

# CONSTITUTION

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH of SOUTH ORANGE

### A Nonprofit Corporation

**Adopted:** September 24, 1952

**Amended:** March 14, 1967, June 16, 1969, December 13, 1988, December 13, 1989, September 1994, January 23, 2001, May 2002, and April 26, 2011

#### PREAMBLE:

For the most certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the accepted tenets of the Christian faith, seek to fulfill the whole gospel message through Biblical worship practice, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church and freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other churches, the governance of this church is vested in the leadership. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but recognizes and sustains the wisdom of mutual counsel and cooperation which are found among Missionary Baptist churches. We do hereby declare and establish this Constitution of the First Baptist Church of South Orange.

#### ARTICLE I. NOMENCLATURE

##### Section 1. Nomenclature (classification)

This Body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of South Orange.  
(the \_church\_ or the \_Nonprofit Corporation\_ as an exempt organization  
within  
the state of New Jersey).

##### Section 2. Purpose.

It is the purpose of this church to promote the cause of Jesus Christ; to advance the Kingdom of God through worship, Christian missions, education and fellowship; to promote Christian enterprises consistent with New Testament teachings; to reach the unsaved and the un-churched; and, to encourage the development of all of its members in Christian living and growing toward Spiritual maturity and righteously impacting on society.

##### Section 3. Legal Requirement.

This Church is a nonprofit corporation in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey, governing religious bodies. The handling of the

properties of this Church shall be in accordance with such laws.

## **ARTICLE II. COVENANT and ARTICLES of FAITH**

We are guided, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit, and relying on the blessings of God, we do here and now, by this act, constitute ourselves a church of Jesus Christ to perform His service and to be governed by His will, as revealed in the New Testament, and, to this end, we do hereby adopt and agree to the following Covenant and Articles of Faith.

### **Section 1. Church Covenant**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having 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, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into a 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 it's prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; 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 and behavior altering substances for recreation purposes; 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.

And now unto Him, Who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, be power and glory forever, Amen.

## Section 2. Articles of Faith

The Articles of Faith are common to many Christian churches and are 23 in number. The Articles listed herein are essential Christian doctrine, and their acceptances are critical to faithful participation in the ministry of this church.

1. **THE SCRIPTURES** - We believe the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction.
2. **THE TRUE GOD** - We believe that there is only one true God. He is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature.
3. **THE FALL OF MAN** - We believe that man was created by God in a state of holiness, but through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God by free choice and fell from his original state.
4. **THE WAY OF SALVATION** - We believe that salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered to all through the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.
5. **JUSTIFICATION** - We believe that justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of righteousness of all sinners who believe in Christ.
6. **THE FREENESS OF SALVATION** - We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all.
7. **REGENERATION** - We believe that regeneration or the new birth, is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit.
8. **REPENTANCE AND FAITH** - We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, wrought in our souls by the Spirit of God.
9. **SANCTIFICATION** - We believe that sanctification is the process by which we are made partakers of His holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
10. **THE PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS** - We believe that such only are real believers as endure to the end. They are kept by the power of God through faith

unto salvation.

11. **BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER** -We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer. The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus, preceded by solemn self-examination.
12. **THE RESURRECTION** - We believe that Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He now exists in His glorified body, seated at God=s right hand. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. The bodies of the righteous will conform to the glorious body of Jesus Christ.
13. **THE GOSPEL CHURCH** - We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. We observe the ordinances of Christ are governed by His word and exercise our gifts.

### **ARTICLE III. OFFICERS**

The officers of the church shall be Scriptural officers, and those officers required by law. Scriptural officers shall be the Pastor, Elders and Deacons. Officers required by law shall be the Chair (Chief Elder), Secretary and the Treasurer.

#### **Section 1. Council of Elders (the "Council")**

**Definition:** The Council shall comprise the senior leadership of the church, sitting as the council of governance, with the Pastor of this church being the Chief Elder (Chair) and the chair of the Deacons Ministry being the Senior Elder (Vice Chair).

- B. **Qualifications:** Elders shall be appointed to the Council according to qualifications in Article III Section 3, B.
- C. **Authority:** The Council shall sit as a council of governance with oversight of the operation of the church, making decisions as they pertain to church matters, both spiritual and temporal, giving policy direction and governance in all aspects of the church operation. The Council of Elders shall establish an order of succession to the office of Senior Elder in the event the office of Senior Elder becomes vacant or the Senior Elder is unable to perform.
- D. **Responsibilities:** The Council shall act as the Board of Directors and

Trustees of the church in all legal matters, and shall perform such duties as required by civil law.

