

# **Constitution & Bylaws**

## **First Baptist Church of Brandon**

### **Brandon, Florida**

#### **ARTICLE I - NAME AND PURPOSE**

This Church shall be known as THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BRANDON. This Church is a congregation of baptized believers in Christ, voluntarily united together for the worship of Almighty God for the extension of His Kingdom throughout the earth, associated in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel, to practice its precepts, to recognize and acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Savior, their sole Law Giver and Lord, and to take the Bible alone and in its entirety as the standard by which all matters of belief and conduct are to be decided. The Church is organized for the purpose of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for engaging in Christian worship. As a church we adhere to the principles set forth in the Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000.

#### **ARTICLE II – ORDINANCES**

SECTION 1. The Ordinances shall be Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

SECTION 2. Baptism means immersion and shall be administered publicly.

SECTION 3. The Lord’s Supper shall be observed once each month with such exceptions as may be necessary.

#### **ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP**

SECTION 1. GENERAL - This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of the Church and the right to withdraw any delegated power, authority, or responsibility.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this Church and under the conditions set forth in Section 2 - Candidacy.

The membership of this Church shall be all whose names are duly inscribed on the Church rolls as maintained in the Church Office.

SECTION 2. CANDIDACY - Any person may offer himself as a candidate for membership in this Church. All such candidates shall be presented to the church at any worship service or meeting for membership in any of the following ways:

- (a) By profession of Faith and Baptism according to the policies of this Church;
- (b) By letter from another Baptist church of like faith and order;
- (c) By statement of prior conversion experience and believer’s baptism by immersion as a symbol of obedience;
- (d) By coming from another Christian denomination for baptism;

- (e) By or under watch-care of this Church pursuant to the policies of this Church. Such a relationship will entitle said person to all privileges of Church membership, except voting and election to general church office, as described under Article IV, ORGANIZATION;
- (f) By such other ways as this Church may recognize.

Membership will be granted upon a majority vote of members present and voting.

SECTION 3. DUTIES - Church members are urged to be faithful in all duties inherent with the Christian life; to support all the programs of the Church with regular attendance and prayer; to give generously to the work of the Lord in this part of God's Kingdom.

SECTION 4. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP - Membership shall be terminated by

- (a) death;
- (b) dismissal to another Baptist church;
- (c) erasure upon becoming affiliated with a church of another faith or denomination;
- (d) written request of a member to have his/her name removed;
- (e) any member whose behavior is deemed detrimental to the Church fellowship, following a recommendation of the Deacons and a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present and voting at a business meeting, the purpose, date and time of which shall have been made known to the members in writing by mail at least thirty (30) days prior to such meeting. Such dismissal procedure shall be resorted to only after exhaustive measures for reconciliation have failed.

#### **ARTICLE IV - ORGANIZATION**

SECTION 1. GENERAL - Recognizing the need for a definite outline of organization with delineation and delegation of responsibility to better enable this Church to serve its Master, this Church decrees that its general organization shall be as follows:

- (a) There shall be two (2) scripturally mandatory offices for this Church — which are the Pastor and the Deacons. The duties, responsibilities, and qualifications of each shall accord fully with those prescribed in the New Testament, with particular reference to I Timothy 3 and Acts 6. Each is hereafter dealt with in more particularity.
- (b) The Church shall also elect a Church Clerk and an Assistant Clerk, and a Church Treasurer and an Assistant Treasurer with general duties as follows:

CLERK - The Clerk and the Assistant Clerk shall be elected by the Church upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee. The Clerk shall record faithfully all proceedings of all business meetings; keep records of Church membership and such other records as may be required; issue all letters and requests for Church membership; issue other correspondence as the Church directs.

TREASURER - The Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer shall be elected by the Church upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee. The Treasurer shall be the custodian of all Church funds; responsible for the safe-keeping, disbursing, and accounting of all Church funds, consistent with Church policy and direction; one of the authorized co-signers of Church checks, establish bank accounts or other depositories as directed by the Trustees for the deposit of all Church funds, documents, papers, or other valuables.

- (c) Upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee and with the approval of the Deacons, the Church shall “call” and employ by affirmative vote all ministerial staff members, including a Church Administrator, who shall have authority to hire and dismiss all paid Church positions except the Professional Staff.

