

Constitution and Bylaws

First Baptist Church Brownwood, Texas

FOREWORD

A church is a fellowship of people who have accepted Christ as Savior and are united by their common relation to the Holy Spirit. A church, like a community or an individual, is always changing. Fundamental doctrines remain the same, but methods of teaching these doctrines and of moving toward objectives must change if the mission of the church is to be accomplished.

A church constitution and bylaws document helps a church preserve democratic procedure. This instrument serves as the guide for members to follow in carrying out the work of the church.

Basic theology, organizational structure, and church policies are contained in the constitution. Bylaws will usually be changed more often than the constitution. It should be emphasized, however, that both constitution and bylaws should be reviewed annually by the deacons. As the program of a church changes, so must its rules of governmental procedures be brought up to date.

The basic advantages of a constitution and bylaws are:

1. Furnishes members a written statement of their church organizations, fundamental guidelines, and theological beliefs.
2. Aids in preserving democracy and harmony since predetermined guidelines have already been established by the members.
3. Provides orderly procedures for guiding the transaction of church business.
4. Serves as a basis, a method of solving problems before problems arise.

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith, so that this body may be governed in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches of the same faith and order.

I. NAME

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Brownwood, Texas and is incorporated under and by the virtue of the laws of the State of Texas.

II. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the basis for any Statement of Faith. The church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith and Message adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963 and affirmed by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. We band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the Good News of salvation to lost mankind. The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

III. BASIC CHURCH BELIEFS

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, Son, and 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. Realizing that we are still sinners, saved by the grace of God, we covenant together to seek to attain the following:

We covenant, 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 prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; and 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 covenant to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our family and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings; faithful in our engagements; exemplary in our deportment; and to use the principles set forth in the New Testament as an example to follow in all our endeavors.

We further covenant to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid, be slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior and to secure it without delay.

We moreover covenant 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 our beliefs and the principles of God's Word.

IV. POLITY

The government of the church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches.

BYLAWS

1. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. General

The membership of this church shall consist of born-again baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been received into membership of this church according to the procedures outlined in this constitution and bylaws. This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains the right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church as led by the Holy Spirit.

Section 2. Candidacy

Any person may offer oneself as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates shall be presented to the church at any regular worship service for membership in any of the following ways:

- (1) By profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and for baptism by immersion according to the New Testament pattern.
- (2) By promise of letter of recommendation from another Baptist church of like faith and order.
- (3) Admission into membership may be by personal statement satisfactory to this church, that the person confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and has had believer's baptism in a church of like faith and order. Churches of like faith and order, for purpose of membership, are those who hold similar requirements of profession of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, and of baptism as to manner and meaning: the manner is immersion and the meaning is that of a symbolic act.
- (4) Persons in need of a church home, but not desiring to become voting members, may offer themselves for watchcare and may be accepted as watchcare members upon the majority vote of the congregation assembled. Such candidates should have had a genuine conversion experience and membership in another congregation and should agree to live within the framework of this congregation. Watchcare members are not eligible to be elected to church office or to vote in transactions of the congregation, but they shall otherwise be fully admitted to the fellowship of the congregation. No church letter will be granted to watchcare persons who unite with another congregation.

Should there be any dissent as to any candidate becoming a member of the church, the affirmative vote of three-fourths of those church members present at the church service shall be required to elect such candidate to membership.

Section 3. Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- (1) Death
- (2) Transfer to another Baptist church
- (3) Erasure upon request on becoming affiliated with a church of another faith or denomination
- (4) Exclusion by action of this church *

*No member shall be excluded from this church unless the procedure outlined in Matthew 18: 15-20 has been carried out.

- (5) Members of this church, who are known to be a non-resident, and who are not known to have affiliated with another denomination, along with those members who cannot be found after a reasonable investigation by the church, shall be placed in a category of membership called "Non-resident, and/or Unknown", and so reported in the membership rolls. The church personnel shall determine this placement and notify the church clerk.