The Council shall act as the legal representative of the church, and hold title to all church property. The Council shall also act on behalf of the church in making purchases or securing loans to accomplish the business of the church.

In counsel with the Pastor, and by such methods as the Holy Spirit may direct, and in accordance with New Testament teachings, the Council is to have oversight of the discipline of the church, guided by the principles set forth in Matt. 18:15-17, I Cor. 5:9-14, and I Thess. 5:12-14.

The Council shall give a report to the church during scheduled church meetings.

The Senior Elder shall be the moderator of all business meetings of the church in the absence of the Pastor, unless otherwise directed.

- E. Number:** The Council of Elders shall have no less than five (5) members. The initial number shall be five (5), and may be increased, as needed, by the Council.
- F. How Obtained:** See Article III; Section 3; Subsection F

## **Section 2. Pastor**

- A. Definition** - The Pastor is the shepherd of the church by appointment of God, and the free and voluntary, God led, act of the church. The Pastor is, by appointment and direction of God, set in place to rule over the congregation, providing spiritual nourishment and guidance, and Godly direction and management.
- B. Authority** - Pastor has absolute charge of the pulpit and all services and functions held in the Church facilities, and in the name of First Baptist Church of South Orange. He may perform weddings, officiate at funerals and other services; or appoint and/or approve other ministers to do so.

Pastor shall also chair the Council of Elders. Pastor may appoint committees, establish ministries, and appoint individuals to serve on various committees to accomplish the work of this ministry.

**C. Duties and Responsibilities** - The Pastor is responsible for the oversight and supervision of all interests of the church, and of all its work, both spiritual and temporal. He shall establish requirements for leadership in the church and develop and guide the direction of the church and its ministries. The Pastor is to gain the cooperation and involvement of the members of the church to attain the objectives of the ministry. Scriptural guidance shall be the final authority.

**D. How Obtained** - the church shall secure its Pastor by God led election, a majority of the membership present and voting is required. No individual or combination of members can appoint the Pastor, or compel the church to accept anyone who has not been chosen by vote of the church.

A special meeting of the general membership of the church shall be set for the expressed purpose of selecting a Pastor, notice being given publicly, at least four (4) Sundays in succession before the meeting. These notices shall be given both from the pulpit and in the church news letter or bulletin. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the notice. The minister who receives the majority of the votes cast by those eligible and voting shall be called to the office of Pastor of the First Baptist Church of South Orange.

**E. Tenure** - The call shall be indefinite and effective immediately unless otherwise stated.

**F. How Terminated** - The Pastor may terminate his services by submitting a resignation, giving ninety (90) days notice, unless otherwise agreed.

The church may, by action of two-thirds (2/3) majority of the qualified membership (See ARTICLE V, Section 1.), at a meeting called for that purpose, declare the pulpit vacant, provided that thirty (30) days notice has been given in writing by the Council of Elders, and that the Pastor has been notified in writing of all charges (if any) against him, and has had at least thirty (30) days in which to respond to such charges. Opportunity shall also be given for the Pastor to respond in person before the Council of Elders.

### **Section 3. Elders**

**A. Definition** - A member of the senior leadership of this church, serving on the council of governance of this church (Council of Elders), with the

Pastor being the Chief Elder of the Council (Chair), and the Chair of the Deacons Ministry being the Senior Elder (Vice-Chair).

- B. Qualifications** - An Elder shall be a mature Christian, recognized as being in good standing with the church, as demonstrated by a full embrace of the teachings of this ministry through tithes and offerings, faithful support of the ministry and through regular participation in the teachings of the ministry.
- C. Authority** - Elders serve as members of the Council of Elders of this church.
- D. Duties and Responsibilities** - Full and faithful participation in the Council of Elders in assisting the pastor in providing leadership in the operation of this church.
- E. Tenure** - One year term with no limit on the number of terms, at the pleasure of the Pastor and Council.
- F. How Obtained** - The initial Council of Elders shall be named by the Pastor in consultation with the Deacons ministry and affirmed by the church. Subsequent Elders shall be named by the Chief Elder in consultation with the Council of Elders and affirmed by the church.

