

# First Baptist Church



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Church Constitution

Church By-Laws

Church Covenant of Fellowship

# CONSTITUTION - TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREAMBLE</b>	Page 1
<b>ARTICLE I. NAME</b>	Page 1
<b>ARTICLE II. ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION</b>	Page 1
<b>ARTICLE III. STATEMENT OF FAITH</b>	Page 1
Section 1. Of the Scriptures	Page 1
Section 2. God the Father	Page 2
Section 3. God the Son	Page 2
Section 4. God the Holy Spirit	Page 3
Section 5. The Devil or Satan	Page 3
Section 6. Creation	Page 4
6.1. Biblical Marriage	Page 4
Section 7. The Fall of Man	Page 5
Section 8. The Virgin Birth	Page 5
Section 9. Salvation	Page 6
Section 10. Resurrection and Priesthood of Christ	Page 6
Section 11. Grace and the New Birth	Page 6
Section 12. Justification	Page 7
Section 13. Sanctification	Page 7
Section 14. The Security of the Saints	Page 8
Section 15. The Church	Page 8
Section 16. Baptism and the Lord's Supper	Page 9
Section 17. Separation	Page 10
Section 18. Civil Government	Page 10
Section 19. Israel	Page 11
Section 20. Rapture and Subsequent Events	Page 11
Section 21. The Righteous and the Wicked	Page 12
<b>ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP</b>	Page 13
Section 1. Qualifications	Page 13
Section 2. Procedure	Page 13
Section 3. Reception of Members	Page 13
Section 4. Termination of Membership	Page 13
Section 5. Discipline	Page 14
5.1. Restoration	Page 14
<b>ARTICLE V. GOVERNANCE</b>	Page 14
Section 1. Authority	Page 14
Section 2. Leadership	Page 15
2.1. Summary	Page 15
2.2. Nominations	Page 15
2.3. Terms of Office	Page 15
2.4. Cooperation Between Offices	Page 15
Section 3. Elders	Page 15
3.1. Qualifications	Page 16
3.2. Duties of the Elders	Page 16
3.3. Selection of Elders	Page 16
3.4. Pastoral Staff	Page 17
Section 4. Deacons	Page 17
4.1. Qualifications	Page 17
4.2. Duties of Deacons	Page 18
4.3. Selection of Deacons	Page 18
Section 5. Treasurer	Page 18
Section 6. Clerk	Page 19
<b>ARTICLE VI. MISSIONS</b>	Page 19
<b>ARTICLE VII. DISSOLUTION OF CORPORATION</b>	Page 19

## **BY-LAWS**

ARTICLE I.	Congregational Meetings	Page 20
ARTICLE II.	Voting Rights	Page 20
ARTICLE III.	Constitutional Changes	Page 20
ARTICLE IV.	Committees	Page 20
ARTICLE V.	Rules of Order	Page 21
ARTICLE VI.	Quorum	Page 21
ARTICLE VII.	Method of Voting	Page 21

## **COVENANT OF FELLOWSHIP**

Covenant of Fellowship	Page 22
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## **Constitution of First Baptist Church, Fremont, Michigan**

### **Preamble**

Having placed our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, accepting the Bible as our final authority on all matters of faith and practice, demonstrating our devotion and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers who seek to wholeheartedly follow Jesus Christ.

We are joined voluntarily, cheerfully and seriously into the membership of this local assembly of Christ's body as a community of redeemed people who by covenant, own a common calling and vocation, and are equally sent on a mission, both calling and commission being rooted in God's story of HIS good creation, our fall, and His name-vindicating redemption and reconciliation.

We adopt for our government, worship and service the following Constitution and By-Laws which supersede all previous actions contrary hereto.

### **ARTICLE I. Name**

The name by which this corporation shall be known as is:

**First Baptist Church of Fremont, Michigan**

### **ARTICLE II. Articles of Incorporation**

The purpose of this corporation will be: the maintaining of public Christian worship, the study and teaching of the Bible, the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, the administration of the New Testament ordinances, the spiritual improvement of its members, the winning of the lost to Christ and to exercise, as far as possible, a Christian and moral influence in the community and a missionary spirit in the world at large.

These Articles of Incorporation may be changed by proceeding according to the provisions of Act No. 327, Public Acts of the State of Michigan, for the year 1931.

### **ARTICLE III. Statement of Faith**

#### **Section 1. Of the Scriptures**

We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, as originally written; that it was verbally and plenary inspired and is the product of Spirit-controlled authors and, therefore, is infallible and inerrant in all matters of which it speaks.

Psalm 119:89 (NKJV) *Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*

Psalm 119:160 *The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.*

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We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian unity and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed and opinions will be tried.