II. CHURCH OFFICERS

All church officers must be members of the church and shall seek to lead the membership in accordance with the mission of the church.

Section 1. Pastor

- 1.1 Duties: The pastor is responsible for leading the membership in functioning as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations and the church staff in performing their tasks. He will serve as a nonvoting ex-officio member of all committees and groups organized by the church. A major concern of the pastor is to perform pastoral responsibilities. He is the leader of worship, proclamation, education and pastoral ministry, and is the chief and director of the ministerial and non-called staff.
- 1.2 Call: The pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy or need occurs. This election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose of which at least one week public notice shall be given. Candidates shall be sought and ultimately recommended to the church by a church-selected Search Committee.
- 1.3 Search Committee: A Search Committee shall be nominated from recommendations of the church. The Committee on Committees shall receive recommendations after publicizing their intent. The Committee on Committees shall seek to name the search committee members from the church recommendations. They should be church members and should as adequately as possible represent the organizations and age differentials of the congregation. The Search Committee shall consist of an odd number (preferably, seven).
- 1.4 Method of Election: After prayerful thought and examination of qualifications the Search Committee shall present one name for consideration. Notification of time and place for election shall be given both orally in services and by mail to all church members at least one week prior. Before the election the church membership shall have the opportunity to hear the candidate preach in at least one scheduled Sunday service. Additionally, an opportunity will be afforded the church congregation for questioning and fellowship with the candidate and the candidate's family. Election shall be by written ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present being necessary for a choice. The Committee on Committees shall be in charge of the election, the chair person serving as moderator. The pastor thus elected shall serve until the relationship is terminated.
- 1.5 Termination: The pastor shall serve until the relationship between the church and pastor is terminated. This may occur either by resignation or the church may terminate the service of a pastor. This may be done at a meeting of the church called for this purpose upon a recommendation of the Personnel Committee. The entire congregation shall be advised of time and place and objective of the called meeting at least one week prior to the date. A decision to terminate shall require a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.

Section 2. Other Ministerial Staff

- 1.1 Duties: Specific duties of other ministerial staff members should be stated prior to presentation for election and job specifications shall be on file in the church office. Other ministerial staff shall serve as non-voting ex-officio members of any committees of which they are named.

1.2 Call: Other ministerial staff members shall be called in the same manner as outlined in Pastor Sections 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4.

1.3 Termination: Other ministerial staff shall serve until the relationship between the church and minister is terminated. This may occur either by resignation or the church may terminate the service of a minister. This may be done at a meeting of the church called for this purpose upon a recommendation of the Personnel Committee or the pastor. The entire congregation shall be advised of time and place and objective of the called meeting at least one week prior to the date. A decision to terminate shall require a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.

Section 3. Clerk

The church clerk shall keep the minutes of all regular and called business meetings, is authorized to sign such documents as may require the signature of the church clerk such as the signing of letters of transfer. The term of service of the church clerk shall be one year with no more than three consecutive terms. The church clerk shall be elected annually after nomination from the Nominating Committee. Elections shall be held at a designated monthly business meeting with election by majority vote of all members of the church who are present and entitled to vote. If a vacancy should occur during a term, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a replacement for immediate election.

Section 4. Treasurer

The church treasurer, in conjunction with the Stewardship Committee and financial secretary, shall see that all church funds, either special or budgeted, are properly handled and properly disbursed, and that proper accounting records of all financial transactions have been made. This person shall make appropriate reports to the Stewardship Committee. The term of service of the church treasurer shall be one year with no more than three consecutive terms. The church treasurer shall be elected annually after nomination from the Nominating Committee. Elections shall be held at a designated monthly business meeting with election by majority vote of all members of the church who are present and entitled to vote. If a vacancy should occur during a term, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a replacement for immediate election.

Section 5. Trustees

The church shall have three trustees, each of whom shall be nominated to serve a term of nine years by the Stewardship Committee. Every three years the Stewardship Committee shall review the trustees and at their discretion nominate for election by the church a new member on a rotating basis, being watchful to ensure two of the three are held over until the next rotation. If a vacancy should occur during the year the Stewardship Committee will nominate a replacement to be approved by the church.