When the office of Senior Elder is vacant, the position shall remain vacant until the Pastor appoints a new Chairman of the Deacons Ministry.

- G. How Terminated** - Term may be ended by resignation, death, by recommendation of the Pastor or by recommendation and action of the Council; reasons may include being out of Christian fellowship, non-participation, and non-support of the ministry. Termination of any Elder must be with a two thirds (2/3) majority of the membership of the Council of Elders.
  - H. Quorum** - No action or decision shall be made by the Elders without a Quorum consisting of a simple majority of the members of the Council.
- VI. Actions by Elders - Any actions or decision by the Elders will be by simple majority of the members present and voting.

#### **Section 4. Deacons**

- A. **Definition:** Deacons assist the Pastor by serving the needs of the congregation. (Acts 6:1-3)
- B. **Authority:** Deacons are servants of the church and are selected by the Council of Elders to assist the Pastor and serve the congregation. (Acts 6:1-7)
- C. **Qualifications:** The qualifications for Deacon shall be as set forth in the Scriptures. (1 Tim. 3:8-13).
- D. **Duties and Responsibilities:** The Deacons shall assist the Pastor in his pastoral responsibilities to ensure the spiritual well being of the church and Pastor. With the Pastor, they are to consider and formulate plans for the constant effort, and progress of the church in all things pertaining to the saving of souls, the development of Christians to maturity, and the extension and growth of the Kingdom of God.

By proper organization and methods among themselves, Deacons are to establish and maintain fellowship relations with, and inspiring oversight of all of the members of the church. They are specially to seek to know the physical needs, and the moral and spiritual struggles of the members; to serve the whole Church in relief, encouragement, and development of all who are in need.

Deacons shall be free to call upon any member(s) of the Church to aid in matters of reconciliation.

- E. **How Obtained:** Deacons shall first be recommended by the church and appointed by the Council of Elders.  
The Chair of the Deacons Ministry shall be named by the Pastor and affirmed by the church. He will provide the leadership of the Deacons in their duties as specified. The chair of the Deacons ministry shall also serve as Senior Elder. When the chair of the Deacons Ministry is vacant, the Vice Chairs shall, in order, assume all duties of the Chair except the position with the Council of Elders.
- F. **Tenure:** - Tenure shall be indefinite.
- G. **How Terminated:** - Deacons may resign their office, or they may be subject to removal upon action by the Pastor and the Council of Elders.

**Section 5. Corporate Secretary**-The Corporate Secretary shall be a member of the Council of Elders, and selected by the Council and affirmed by the church.  
The Corporate Secretary shall:

- A. Be responsible for the recording and maintenance of all official corporate minutes;
- B. Preserve on file, all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice where such notice is required;
- C. Issue legal correspondence of the corporation, and
- D. Maintain the Corporate Seal.
- E. The term of office shall be one year. The incumbent may serve an indefinite number of terms.

**Section 6. Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall be recommended by the Pastor and elected annually by the Council of Elders. The Treasurer shall be bonded during tenure in this office.

- A. The Treasurer shall be responsible for accounting for all monies and disbursements.
- B. The Treasurer shall serve as a member of the Finance Ministry, and maintain a close working relationship.
- C. The Treasurer's books shall be subject to annual review, compilation or audit.
- D. The Treasurer shall give a written report to the church at each regularly scheduled church business meeting.
- E. The term of office shall be one year. The incumbent may serve an indefinite number of terms.

#### **ARTICLE IV. COMMITTEES**

##### **Section 1. All Committees**

- A. **Chair** -The Chair of all committees shall be appointed by the Chief Elder and serve at the pleasure of the Chief Elder.

- B. **Tenure** - Appointments of non-standing members shall be for one year. Members may be reappointed for an indefinite number of terms.
- C. **Number of Members** - The number of members shall be as required and as determined by the Chief Elder.
- D. **How Terminated** - Members serve at the pleasure of the Chief Elder. Termination may be by resignation, death or removal by the Chief Elder.

**Section 2. Finance Committee**

- A. **Definition:** The Finance Committee is the manager of the fiscal matters of the church.
- B. **Authority:** The Finance Committee shall have general oversight of church revenue matters in consultation with, and under the direction of the Council of Elders.
- C. **Duties and Responsibilities:** Shall be responsible for accounting recording and reporting the revenue matters of the church, and shall deposit all monies in accounts approved by the Council of Elders.
- D. **How Obtained** - Members include Senior Elder, Chairman of the Budget Committee, Treasurer as standing members. Other members as defined above.

