

# **Constitution**

of the

## **First Baptist Church**

310 W. Taylor Street  
Kokomo, IN 46901

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## **Preamble**

We, the Family of First Baptist Church of Kokomo, Indiana exist solely for the glory of God. We exist to carry the Name of Jesus into the world as we:

- Continue to follow Jesus Christ personally and come to know Him as our Savior and make Him Lord of our lives.
- Continue to follow Jesus Christ together as the Family of First Baptist Church through Worship, the study of God's Word the Holy Bible, by devoting ourselves to Biblical fellowship and serving others by the example of Jesus.
- Follow Jesus's command to seek, love and serve the world by the way we carry the Name of Jesus to the lost, the sick and those in need.

In order to carry the Name of Jesus, we recognize the Biblical authority of Scripture and power of the Body of Christ carried out in the local church. While non denominational, we are called to unity and good order in the Family of First Baptist Church. As such, we establish the following Constitution and by laws.

# Statements of Faith

## **1. God's Word**

We believe the Bible is the Word of God, written by men, inspired by the Holy Spirit and that its teaching and authority are absolute and supreme.

*(Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 30:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 24:35; John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:7,10)*

## **2. God**

We believe in one God, Who is Creator and the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe; Who exists through three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and Who is an infinite God of Holiness and righteousness, as well as love and grace. God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit are the only reason why we, The Church, exist.

*(Genesis 1:1; Proverbs 3:19; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:1-2; Acts 5:3-4; Ephesians 4:24; 1 John 2:5; Ephesians 2:8-10; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 22:13)*

## **3. Jesus**

We believe in the deity and sinless humanity of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

His virgin birth, His life, His Ministry, His death as the atoning sacrifice for us, His bodily resurrection, His post-resurrection appearances, and His ascension to Heaven where He is the only mediator between God and man is all well documented in the Word of God. Jesus also tells us, through Scripture, that He is coming again in power and glory at the end of this age to take His Bride, The Church, home.

*(Isaiah 7:14; John 1:1; Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Matthew 1:20-23; John 10:30; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 4:14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 24:6-9, 36-46; John 14:7; Acts 1:11; Acts 2:24-36; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:2-3; Revelation 19:12-16)*

## **4. Holy Spirit**

We believe the Holy Spirit is a person and is fully God. He regenerates, baptizes into the body of Christ, indwells every believer, teaches, guides and empowers believers, and gives gifts to all believers to be used in ministry so that the church fulfills its mission on earth.

*(Matthew 28:19; John 3:5; John 16:13; Acts 1:8; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:11, 19; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; Ephesians 3:16; Ephesians 4:1-16)*

## **5. Sin and Salvation**

We believe that sin is disobedience to God and failure to live according to His will. Because of sin all people have separated themselves from God. We believe and it is revealed through Scripture that because we are born sinners, we are in need of a Savior.

We believe that salvation is by faith in Christ alone, not by works and solely by the grace of God. Jesus took upon Himself our sins and by His death on the cross paid the penalty of sin for us once and for all. The power of the blood of Christ can and will cleanse sin from anyone who repents and calls on the Name of Jesus.

*(Isaiah 59:2; Matthew 19:25-26; Matthew 25:41-46; John 3:16-18, 36; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:23-25; Romans 5:1,6-10; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:38-39; Romans 10:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7-10; 1 John 3:4-5; Philippians 3:4-11; Hebrews 9:27; Hebrews 10:10-14; Revelation 22:17)*

## **6. Family**

We believe in The Church, the Body of Christ, and our Call to be a part of that Kingdom here on earth. All who believe in Jesus (who is the Head) are part of the Body, and as such are part of the Family. We believe that our goal is not to get people into a church, we exist to connect people to Jesus. We believe that The Church exists through the local assembly of believers who live out their faith and Calling uniquely from other assemblies, but that we are Called to unity as we are The Church.

*(Matthew 16:18; John 10:16; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-20; Ephesians 2:20-22; Ephesians 1:20-23; Ephesians 4:14-16; Romans 12:4-5; Hebrews 10:24-25; )*

## **7. Gifted**

We believe that every believer in Jesus Christ has been uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to build up the Body of Christ. There are many gifts, but all given to carry the Name of Jesus in to the world.

*(Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11-12; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 2:22; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Peter 4:10-11)*

## **8. Baptism**

We believe that Baptism is a public celebration of what God is doing in the person's heart in moving them from death to life. We believe that Baptism is a public first step of obedience as we follow the example of Jesus through His own Baptism immersion.