The trustees shall have the power (although only upon officially recorded instructions of the membership of the church, approved in a business meeting) to execute, on behalf of the church, any and all necessary legal documents related to church approved matters - including (by way of example but not by way of limitation) deeds, deeds of trust, mortgages and liens - and to transfer, assign and convey any or all church property, as specifically authorized by the membership. All powers and duties of the trustees shall conform to the laws of the State of Texas, to the church Constitution and Bylaws, and to the duties of trustees as described in such other written statements as may hereafter be recommended to and approved by the church.

Section 6. Non-Ministerial Church Staff

The non-ministerial church staff shall consist of the Church Weekday Educational Director and support persons such as secretaries, custodial, and technical operators who provide services for the church upkeep and assistance to the ministerial staff. Job specifications shall be on file for all church staff positions in the church office. Selection and hiring of the church staff shall be a duty of the Personnel Committee in cooperation with the supervising called staff member.

Section 7. Church Council

The government of the church is vested solely in the body of the members who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body.

To allow continuity of scheduling and focus on church goals and to coordinate activities for the church body, the Church Council shall meet at least quarterly with the persons listed below as members. The council may make recommendations to the deacons, the church, and the various organizations and committees. The moderator shall serve as the chairman of the Church Council. In the absence of the moderator, the chair of the deacon body shall preside. The term of service of the moderator shall be one year with no more than three consecutive terms. The moderator shall be elected annually after nomination from the Nominating Committee. Elections shall be held at a designated monthly business meeting with election by majority vote of all members of the church who are present and entitled to vote. If a vacancy should occur during a term, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a replacement for immediate election.

Members of this council shall be:

- Pastor
- Other Ministerial Staff
- Moderator (Chairman)
- Chair, Deacon Body
- Representatives of Preschool, Children, Youth, University, WMU and Baptist Men (The terms of service for representatives shall be one year with no consecutive terms. Representatives shall be elected annually after nomination from the Nominating Committee. Elections shall be held at a designated monthly business meeting with election by majority vote of all members of the church who are present and entitled to vote. If a vacancy should occur during the term, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a replacement for immediate election.)
- Chairpersons or representatives of Personnel, Stewardship, and Properties Committees

Section 8. Deacons

In accordance with the New Testament guidelines deacons are to be servants of the church. Deacons of the church shall be ordained to provide spiritual leadership for and service to the fellowship of the church. They shall guard the unity of spirit within the church, and shall recommend establishment of policies concerning the material interests of the church and its ministries, subject to the will of the church.

The ministry of the deacon is to serve with the pastor and shall be to carry out God's work in the church and community in assisting the church members and others in the community when needs arise. The deacons shall have responsibilities and duties specified in the New Testament or as specified by the church family. The deacons shall assist the pastor in the administration of the ordinances and help the pastor in the general work of the church. Matters pertaining to the operation of the church may be presented and discussed in deacons' meetings for counsel, clarification, and affirmation before presentation to the congregation. This will allow the pastor and other church staff to use the deacons as a sounding board in such matters. Every deacon of the church is expected to seek out and occupy a chosen place of service in the church program in addition to performing services as a deacon.

The chairman and vice-chairman of the deacons in consultation with the pastor shall determine whether the active deacon body is large enough to carry out its ministries and make such recommendations to the church. Only those persons who meet the scriptural qualifications set forth in Acts 6: 1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and who have been members of the church for at least one year shall be considered. Nominations shall be made by the church body to a committee selected by the deacon body. This special Qualification Committee shall return a slate of qualified nominees to be elected by the church body. This slate shall be elected *en toto*, with a majority vote required for election. Those elected individuals will be available for ordination. The deacon body will call an ordination council of ordained ministers and deacons to question the individual(s) on the truths of their faith and their qualifications. Upon completion of this examination, the ordination council will make a recommendation to the church for their ordination. Once ordained, deacons shall serve thereafter as long as they are faithful to their duties and continue to meet the scriptural qualifications.