SECTION 2. COMMITTEES

- (a) **STANDING** - The Church shall function largely through various standing committees. These committees shall keep the Deacons advised of their actions and seek their counsel, but shall report ultimately to the Church. Standing committees will be nominated each year by the Committee on Committees at the October Business Meeting and will serve in office from January to December. The Committee on Committees (to consist of six (6) persons, two (2) to be elected each year) will be named by the Chairman of Deacons, after consultation with the Pastor. Following approval of the Deacons, the recommendation will be submitted to the Church not later than the October business meeting. A chairman should also be recommended.

A Standing Committee Manual, approved by the Church, shall be maintained by the Committee on Committees which will set forth the committee organization, outline committee functions, list duties, and suggest procedure for each standing committee. Changes in said manual shall be subject to approval by the Church.

- (b) **TEMPORARY** - The Church shall establish from time to time such temporary committees as it may deem necessary in carrying out its work.
- (c) **MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT** - All committee members shall be resident members of First Baptist Church of Brandon.

SECTION 3. **ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING** - The annual business meeting of this Church shall be on the third week in February of each year but may be changed in accordance with Section 6. Notice of this meeting shall be given to the membership in the Church publications and at each regular service for two (2) weeks immediately preceding each meeting. The main items to be considered by the Church at its annual business meeting shall be the following:

- (a) Reports from the Pastor, Staff, Deacons and Corporation covering the preceding year (oral or written).
- (b) Written reports, to be combined in booklet form, from each of the standing committees.
- (c) The annual twelve-month financial statement.

SECTION 4. **REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS** - Regular business meetings shall be held on the third week in each quarter but may be changed in accordance with Section 6, should there be unusual business or matter of unusual interest to be brought before such regular quarterly meeting, the same notice to be given to the membership as hereafter required for called business meetings.

SECTION 5. **SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS** -

- (a) **Organizational Leadership** - The Church Officers (Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Clerk, and Assistant Clerk) and organizational leaders shall be presented for election by the Nominating Committee at the October business meeting.
- (b) **Church Budget** - A special business meeting of the Church shall be held during the second quarter (April-June) of each year (after adequate opportunity for discussion) to adopt the Church budget for the coming fiscal year (first day of July to the last day June in the next calendar year).

- (c) Church Committees - The Committee on Committees will present its recommendations for the various committees at the October business meeting.

Notice of these meetings shall be given to the Church membership by publication in the Church bulletin and by announcement at all regular services of the Church for at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date.

SECTION 6. CALLED MEETINGS - The Church may be called into business session at other times as shall be deemed necessary or advisable by the Pastor or Chairman of Deacons.

SECTION 7. NOTICE REQUIREMENTS -

- (a) Notice of all called business meetings of the Church shall be given to the Church membership by publication in the Church bulletin and by announcement at all regular services of the Church for at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date, unless the Chairman of the Deacons and the Pastor shall agree that extreme urgency renders such notice impracticable.
- (b) All announcements of notice of called business meetings shall include the date, hour and place of the meeting together with a statement of the purpose of the meeting.

SECTION 8. MODERATOR - All meetings shall be presided over by a Moderator, who shall be elected by the Church at the October business meeting. The Moderator shall be named by the Chairman of Deacons, after consultation with the Pastor and approval of the Deacons. The Moderator may succeed himself. In the event that the Moderator is not available, the Chairman of Deacons shall preside. In the event that the Chairman of Deacons is not available, the Pastor shall preside.

SECTION 9. QUORUM - One hundred (100) members of this Church shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of transacting business:

- (a) at any called meeting
- (b) at the special business meeting to adopt the Church budget
- (c) at any business meeting wherein the Church is requested to authorize the special expenditure of funds or the borrowing of funds
- (d) regarding any issue deemed necessary or advisable by the Pastor or the Chairman of the Deacons.
- (e) If a Quorum is not present, no new business can be conducted and the meeting is limited to: Approving of the minutes from the last meeting, receiving reports, voting in new members and granting letters of departing members.

SECTION 10. PARLIAMENTARY RULES - Roberts Rules of Order is adopted as the Parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the Church, the Deacons and the committees.

SECTION 11. CHURCH FISCAL YEAR - The fiscal year of the Church shall be from the first day of July to the last day of June in the next calendar year, while the organizational year shall be from January 1 to December 31 and the administrative year shall be from October 1 to September 30.