Baptism itself does not bring about salvation. We know that has been accomplished by Jesus dying for our sin on the cross. Rather, Baptism is the choice of the individual and a public

declaration of faith that the individual is choosing life in Jesus and to carry His Name to the world. Baptism symbolizes that our old self has been put to death, we have been buried, and that we have been raised with Christ to new life.

## **Dedication**

At First Baptist Church, we believe that a child must be able to answer for themselves the questions that we ask anyone being Baptized. As such, we celebrate with the family the Dedication of any child under the age of accountability.

*(1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 10:48; Acts 22:16; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27; Luke 3:16; Mark 16:16; Luke 3:21-22; Mark 1:4-5; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 8:36-38; Ephesians 4:4-6; Acts 16:31-33; Acts 2:38-41; John 1:29-33; Matthew 3:11-17; Romans 6:1-18)*

## **9. The Enemy**

We believe in the reality of Satan, the devil, who is the father of lies and goes in to the world to deceive and destroy. While his power was crushed by Jesus, we know that Satan continues to attack The Church, us individually, and do everything he can to distract us from the Mission we are Called to carry out.

*(Isaiah 14:12-15; Job 1:7; Luke 10:18; John 8:44; John 10:10; John 12:31; John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 11:3,14; James 4:7; Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9-12; Revelation 20:10)*

## **10. Our Mission**

We believe the Great Commission calls us to Carry the Name of Jesus, to baptize those who are repentant, and to bring the message of the gospel to our community, our nation and to the world...so that all may know Jesus. We believe that as the Holy Spirit convicts the individual. Our Calling, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is to teach them everything that we have been entrusted with as we disciple those who have chosen to follow Jesus and multiply the Kingdom of God.

*(Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 9:37-38; Matthew 10:7-8; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; John 4:35-38; John 20:21; Acts 1:7-8; Romans 10:15; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 2:15 )*

## Article I - Name and Purpose

**Section 1 - Name:** The name of this Family, with Jesus as the head, shall be First Baptist Church of Kokomo, Indiana, a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Indiana, on October 3, 1952.

**Section 2 - Purpose:** “We are a Jesus church. We are a Family of people following Jesus who are connected together by a common faith in Him, for His glory, for His purpose to see Jesus change our families, our church, our city and the world. We are based in Kokomo, but know that we are just one house that is part of His Kingdom.”

## Article II - Affiliation

This church shall operate as an independent church with no affiliation.

## Article III - Membership

**Section 1: Qualifications:** Any person professing faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, who is in agreement with the Statements of Faith and practices held by this church, having been baptized may be admitted in to membership in the Body of First Baptist Church.

**Section 2: Reception of Members:** Persons may be received into membership upon recommendation to the Deacons, Elders, or the Pastor(s) by any one of four methods as may be appropriate.

- A. **Baptism:** Any person professing faith in Jesus as their Savior, giving evidence of a change of heart, and by testimony of wanting to live for Jesus, may be received into this church membership upon baptism.
- B. **By Letter:** By letter of transfer from any other Christian church confirming previous membership and having been baptized.
- C. **Statement of Faith:** Any believer may be received upon a satisfactory statement of Christian faith, experience and having been baptized, should records be unavailable from the former church.
- D. **Membership Class:** By committing to go through a series of lessons led by the Pastor, Elders and Deacons on what it means to be a part of the Body of First Baptist Church.

**Section 3: Privileges of Membership:** As members of the Body of First Baptist Church, it is the duty of the membership to:

- A. **Pursue** spiritual growth by disciplining and living our lives in accordance with the Word of God.
- B. **Serve** as we achieve spiritual maturity in our personal walk with Jesus, we realize that we have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to work within the Body of FBC and in our community to further the Kingdom of God.
- C. **Leadership** as any member is eligible to serve by election as a deacon or be appointed an elder by the Pastor(s) of First Baptist Church, as God leads through the gifting of the Holy Spirit.
- D. **Vote** during church elections or for special called Membership meetings of First Baptist Church.

**Section 4: Withdrawal of Membership:** Membership in this church may be concluded in any of the following ways:

- A. **By Letter:** Members may withdraw to unite with another church upon request. All church letters shall be sent by the Church Clerk to the Pastor or Clerk of the church designated.
- B. **By Request:** If a member wishes to withdraw from the church, his or her name shall be removed from the membership list.
- C. **By Discipline:** Upon agreement of the Pastor(s) and elders of First Baptist Church, members may be withdrawn from the church roll for conduct not in accordance with the Word of God. Matthew 18:15-20 is to be followed by the Pastor(s) and elders in order to get the member within good standing. If things are unable to be resolved, the member shall cease to be a member of First Baptist Church.

