Church Training, Finance Committee, Church Clerk, leadership training, and prospect files. The Secretary should handle all church-related correspondence for the Pastor and church, keep and up-to-date mailing list and maintain an orderly filing system. The Church Secretary must be able to type, mimeograph, file and be acquainted with all church record systems.

## **Church Clerk**

The Church Clerk shall keep in a suitable book a record of all the actions of the Church, except as otherwise herein provided. He or she shall keep a register of the names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal, or death, together with a record of baptisms. He or she shall also notify all officers, members of committees, and delegates of their election or appointment. He or she shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary, as indicated by these By-Laws. He or she shall be responsible for submitting the Annual Church Report to the Association. The Clerk shall consider it a part of his or her responsibility to promote loyalty and efficiency in church life.

## **Sunday School Director**

The Sunday School Director shall be elected by the church in June of each year, after being nominated by the Deacons and Pastor. The Director shall have general supervision of the Sunday school, its conduct and direction, consistent with the Church program. The Director and the Department Directors working together shall select their teacher, subject to the Nominating Committee, and elected by the Church in conference on or before September 15 of each year. Vacancies, therefore, shall be filled by the same procedure.

## **Church Training Director**

The Director of Church Training shall be elected by the Church in June of each year, after being nominating by the Deacons and Pastor. The Director shall have general supervision of the

Church Training, its conduct and direction, consistent with the Church program. The Director and Nominating Committee, working together, shall nominate leaders and officers of Church Training to be approved by the church in conference on or before September 15 of each year. Vacancies, thereafter, shall be filled in the same manner.

## **STANDING COMMITTEES**

### **Church Council**

This committee with the leadership of the Pastor, shall compose the Church Council and shall consist of the Chairman of the Deacons, the Sunday School Director, Church Training Director, Women Missionary Union Director, Chairman of the Budget & Finance Committee, and the Church Clerk, the Church Treasurer, and youth worker, and the Church Secretary. This committee shall meet with the Pastor quarterly or as often as he considers best, for the purpose of planning and coordinating the work and activities of the Church. The Council shall make recommendations to the Church as it feels necessary.

### **Budget-Finance Committee**

This committee shall consist of seven (7) members including the Sunday School Director, Church Training Director, Women's Missionary Union Director, or persons representing one of each areas, a representative from the Deacons, the Building & Grounds Committee, and two (2) members to be selected from the church at large. The duties of this committee shall be to prepare the annual budget of the church to be presented to the Church in December. Under no circumstances shall anyone purchase goods for any reason without proper authority. Any expenditure not allowed for in the annual budget must be referred to the Budget-Finance Committee for consideration and presented to the church as it deems advisable. This committee shall make no expenditure of more than one hundred dollars (\$100), unless items for this amount or more be listed in the approved budget, except by majority vote in a called meeting. Each member of this committee shall be a tither, and the committee shall seek to create a sense of stewardship responsibility among our members.

### **Usher Committee**

1. To exercise the best efforts to stop any disturbance or noise in or about the Sanctuary during the Worship Service.
2. To greet strangers before and after service.
3. To seat visitors and others if there is a need.

4. The chairman will see that the proper number of men are available to receive the offerings.
5. See that the Sanctuary cooling and heating is regulated.

## **Nominating Committee**

This committee shall be selected by the Pastor and the Nominating Committee to consist of five (5) to seven (7) members to be selected in March and elected in April and shall function throughout the year. Their recommendations must be brought before the Church and approved by the same. It shall be the duty of this Committee to nominate all church officers and committee members (Changed by action of the church on May 20, 2001).

## **Counting Committee**

Composed of three (3) people, nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church.

1. This committee shall be responsible for counting all collections of the church and depositing them in the bank.
2. They shall be nominated for one year, two years or three years.
3. Shall make and sign a triplicate report of all funds received, and deliver the original report slip to the Church Office for the files, a copy to the Church Finance Committee and a copy to the Treasurer with a copy of the deposit slip receipted by the bank.

# **MUSIC**

## **Minister of Music**

The Minister of Music shall be charged with the following responsibilities:

1. To provide worshipful music for all services of the church.
2. To have general oversight and direction of the music.
3. He/she is to direct the choir or choirs in practice and congregational singing.
4. He/she is to cooperate with the Pastor and Church Council in the selection of suitable music and the devising of appropriate musical programs for all occasions where such services are needed.
5. The Minister of Music shall hold no other position, or have any other responsibility within the church which would in any way interfere with his/her performance and/or duties as Minister of Music, or would prevent said Minister of Music from being present at all Sunday Services, Wednesday Night Services, and all other services as required by the church, unless providentially hindered.