**Section 3. Budget Committee.**

- A. **Definition** - The Budget Committee shall consist of members appointed by the Pastor. The Committee, in consultation with the Pastor and all ministries of the church, shall assist in the preparation of an inclusive budget.
- B. **Chair** - As defined above in Section 1.
- C. **Tenure** - As defined above in Section 1.
- D. **How Obtained** - As defined above in Section 1.

**Section 4. Audit Committee.**

- A. **Definition** - The Audit Committee shall consist of at least three (3) members appointed annually by the Pastor. The committee shall conduct or cause to be conducted, regular reviews, compilations, or audits of the financial records of the church.
- B. **Chair** - As defined above in Section 1.
- C. **Tenure** - As defined above in Section 1.
- D. **How Obtained** - As defined above in Section 1.

## ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

**Section 1. Qualifications.** The membership of this church shall consist of such persons as confess Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord, and who:

- A. After due examination by the church as to their Christian experience,
- B. After being baptized and upon completion of all other requirements,
- C. After entering into covenant with the church, and
- D. Being faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian faith, regularly attending the services of the church, giving regularly in tithes and offerings in support of the church and its vision, being actively involved in a ministry and participating in some ministry that teaches the tenets of the faith in this church.
- E. Qualified members may be certified by the official church membership roll and the official church giving records.

**Section 2. Duties and Responsibilities.** All members should be responsive to the wishes of the Pastor, and

- A. Strive to maintain Godly conduct;
- B. Be prayerful in all things, and,
- C. Resolve any dilemma or problem according to Matthew 18:15-17.

**Section 3. Ministries.** All Ministries are responsible to the Pastor and Elders; and shall support the vision of the church. Heads of each Ministry shall participate as a member of an Advisory Council and meet at the discretion of the Pastor.

**Section 4. Right to Act and Vote.** The right to act and vote in the transactions of the Church shall be limited to persons who meet all qualifications for membership.

**Section 5. Termination.** Termination of membership shall be subject to the following principles :

- A. Any member in good standing who desires a letter of reference is entitled to receive it upon request.
- B. Termination for any reason other than at the request of the member shall be by action of the Council of Elders after all due diligence to bring the member into restoration.

**Section 6. Restoration.** Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored upon action by the Council of Elders.

## ARTICLE VI. CHURCH MEETINGS

**Section 1. Worship Services.** The church shall meet regularly, each Sunday and other such times as may be announced.

**Section 2. Regular Business Meetings**

- A. Regular Church Business meetings shall be held twice a year, in January and July, to receive reports on the state of the church and to approve church budget.
- B. All meetings should be well planned with an agenda, and conducted in a prayerful, orderly and democratic.

- C. Members with items to be considered for the meeting agenda must present them in writing, to the Pastor or Council of Elders, at least 30 days week before the meeting.

### **Section 3. Special Business Meetings.**

- A. Special business meetings may be called by the Chief Elder or the Senior Elder, provided that ample notice is given in advance.
- B. The meeting notice must specify the purpose of the meeting and no other business may be transacted.
- C. Special business meetings called for the purpose of dealing with matters related to filling or vacating the pulpit must be called by the Senior Elder with approval of the Council of Elders, and require a quorum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the membership.
- D. When the meeting is concerned with calling a Pastor or declaring the pulpit vacant, the Senior Elder shall preside.

**Section 4. Quorum.** For all regular church business meetings, the moderator may declare a quorum to be the members present. All actions and decisions will be by simple majority.

## **ARTICLE VII. AMENDMENTS**

**Section 1.** This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at any business meeting or at a meeting specially called for that Purpose; the proposed amendment(s) being inserted in the call. All amendments must be laid in writing before the Church in a business meeting not less than thirty (30) days before the time of the proposed action.

## **ARTICLE VIII. ADOPTION**

### **Section 1. Constitution Revision**

All former rules of order and by-laws governing this body shall become null and void on the adoption of these as herein stated.

These Bylaws and Constitution were approved at a meeting of the general church body of First

Baptist Church of South Orange, New Jersey on \_\_\_\_\_, 2011

**Constitution Committee members:** Doug Rogers, Clearance Drakes, Jerri Drakes, David Clement, Rev. Terry Richardson

Being created as apart of ministry revamp.  
Once completed, to distributed to congregation  
at business meeting.

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