# **Article IV - Clergy**

## **Section 1: Senior Pastor**

**A. Principle Function:** The Senior Pastor is responsible and accountable to God and to the church for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, for using his skills in administrative leadership, for engaging in pastoral care ministries to meet the needs of persons in the church and in the community, and to act as the chief administrator of the ministerial and vocational staff.

### **B. Responsibilities:**

- Set as a guideline of personal behavior the standard required in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- Provide administrative leadership for the total church program.
- Maintain a regular program of study to enable himself to plan and conduct meaningful worship services.
- Prepare for and conduct worship services; lead in the observance of the ordinances; and lead the church in proclaiming the gospel to the church and community.
- Visit members and prospects and lead the membership in a visitation program.
- Supervise other members of the church staff according to staff organization.
- Conduct premarital, vocational, family, bereavement, counseling sessions, etc., as needed. Shall recommend other professional help when necessary.
- Perform wedding ceremonies and conduct funeral services.
- Work with deacons, church officers, and committees in performing assigned responsibilities. Be available for and lead in training as needed.
- Serve as a representative of the church in civic matters.
- To model seeking to win the unsaved and disconnected; lead the membership in soul-winning training.
- Plan and promote periods of evangelistic emphasis for the unsaved and renewal for the Christians.
- Serve as a member of the Elder Council and aid in planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and evaluating the total church program.

**C. Selection:** The position of Senior Pastor shall be elected by the church body upon recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee which shall consist of 1) the elders of First Baptist Church, 2) three current serving deacons of First Baptist Church, 3) elected persons by the congregation of First Baptist Church. A recommendation shall be presented to the church body 2 weeks prior to a vote by the church body. An affirmative vote of 2/3 of the church body voting is required. After the call is voted on, dates of arrival, beginning of duties, installation, etc are to be coordinated between the Pastoral Search Committee, the Board of Deacons, the elders of First Baptist Church and the new pastor.

**D. Resignation and Removal of Pastor:** The Senior Pastor term is open-ended, and continues uninterrupted until resignation, retirement, death or dismissal. Dismissal may occur if the Elders of First Baptist Church in consultation with the Board of Deacons, after prayerful and humble

evaluation, agrees unanimously (not including the Senior Pastor. In all other pastoral evaluations, the Senior Pastor shall be included) that it is necessary due to the following situations:

1. Lifestyle, moral or ethical choices that disqualify the person from continuing in the position.
2. Consistent disagreement with First Baptist Church's Preamble or breaks the Statements of Faith.
3. Willful failure to fulfill the stated responsibilities of the position.

After the unanimous recommendation of the Elders and Deacons, the recommendation shall be made to the congregation (with 2 weeks advance notice) for the approval of the congregation. If the vote is in 3/4 agreement of the congregation, the Pastor is dismissed.

**Section 2: Other Pastoral Leadership:** Additional Pastoral leadership candidates will be recommended to the church body by the Pastoral Search Committee and Senior Pastor and should follow the procedures of Article IV, Section 1c. Termination procedures will be as of Article IV, Section 1d.

## **Article V - Lay Staff**

Lay Staff shall be hired or dismissed by the Elder Council in consultation with the Board of Deacons. The elders in consultation with the Board of Deacons shall provide job descriptions for all lay staff. Also, lay staff shall have special tasks in relation to their individual job duties as requested by the pastoral staff. For day to day operations, the lay staff will be directed by the Senior Pastor or his appointed representative.

## **Article VI - Leadership Structure**

The First Baptist Church governing structure consists of 1) The Church Council of Elders consisting of the appointed and affirmed elders of First Baptist Church and the Pastoral Staff. 2) The Board of Deacons consists of the nominated and elected deacons of First Baptist Church. Within the Board of Deacons shall also include the offices of Church Clerk, Church Treasurer, and Church Financial Secretary. All leadership within the Church Council of Elders or The Board of Deacons shall be considered a non-compensated member of that Council or Board.

## Section 1: Elder

**A. Principle Function:** An elder is an overseer and spiritual leadership of the Body of First Baptist Church. The elders are to work with the Lead Pastor and all Pastoral Staff to form the Church Council of Elders who shall oversee the spiritual growth, maturity and leading of the Holy Spirit for the Body of First Baptist Church. When needed, the Church Council of Elders shall aid in the decisions for the leadership of the church after prayerful and wise consideration of the Word of God.