The officers of the deacons will be chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary. They shall be elected each year. The deacon body will meet regularly once each month. The normal meeting time is Sunday evening following the evening service on the Sunday immediately preceding the last Wednesday of the month which is the time of the church's regularly scheduled business meeting. Special deacon meetings may be called by the chairman of the deacons or the pastor and every member of the deacon body shall be notified twenty-four hours in advance if a special meeting is called. A quorum shall consist of all members present at the regularly scheduled or special meeting.

There shall be no obligation to recognize a deacon who comes to this church from another baptist church of like faith and order, but after six months the deacon may be considered by the deacon body and recommended by the deacon body to the church. A majority vote of the church members present shall entitle the deacon to serve as part of the deacon body of this church.

III. COMMITTEES

Section 1. General

The committees of this congregation shall be a Committee on Committees, a Nominating Committee, a Personnel Committee, a Stewardship Committee, and a Properties Committee and such other regular and special committees as the congregation shall authorize. Committees may be created or dissolved by simple majority vote of the congregation at any regular business meeting.

Section 2. Membership

All committee members shall be members of this congregation and shall be recommended by the Committee on Committees, except the Committee on Committees whose members shall be recommended by the Church Council. Recommendations shall be made annually at a designated monthly business meeting with election by majority vote of all members of the church who are present and entitled to vote. All committee members must submit information for background checks according to church policy. Committee members shall serve on a three year rotating basis with one third to be elected each year unless otherwise specified. A member may not serve two consecutive full terms on the same committee. A person elected replacing a member who did not serve their complete term will serve the remainder of the incomplete term and are eligible to serve a consecutive full term. No member may serve as chairperson of the same committee for two consecutive years. All committees shall have at least one ministerial staff member assigned as an ex-officio member. Any ex-officio member of a committee shall serve as a non-voting member.

Section 3. Duties

A complete list of all standing committees and a description of their duties shall be kept in the church office. All committee members are required to follow church policies and procedures. Each committee is responsible for reviewing the description of their duties annually and, if changes are necessary, submitting proposed changes to the congregation for approval at any regular business meeting. Any committee requiring budgeted monies will be responsible for submitting a budget request to the Stewardship Committee annually. Each committee will be responsible for submitting to the church office a written report of meeting proceedings. Meetings shall be held at least quarterly.

IV. SERVICE TEAMS

Section 1. General

The service teams of this congregation shall include Church Ordinance, Family Care, Outreach and Prayer, Hospitality, Ushers and Greeters, Music and such other service teams as the congregation shall authorize. Service teams may be created or dissolved by simple majority vote of the congregation at any regular business meeting.

Section 2. Membership

Service team leaders shall be members of this congregation and shall be recommended by the Church Council. Recommendations shall be made annually at a designated monthly business meeting with election by

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majority vote of all members of the church who are present and entitled to vote. All team members must submit information for background checks according to church policy. A service team leader may serve as leader of the same service team for a term of up to three years. Service team members may volunteer or be recruited by the team leader or other team members. All church members are eligible and encouraged to join the service team in which they have associated interests and talents, and in which they feel called to minister. The term of a service team member is unlimited, as is the number of members on a team. All service teams will have at least one ministerial staff member who will assist in coordination and oversight of team membership and activities.

Section 3. Duties

The duty of all service teams is to minister to church and community members so as to bring glory to God and His Kingdom. A complete list of all teams and a description of their ministries shall be kept in the church office. All team members are required to follow church policies and procedures. Each team is responsible for reviewing the description of their duties annually and, if changes are necessary, submitting proposed changes to the congregation for approval at any regular business meeting. Any team requiring budgeted monies will be responsible for submitting a budget request to the Stewardship Committee annually. Each team will be responsible for submitting to the church office a record of team activities and/or ministries and of the team members involved.

V. EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

Section 1. General

The congregation shall maintain programs of Bible teaching, member training, leader training, mission education, action and support, and music education, training and performance. Organizations may be created or dissolved by simple majority vote of the congregation. All organizations related to these programs shall be under congregational control, all officers being elected by and reporting regularly to the congregation, and all program activities subject to coordination and approval by the congregation. The congregation shall provide the leadership resources, the physical resources and the financial resources for the proper advancement of these programs. All ministries of the church will be coordinated by the appropriate staff person as indicated by the church approved organizational chart.

Section 2. Sunday School

There shall be a Sunday School divided into departments and classes for all ages and conducted under the direction of the ministerial staff for the study of God's Word. Sunday School is to be conducted every Sunday morning.

The tasks of Sunday School shall be to teach the biblical revelation; lead in reaching all prospects for the church; lead all church members to worship, witness, learn, and minister daily; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

Sunday School leaders shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee for immediate election by the church in the case that a vacancy should occur.

Section 3. Woman's Missionary Union

There shall be a Woman's Missionary Union with such officers and forms of organization, such as GA's, as needed. This program shall be directed by a Woman's Missionary Union Director. The Woman's Missionary Union Director shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee for election by the church in the case that a vacancy should occur. The tasks of the Woman's Missionary Union shall be to teach missions, to lead persons to participate in missions, to provide organization and leadership for special mission projects of the church, and to provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

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Section 4. Baptist Men

There shall be a Baptist Men's group made up of various organizations, such as Royal Ambassadors, as needed. This program shall be directed by a Baptist Men's Director. The Baptist Men's Director shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee for election by the church in the case that a vacancy should occur. The task of the Baptist Men's group shall be to teach missions, to lead all men and boys to participate in mission activities, to provide organization and leadership for special projects of the church, and to provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

Section 5. Music Ministry

There shall be a Music Ministry with such officers and organizations as needed. The Music Ministry tasks shall be to teach music and hymnody, to provide music and musicians for the congregational services and the organizations of the church, to lead persons to participate in singing, to train persons to lead, sing and play music; to provide organization and leadership for special projects of the church, and to provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination. The music minister shall coordinate with the pastor in the planning and execution of the worship service.

VI. CHURCH MEETINGS

Section 1. Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening for preaching, prayer, instruction, evangelism, and for worship of Almighty God. These meetings will be open for the entire congregation of the church and for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the pastor. Meeting times for services shall be determined by the church body.

Section 2. Regular Business Meeting

A regular business meeting shall be held monthly on a designated Wednesday night. Should there be a need for a specially called church meeting due to unusual business or a matter of unusual interest, notice shall be given by the church office to the membership at least one week prior to the meeting, unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The moderator of the Church Council shall serve as moderator for the church business meetings. In absence of the moderator, the chair of the deacon body shall preside at church business meetings.

Section 3. Quorum

The quorum consists of those who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called.

Section 4. Parliamentary Rules

The newest edition of Robert's Rules of Order Revised is adopted as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church, the deacons, and the committees.

VII. CHURCH FINANCES

Section 1. Christian Stewardship

It is understood that membership in this church involves the financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts. Each member shall be encouraged in Christian stewardship to be in support of the church budget as well as non-budget financial emphases (for example the building fund or mission offerings).

Section 2. Funds Received

All funds, for all purposes, shall pass through the hands of the Stewardship Committee and be properly recorded on the books of the church by the church financial secretary.

Section 3. Annual Budget

The Stewardship Committee, in consultation with the ministerial staff, shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget, indicating by item the amount needed and sought for all local and worldwide expenses.

Section 4. Church Audit

The Stewardship Committee shall order a financial audit of the church's books at least every three years. This audit shall be performed by an outside source not associated by church membership or church held position.

VIII. AMENDMENTS

Changes in this Constitution and Bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church, provided such amendments have been presented in writing at a previous meeting. Copies of the proposed amendment shall be furnished to each member present. Amendments to the Constitution shall be by two-thirds vote of all members of the church who are present and entitled to vote; amendments to the Bylaws shall have a concurrence of a majority of the members present and voting.