*2 Timothy 3:16,17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

*2 Peter 1:19-21 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

## **Section 2. God the Father**

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, the Maker and supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:30).

*Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.*

*2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

## **Section 3. God the Son**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is both fully God and fully man, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

*Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: after His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.*

*Matthew 1:23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us."*

*Matthew 1:25 And did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.*

He grew and developed as a man without sin.

*Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.*

He died by crucifixion to pay the penalty for mankind's sin. He was buried, rose bodily from the grave on the third day and ascended to Heaven where, at the Father's right hand, He prays for and defends those HE has redeemed.

*1 Corinthians 15:3,4 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,...*

*Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

He will return and ultimately establish His kingdom on earth (Colossians 1:13-19; Hebrews 1:2,3).

*Hebrews 1:8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom."*

#### **Section 4. God the Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son, and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the Agent in the new birth; that He seals, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer (Genesis 1:1-3; Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8; Luke 1:35; 24:49; John 1:33; 3:5; 14:26; 16:8-11; Acts 5:30-32; 11:16; Romans 8:14,16,26,27; Hebrews 9:14).

*John 14:16,17 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

*Ephesians 1:13,14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

#### **Section 5. The Devil or Satan**

We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, the Devil; and that he was created by God as an angel; but, through pride and rebellion, became the enemy of his Creator; that he became the unholy god of this age and the ruler of all the powers of darkness and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Isaiah 14:12-16 *How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation the farthest sides of the north; I will be like the Most High." Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms,..."*

Revelation 20:10 *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

## **Section 6. Creation**

We believe the Biblical account of the creation of the physical universe, angels, and man; that this account is neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of the direct, immediate creative acts of God without any evolutionary process; that man was created by a direct work of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all men descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race (Genesis 1; 2; John 1:3).

Genesis 1:1,2 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

### **Section 6.1. Biblical Marriage**

In light of God's creative design, we believe that the Bible teaches that marriage is the joining of one man and one woman and that sexual intimacy is to be expressed only within the bonds of a Biblically defined marriage. Any other definition of marriage, union, or sexual intimacy is immoral and a perversion of God's gracious will.

Genesis 2:18 *And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

Genesis 2:23,24 *And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Romans 1:24-27 *Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies amongst themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.*

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 *Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife that affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self control.*

## **Section 7. The Fall of Man**

We believe that man was created in innocence (in the image and likeness of God) under the law of his Maker, but, by voluntary transgression, Adam fell from his sinless and happy state and all men sinned in him, in consequence of which all men are totally depraved, are partakers of Adam's fallen nature, and are sinners by nature and by conduct, and therefore are under just condemnation, without defense or excuse (Romans 1:18;32).

Genesis 3:1-6 *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

Romans 5:12 *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*

Romans 5:19 *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*

## **Section 8. The Virgin Birth**

We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God the Son (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:14).

Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

Luke 1:35 *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."*



## **Section 9. Salvation**

We believe that God the Son shed His blood to pay for man's sin and was raised from the dead to provide perfect righteousness for those who believe salvation is a free gift of God's love, mercy and grace which cannot be earned by any virtue or work of man, but may only be received by personal faith in Jesus Christ. All those who repent of their sin and believe in and receive Christ as Savior are completely forgiven, born into the family of God and receive eternal life. All those who are genuinely saved are kept eternally secure by God and should demonstrate their salvation by living in obedience to God (Isaiah 53:4-7; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24,25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:7,8; Hebrews 2:14-17; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 4:10).

*Jonah 2:9 But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.*

*Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,...*

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

## **Section 10. Resurrection and Priesthood of Christ**

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and in His ascension into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest interceding for us (Matthew 28:6,7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6,39,51; John 20:27; 1 Corinthians 15:4; Hebrews 2:17; 5:9-10; 7:25; 8:6; 12:2; 1 John 2:1; Revelation 3:21).

*Acts 1:9-11 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

*1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*

## **Section 11. Grace and the New Birth**

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again.

*John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

We believe that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus and that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about by our sovereign God in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life (John 3:8; Acts 16:20-33; Romans 6:23; Colossians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:1).

*2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

*Ephesians 2:5 Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),...*

### **Section 12. Justification**

We believe that justification is the judicial act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous upon the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any work of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's shed blood (Romans 4:5; 5:1; Philippians 3:9).

*Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

*Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

### **Section 13. Sanctification**

We believe that sanctification is the divine setting apart of the believer unto God accomplished in a threefold manner (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 3:1). First, an eternal act of God, based upon redemption in Christ, establishing the believer in a position of holiness at the moment he trusts the Savior.

*Hebrews 10:10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Second, a continuing process in the saint as the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to the life.