### **B. Responsibilities**

- Oversight of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3)
- The oversight of the Pastoral Staff of FBC.
- Spiritual decision makers of the church (1 Timothy 3:5, 5:12; Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24)
- Resolve matters within the Family in terms of disputes. (1 Corinthians 6:5)
- Responsible for the rebuking of the Family. (1 Timothy 5:20)
- Called to bind, loose and use the Keys of the Kingdom:
  - Preach the Gospel (1 John 1:3)
  - Administer the Sacraments (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23)
  - Exercise discipline (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5)
- Called to convene the Church Council of Elders once a month (or as needed) to pray, provide oversight and address matters of importance. The church council of elders consists of all elders and the pastor(s) of the church.
- Responsible for interviewing candidates for Lay Staff positions and give a recommendation to the Board of Deacons for hiring. The Board of Deacons then will conduct an interview for the position and come to a decision to hire or not along with the Council of Elders.
- All decisions of the council are to be agreed upon unanimously by the ruling elders after prayer and discernment. If such a decision is not reached unanimously, the proposal does not pass.

### **C. Requirements**

#### **1. AS TO GOD:**

- ***Not a new convert*** (1 Tim. 3:6) Must know the Word of God and shows spiritual maturity.
- ***Devout*** (Titus 1:8) Demonstrates a definite commitment to know, love and walk with Jesus.
- ***Holds fast to the faithful Word, able to exhort and refute*** (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:9) Stable in faith, sound in doctrine and in practice. Is able to teach others, able to exhort people with sound doctrine, able to refute those who are antagonistic to the faith of the truth of Scripture.

#### **2. AS TO HIMSELF:**

- ***Aspires to the office of overseer*** (1 Tim. 3:1) Based biblical criteria and motives, an elder must have a strong desire to serve the Lord and the Body of Christ as an overseer of the flock, not feel constrained by necessity (cf. 1 Peter 5:2).
- ***Temperate*** (1 Timothy 3:2) The elder must discipline his life according to biblical principles so that he remains under God's control. The elder is Spirit-controlled and disciplined rather than self-indulgent.

- **Prudent** (1 Tim.3:2) An elder must be disciplined to the extent that he walks wisely according to the Word of God.
- **Not quick tempered** (Titus 1:7) Must not be easily angered, but in control of his emotions and in control of his feelings.

### 3. AS TO HIS FAMILY:

- **Husband of one wife** (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6, Matthew 19:9) An elder must be devoted and faithful to his own wife so that he is not distracted by other women.
- **One who manages his own household well** (1 Tim. 3:4-5, Titus 1:6) Is respected and loved by his wife, leads his own family, children who are respectful of authority, under control and responding positively to their own walk with Jesus.

### 4. AS TO OTHERS:

- **Hospitable** (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8) The elder must be a “lover of strangers.” As an elder is able, should share his home with others in order to minister to the needs of others.
- **Able to teach** (1 Tim 3:2) An elder is be able to communicate the Word of God to others. He must be able to handle those who disagree with him in a patient and gentle manner and others must recognize his ability to teach and communicate the Word of God.
- **Not self-willed** (Titus 1:7) An elder is not self-centered, demanding his own way. As a servant, an elder must seek to please God and care for others putting his own preferences aside in order to promote unity and care for the Body of Christ.
- **Loves what is good** (Titus 1:8) An elder is a “lover of goodness.” An elder is a man who is devoted to that which is good or beneficial in things, deeds and people (Psalm 15). An elder takes advantage of opportunities to do good to all men (believers and non-believers alike) in order to build them up rather than tear them down.
- **Not pugnacious or a striker** (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7) An elder does not show a tendency to be physically or verbally abusive. Also does not use his position to bully or push people around.
- **Uncontentious** (1 Tim.3:3) An elder is not quarrelsome person who struggles against others for self seeking reasons such as jealousy or selfish ambition. He may strongly disagree, but he will state his case without being contentious.
- **Gentle** (1 Tim. 3:3) An elder will do his best to handle others in a gentle, patient and gracious way. An elder is yielding, showing a mellow gentleness, not heavy handed and insisting on the letter of the law.
- **Just** (Titus 1:8) An elder is able to make decisions that are wise, fair, impartial, objective and honest according to the principals of Scripture.
- **Respectable, orderly, balanced** (1 Tim. 3:2, 1 Tim. 1:7) An elder is respected by others within the Body of Christ as well as in the community. An elder’s own home and relationships are in order and is making every effort to follow the Word of God.

### 5. AS TO THINGS:

- **Free from the love of money** (1 Tim 3:3, Titus 1:7) An elder does not find his significance, security or primary satisfaction in material wealth. An elder is not involved in dishonest business practices. An elder does not seek the office of elder for personal gain.
- **Not addicted to wine** (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7) An elder is free from any form of substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc) or any kind of addiction which might take control of his life, cause belligerent or irresponsible behavior and cause weaker Christians to stumble.