SECTION 12. VOTING DEFINITION - Unless otherwise specifically provided herein, all issues to be voted on shall be decided by a majority vote of those members present and voting, provided applicable quorum rules are satisfied. The phrase, "present and voting", as used here and in any other provision of these rules shall mean:

- (a) That neither proxy voting nor absentee ballots shall be allowed; and
- (b) That to be eligible to vote a member must be present in person at the meeting in which the vote is taken.

## ARTICLE V - PASTOR

SECTION 1. GENERAL - The Pastor shall be the spiritual leader of this Church pursuant to the New Testament teachings, with particular reference to I Timothy 3. Subject to the inherent power of the Church, the Pastor, with the Ministerial Staff working directly under him, shall organize, supervise, direct, promote, develop, and enlarge the spiritual program of this church and its members, including but not limited to worship, study, training, missions, and evangelism.

SECTION 2. SERVICE AND CALL - When such a need arises, the Deacons will call themselves into a special business session and select a committee of 5 Members to seek out not more than 7 duly qualified candidates in good standing representing a cross section of the Ministries of the Church and congregation for Pastoral Search Committee Duties Following the guidelines in the Pastoral Search Committee Handbook. Such candidates shall then be recommended to the Church by the Deacons in a special called meeting.

The Pastoral Search Committee shall seek the next Pastor of the Church, through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Upon finding the man as led by the Holy Spirit, the Chairman of the Pastoral Search Committee shall notify the Church of a special meeting for a vote on the Pastoral candidate in accordance with section 3 below.

Salary, allowances and other benefits shall be determined by the Pastoral Search Committee in concert with the Personnel Committee and the Finance Committee.

SECTION 3. PASTORAL CALL MEETING -The Chairman of Deacons or the Chairman of the Pastoral Search Committee shall call the Church into a special meeting for a vote on Pastoral candidate to be recommended by the Pastoral Search Committee. Notice shall be given at least two weeks in advance of such meeting, giving specifically date, time and place, and announcement shall be made from the pulpit during the regular Sunday services. Notification shall also be made in the Church publications and all other Church mailings to members two weeks in advance of called meeting.

The call to any Pastoral candidate shall be considered favorable only upon three-fourths (3/4) or more "yes" vote of members present and voting. Voting shall be by secret ballot.

SECTION 4. TERMINATION OF PASTOR - The Pastor shall be called to serve the will of the Church for an indefinite period of time. Termination of the Pastor may be initiated:

- (a) BY THE PASTOR - Termination of service as Pastor may be ended upon a thirty (30) day written notice of intent to resign by the Pastor.
- (b) BY THE CHURCH - Termination by the Church shall be as follows: Should there be evidence that the church feels a change of Pastor is needed, the Deacons shall counsel with the Pastor and make recommendations to the Church.
  - (1) After two (2) weeks written notice to membership indicating purpose, time and place of business meeting for purposes of termination.
  - (2) Upon affirmation vote of (majority) members present and voting, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Deacons shall be instructed to give, in writing, thirty (30) days notice of termination of his pastorate or thirty (30) days severance pay and no further active service.

SECTION 5. INTERIM RESPONSIBILITIES - During the absence of a Senior Pastor, administrative duties shall be assumed by the Church Administrator or the most senior Pastor.

## ARTICLE VI - DEACONS

SECTION 1. GENERAL - Beginning January 1, 1998, the Body of Deacons for this Church shall consist of a number determined by the current Body of Deacons to be sufficient to adequately serve and minister to the Church membership. Deacons shall serve a three (3) year term. Each year one third shall be retired and new Deacons elected to fill the vacancies. A retiring Deacon may not succeed himself for one year. After one year he may be re-elected to the active body. (Any Deacon serving a one-year term or less will be eligible for a full three-year term re-election.)

SECTION 2. QUALIFICATIONS - Any person nominated for Deacon shall have been a Christian for at least three (3) years and a member of this Church for a minimum of twelve (12) continuous months prior to the nomination. He must be willing to serve and be qualified according to New Testament requirements, with particular reference to Acts 6:1-3, and I Timothy 3:8-13.

SECTION 3. ELECTION PROCEDURE - The committee on committees shall nominate four (4) Church members (men or women) to serve on a Deacon Nominating Committee and shall present them for confirmation at the October Church conference. These four (4) individuals will be asked to serve with three (3) men, named by the Chairman of Deacons, from the retiring active Body of Deacons. The Committee will choose its own chairman. The first Committee meeting to be called by the Senior Pastor in July.