*1 Corinthians 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*

Third, the final accomplishment of this process at the Lord's return.

*John 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*

*1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

## Section 14. The Security of the Saints

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ (Romans 8:35-39; Jude 1).

*Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

*1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*

*John 10:28,29 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.*

## Section 15. The Church

We believe that a local church is an organized congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His Word; and exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit which have been given to the church through each individual. While there are many opportunities for service in the local church, there are two offices of leadership, pastor/elder and deacon, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures.

*1 Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.*

*1 Timothy 3:1-13 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

We believe the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; that on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline and of benevolence, the will of the local church is final (Acts 20:17-28).

*Acts 2:41,42 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

*Matthew 16:17,18 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."*

We believe in the unity of all New Testament believers in the church, which is the Body of Christ (Acts 15:13-18; Ephesians 3:1-6; 4:11; 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

*1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.*

*Ephesians 1:22,23 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

## **Section 16. Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

We believe that Christian baptism is the single immersion of a believer in water to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our identification with the crucified, buried and risen Savior, through Whom we died to sin and rose to a new life; that baptism is to be performed under the authority of the local church; and that it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership (Matthew 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:36,38,39; Romans 6:3-5).

*Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

*Acts 2:41,42 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination.

*1 Corinthians 11:23-28 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

### **Section 17. Separation**

We believe in obedience to the Biblical commands to separate ourselves unto God from worldliness and ecclesiastical apostasy (John 17:14-16; Romans 16:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

*1 Timothy 6:3-5 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wrangling of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.*

*2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore, "Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters," says the LORD Almighty.*

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

### **Section 18. Civil Government**

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except in those things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming King of Kings (Exodus 18:21,22; 2 Samuel 23:3; Daniel 3:17,18; Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:19,20; 5:29; 23:5).

Romans 13:1-7 *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*

### **Section 19. Israel**

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God's eternal covenant people that she is now dispersed because of her disobedience and rejection of Christ, and that she will be re-gathered in the Holy Land and, after the completion of the church, will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ (Genesis 13:14-17; Ezekiel 37).

Romans 11:1,2 *I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel.*

Romans 11:25,26 *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob."*

### **Section 20. Rapture and Subsequent Events**

We believe in the pre-millennial rapture of the church, an event which can occur at any moment, and at that moment, the dead in Christ will be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ will be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air before the seven years of the Tribulation (1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 51-54; Philipians 3:20,21; Revelation 3:10).

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

We believe that the Tribulation, which follows the Rapture of the Church, will be culminated by the revelation of Christ in power and great glory to sit upon the throne of David and to establish the millennial kingdom on Earth (Isaiah 9:6,7; Daniel 9:25-27; Luke 1:30-33; 11:1-9; Acts 2:29,30).

*Matthew 24:29-31 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

*Revelation 20:1-4,6 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [...] Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

## **Section 21. The Righteous and the Wicked**

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that only those who are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting joy of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in the lake of fire (Genesis 18:23; Malachi 3:18; Matthew 25:34-41; Luke 16:25; John 8:21; Romans 6:17-18,23; 7:6; 1 John 5:19).

*Proverbs 14:32 The wicked is banished in his wickedness, But the righteous has a refuge in his death.*

*Revelation 20:14,15 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

## **Article IV. Membership**

### **Section 1. Qualifications**

Any person who has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior, giving evidence of the New Birth, having been baptized by immersion, and expressing a desire/willingness to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ will be received as a member of this local church.

It is acknowledged that there may be some who wish to attend First Baptist Church regularly, but for reasons of conscience or circumstance do not wish to become members of the local church. As a church, we will seek to minister to them in the same personal way that we would a member, however, they will not be permitted to vote or hold office.

### **Section 2. Procedure**

All members must:

1. Meet with at least 2 members of the First Baptist Church leadership team, and give evidence of meeting the qualifications of membership.
2. Agree with and support the Articles of Faith of First Baptist Church.
3. Agree to walk in harmony with the Membership Covenant which they have signed.
4. Agree to walk in harmony with the Constitution and By-laws of First Baptist Church.

A parent or guardian must also sign the Covenant of any child under the age of 17 who wishes to become a member.

### **Section 3. Reception of Members**

Those who meet the qualifications and procedures above will be recommended by the leadership for membership. The candidate will be introduced to the congregation, and the congregation will be given the opportunity to affirm the reception of the new member. New members may be received at any regularly scheduled service of First Baptist Church.