## **D. Appointment**

The appointment of an elder is done by the Lead Pastor as someone who 1) meets the Biblical requirements listed above and 2) is confirmed by the congregation. When the Lead Pastor has appointed an elder for the congregation to confirm, a 2 week period of prayer and fasting is called for. After 2 weeks, the confirmation shall be called for and an elder shall be confirmed by Body of FBC verbal vote of 2/3 majority. After the elder is confirmed by the Body, there shall be a time set at a later date to lay on of hands by Body of First Baptist Church for dedication of the elder.

## **E. Resignation or Removal of an Elder**

An elder's term of service is for for life, upon personal resignation, or removal due to doctrinal or moral failures.

## **Section 2: Deacon**

**A. Principal Function:** A Deacon is someone who provides leadership to an area of Ministry within First Baptist Church. He is to work with the Church Council of Elders along with the Clergy to coordinate and carry out the Ministry of First Baptist Church. A Deacons also serves as a liaison and overseer to the lay staff of First Baptist Church.

## **B. Responsibilities:**

- A Deacon aspires to the office of Deacon for the purpose of serving within the Body, for spiritual maturity, and a desire to lead in Ministry.
- Responsible for overseeing a Ministry Committee or Team as well as recruiting (if necessary) individuals to assist in serving within the area of Ministry in which the Deacon oversees.
- Responsible for reporting to and coordinating with the Board of Deacons monthly for the purpose of planning and keeping Ministries in good order.

### **Board of Deacons**

- Exist to lead the Congregation in the areas of Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry Stewardship (Finance), Missions, Congregational Care, Property.
- Shall be responsible to oversee their budgeted areas and propose a budget for the next year at the appointed time.
- Shall appoint a Clerk to publish monthly meeting minutes.
- To be pursuing spiritual maturity, to be putting in to practice the spiritual disciplines that reflect that spiritual maturity, and to have the calling on their life to lead the area of Ministry needed by the Body of FBC.

## **C. Requirements for the Office of Deacon:**

- ***Tested...beyond reproach*** (1 Tim. 3:10) Before one is asked to serve as a deacon, he is to be observed by the elders over a period of time to see if they are qualified for that ministry. If he is found to be beyond reproach (no violations in the qualities needed to serve), he may then be eligible to be elected by the congregation.

## 1. AS TO GOD AND HIS WORD

- ***Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*** (1 Tim. 3:8) A deacon seeks to honestly live by the truths of Scripture and holds to the Statements of Faith of FBC.

## 2. AS TO SELF

- ***Dignity*** (1 Tim. 3:8) A deacon is one who takes their work and life seriously as a part of their devotion to the Lord. A deacon has a vision for the deacon's purpose within the Body of FBC.
- ***Not double tongued*** (1 Tim. 3:8) A deacon is not a hypocrite who says one thing to one person and something contradictory to another. A deacon speaks the truth, is honest and does not destroy their credibility by words that are contradictory.

## 3. AS TO THINGS

- ***Not addicted to much wine*** (1 Tim. 3:8) A deacon is free from any form of substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc) or any kind of addiction which might take control of their life, cause belligerent or irresponsible behavior and cause weaker Christians to stumble.
- ***Not fond of sordid gain*** (1 Tim. 3:8) A deacon must not use their office for personal gain or be controlled by the desire for material wealth. A deacon does not have self seeking goals.

## 4. AS TO FAMILY

- ***A husband to but one wife*** (1 Tim 3:12, Matthew 19:9) A deacon has one wife. He is to be above reproach when it comes to their marital status, their reputation and is not considered to be flirtatious. The deacon is seen as stable and mature in character toward their spouse and the opposite sex.
- ***Good managers of their children and their own household*** (1 Tim. 3:12) Is respected and loved by their spouse, leads their own family, children are believers who are respectful of authority, under control and responding positively to their own walk with Jesus.

## D. Appointment

The opportunity to appoint new Deacons to the Board shall happen every year. The nomination of a deacon is done by the congregation as someone who 1) meets the Biblical requirements listed above and 2) is vetted and confirmed by the Elder Council and the Board of Deacons for election. A confirmed Deacon is then presented to the congregation and a 2 week period of prayer and fasting is called for. After 2 weeks, the election shall be called for and be confirmed by a 2/3 vote by the congregation. After a Deacon is elected by the congregation, there shall be a time set at a later date to lay on of hands by the Body of First Baptist Church for dedication of the elected Deacon.

## E. Resignation or Removal of a Deacon

A Deacon serves for a period of 3 years from the date they were elected, until they resign or are removed by the congregation or their peers for doctrinal or moral failures.