The Minister of Music is entitled to a two-week paid vacation each year and other benefits outlined in the budget.

### **Church Pianist**

The Church Pianist shall be elected by the church and charged with the following responsibilities:

1. He/she is to be available to play at all practice sessions of the Choir or Choirs, Sunday Services and Wednesday Night Services and all other services required by the program of the Church unless providentially hindered.
2. He/she shall hold no other position within the church which would in any way interfere with his/her duties as Church Pianist.

### **Church Organist**

The Church Organist shall be charged with the following responsibilities:

1. He/she is to be available to play at all Sunday Services and Wednesday Night Services, and other services as required by the program of the church, unless providentially hindered.
2. He/she shall hold no other positions within the church that would in any way interfere with his/her duties as Church Organist.

## **OTHER COMMITTEES**

### **Social and Kitchen Committee**

1. To administer the general policies established by the church concerning operation of the kitchen and dining hall.
2. To supervise and direct planning, preparation and serving of all meals authorized by the church.
3. All use of the kitchen and Social Hall must be reserved through the Church Social and Kitchen Committee.
4. Be free to ask help from the membership.

## **Flower Committee**

This committee shall furnish, within the budget appropriation, flowers for any special occasions, such as the death of a member of the immediate family of our Church or the death of a member's parents. Flowers shall not be bought for the sick, but the flowers provided for the regular services shall be presented to someone who is ill, as soon as possible after the Sunday Services. This committee shall seek to discourage all organizations of the church from maintaining separate flower funds.

### **Pulpit Committee**

This committee shall consist of five (5) members and one (1) alternate. Three (3) nominated from the Deacons and two (2) nominated and one (1) alternate nominated from the floor. The alternate will serve with the other members and serve as a voting member upon the absence of any elected member. The committee shall elect their own chairman.

## **Missions Committee**

This committee shall consist of not less than three (3) and not more than seven (7) members. This committee shall consist of mission-minded members of the church. They shall elect their own Chairman from within the committee. This committee shall handle all Mission affairs and adhere strictly to the suggested policy of sponsoring Churches and Missions in all matters unless otherwise instructed by the church. To maintain a functionary committee, members of this committee may not absentee three (3) consecutive meetings without satisfactory reason, or be replaced. The pastor will call the initial meeting so the Chairman can be elected.

## **Personnel Committee**

Composed of the Pastor and the active deacons. (Changed by action of the church on September 17, 1997)

1. To promote a spirit of harmony, fellowship among the church staff.
2. Vacancies other than the pulpit, will be filled by this committee, if not otherwise specified, with the approval of the church.
3. Should additional paid personnel be needed, this committee, if it deems feasible, will recommend same to church.

## **Nursery**

The Nursery shall be under the supervision of a Nursery Coordinator. The coordinator will schedule workers for each service as needed.

## **Church Librarian**

1. Plans to promote and strengthen the Book Ministry of the Library.
2. To see that adequate space and equipment is provided.
3. Have specific hours for the Library to be open.
4. To make book selections and keep the purchase of books and equipment within the limits of the budget.
5. To acknowledge, in an appropriate way, all gifts to the library.
6. To encourage good reading habits, and to raise the reading level of the church members.

## **Church Custodian**

1. Open doors for all regular or church voted services and lock same after services.
2. Will have building to be used properly heated or cooled.
3. Be sure all lights are off, windows closed and air conditioners are off after each service.
4. Prepare the Baptismal pool.
5. Keep the building clean, all carpet and other floors, including bathrooms clean and supplied.
6. The lawns will be properly cut, watered, fertilized and pruned.

## **General Instructions**

1. All non salary vacancies in the church, Sunday School, Committee members, organizational workers, etc. will be filled upon the recommendation of department directors being nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Church.
2. Not more than one Deacon on any committee, except the Pulpit Committee, unless by virtue of position, he holds in the framework of the church.
3. If possible and feasible, no one on more than one committee.
4. All members of the Church are born again. They are urged to be faithful to the Lord and to their Church. They are expected to be good stewards of their time, talents and money. Should be tithers.
5. All salaried employees are to be, or will become members of the church.
6. Members shall pray regularly for their Pastor, Church and each other.
7. All Directors, standing and special committees are to give monthly report in the regular monthly business meeting and more often if there is a need.
8. After explaining the responsibilities, requirements, and what is expected of those who are to fill church positions, approval must be given by them, before their names are presented to the church for approval.