On the first and second Sundays in August, each member of the congregation will be given the opportunity to submit up to three (3) names for consideration as Deacon. The Committee will consider all nominees and others they deem qualified according to SECTION 2. They will then proceed to interview these men individually to obtain their acceptance or rejection.

The compiled Deacon Ballot shall be disseminated on or before the third (3rd) Sunday in November. The Deacon Ballot will be voted on by the church on or before the first (1st) Sunday in December. Deacons will be selected based on number of votes received. Deacon service shall begin on January 1.

The Deacon Nominating Committee will remain active throughout the year and any vacancies in the Body of Deacons will be filled from the list of remaining nominees according to the votes received.

SECTION 4. DUTIES - The primary function of the Deacons is to assist the Pastor in the spiritual ministry of the Church and to act as a liaison between the Church and the various committees elected by the Church to carry on the temporal functions and responsibilities.

The Deacons shall advise and consult with the various committees and shall fulfill all other duties and responsibilities imposed by the various provisions of this document. All matters concerning Church business, administration, or policy that may arise from time to time which are not specifically covered herein, shall be referred to the Deacons for suitable disposition, unless otherwise directed by the Church.

It is necessary that the work of the Deacons be planned and carried out in close harmony with the Pastor, Ministerial Staff, and the various committees elected by the Church.

SECTION 5. ORGANIZATION - Prior to the December Deacons' meeting, the retiring Chairman of Deacons shall appoint a committee of three (3) for the purpose of nominating the Deacon Officers for the coming year. Only active and newly elected Deacons shall have the right to vote in this election. The retiring chairman shall advise the new chairman about the standing committees or various committees of the Deacons. Prior to the regular January meeting, the active Deacons shall organize for their work.

QUORUM - A number equal to fifty-one percent (51%) of the Deacon body must be present to constitute a quorum for conducting business.

#### **ARTICLE VII - TRUSTEES**

Under the Articles of Incorporation, the membership of this Church is required to elect five (5) Trustees to serve as Members of the non-profit corporation which holds title to Church property in trust for the Church. The election is annual and shall be accomplished at the regular annual business meeting of the Church. The body of Deacons shall submit nominations to the Church, (two (2) of which shall be the Church Treasurer and Church Clerk). The officers shall be nominated from among the five (5) Trustees. Additional nominations may be made from the church floor.

In addition to fulfilling all obligations and responsibilities set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, the Members of the corporation shall pay over to the Church Treasurer for disbursements pursuant to the direction of the Church, all funds, stocks, bonds, or other gifts coming into their hands.

#### **ARTICLE VIII - FINANCIAL POLICY**

SECTION 1. The Church shall adopt an annual budget to cover all activities of the Church and its organizations.

SECTION 2. All unbudgeted proposed expenditures in excess of \$2,500 must be approved or disapproved by the Finance Committee. This committee has the authority to approve unbudgeted expenditures up to \$12,000.

SECTION 3. Any unbudgeted expenditure in excess of \$12,000 must have been considered by the Deacons and the Finance Committee before final Church action.

#### **ARTICLE IX - GENERAL PROVISIONS**

SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS - All proposed amendments to these Rules shall be referred to the Constitution and By-Laws Committee for investigation. The Deacons shall make a recommendation to the Church concerning such changes in these Rules within thirty (30) days after being referred to them. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and voting shall be required to effect any change in these Rules that is properly before the Church.

SECTION 2. DISTRIBUTION OF RULES - The Church Clerk is directed to:  
(a) Distribute a copy of these Rules to each member of this Church.  
(b) To furnish each new member a copy of these Rules, as amended, upon joining the Church.  
(c) To maintain a correct copy of these Rules and of the Articles of Incorporation in the Minute Book of the Church.

SECTION 3. CONTINUATION IN OFFICE - All members of the Corporation, Church Officers, active Deacons, and standing committee members shall serve until their successors are duly elected and qualified.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE OF REVISION CLAUSE - These RULES OF GOVERNMENT shall continue in full force and effect as amended from time to time by Church action. All prior actions of the Church in conflict herewith are hereby rescinded.

Adopted and made effective by action of the Church in Business Session on this, the 15th day of January, 1977  
Amended April 22, 1981  
Amended September 14, 1983  
Amended October 21, 1984  
Amended December 9, 1987  
Amended October 1, 1989  
Amended July 20, 1997  
Amended August 20, 2000  
Amended January 17, 2009  
Amended January 26, 2014  
Amended November 9, 2014  
Amended October 11, 2017