### **Section 4. Termination of Membership**

In light of the biblical admonition to “not forsake the assembling of yourselves together,” terminating church membership is not something that should be done lightly. However, membership will be removed by any of the following:

1. Request: Upon *written request* to the Clerk of First Baptist Church.
2. Transfer: If a member wishes to transfer their membership to a church of like faith, they should request a Letter of Transfer from the Clerk of First Baptist Church. Upon approval of the elders, a transfer letter will be provided.
3. Exclusion: Any member who is absent from services for a period of six months (or whose attendance is negligible), without giving the elders satisfactory reasons for such absence.



## **Section 5. Discipline**

Unfortunately, there are times in body life when there are cases of conduct or doctrinal error that are so opposed to body life that they will destroy the true fellowship that we have in Christ. In such cases, Matthew 18 will be followed:

1. A private conversation initiated by the individual who has knowledge or a concern.
2. A private conversation continued by that individual with additional witnesses.
3. The matter is referred to the congregation, through the elders, for a final public communication of the complaint.

An unrepentant individual will have their membership and/or fellowship removed, and may experience further measures in accordance with the teaching of Scripture (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3). These disciplinary measures apply not only to members of First Baptist Church, but also to those non-members who attend regularly.

### **Section 5.1. Restoration**

The purpose of any discipline is restoration, and it would be the fervent prayer of the congregation that any individual that has undergone church discipline would be restored to full fellowship. When an individual under discipline wishes to be restored, they will meet with the elders as to the current state of their relationship with the Lord, provide evidence of their repentance, and then come before the congregation at a public meeting and confess their sin. On the basis of these actions, membership and/or fellowship will be reinstated.

## **ARTICLE V. Governance**

### **Section 1. Authority**

The Chief Shepherd of First Baptist Church is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the ultimate authority for ALL that we do is His Holy Word. Under this authority, Elders are called by the Holy Spirit, and recognized by the congregation as the shepherds and overseers of the local church.

*Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

*Acts 6:3-5 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over the business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.*

## **Section 2. Leadership**

### **Section 2.1. Summary**

The Leadership Offices of the local church are that of Elder and Deacon. Together, these two offices make up the leadership of the local church. We believe that God has given the stewardship responsibility for the leadership offices in the church to men who are called and spiritually qualified. Office holders should not be less than 21 years of age, having been a member of First Baptist Church for a least one year prior to being elected to office (Pastoral staff excepted).

### **Section 2.2. Nominations**

Nominations, which should be made only after prayerful consideration of the gifts, talents and abilities of an individual, may be made at any time throughout the year. A slate of approved and willing nominees will be provided to the congregation at least 3 weeks prior to the annual election.

### **Section 2.3. Terms of Office**

The term of office for both elders and deacons is three years. Terms will be staggered to ensure continuity of leadership. Members may serve in leadership for successive terms provided that they are nominated and reaffirmed by the congregation. The term of elected office is from January 1 – December 31.

### **Section 2.4. Cooperation Between Offices**

Elders and deacons will cooperate in the directing of Church affairs. They will ensure through the weekly and monthly schedule that the church meets for worship and the purposes outlined in Acts 2:42 (teaching, fellowship, communion, prayer). They will meet together at least quarterly, and more often if necessary. The elders and deacons will determine their number in order to adequately do the work of the ministry.

## **Section 3. Elders**

The plurality of elders is clearly taught throughout the New Testament. Scripture (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14) repeatedly speaks of elders (plural), and a local church (singular). Acts 20:17-35 addresses the same group of men as elders, as overseers, and as those who carry out the ministry of shepherds. While every pastor is an elder, not every elder carries out the role of pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11). The clearest distinction between a pastor and the other elders is made in 1 Timothy 5:17. Some elders are involved in spiritual oversight, and others are also given to the pastoral task of preaching and teaching. The term or title of Pastor most often refers to an elder who serves the church vocationally, and very often is involved in preaching and teaching.

### **Section 3.1. Qualifications**

The qualifications of elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

*1 Timothy 3:1-7 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

*Titus 1:6-9 If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*

### **Section 3.2. Duties of the Elders**

The elders will meet monthly following a schedule that is mutually agreeable by those holding the office. They are accountable for the following work, to:

1. Give attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word
2. Train and equip the saints for effective ministry
3. Provide oversight for the church
4. Protect the church from doctrinal error and false teaching
5. Administer the duties of baptism, communion, dedications, and other similar celebrations. (weddings and funerals will be conducted by the pastoral staff)
6. Visit the flock, especially those who are sick
7. Moderate/lead all church meetings, except those that pertain to themselves
8. Serve as ex-officio members of all committees of the church
9. Work with the church treasurer and deacons in the formulation of the annual church budget

### **Section 3.3. Selection of Elders**

The following process will guide the recognition of Elders:

1. Names placed into nomination must be approved by elders currently in office
2. The approval process will include an interview with the current elders to assess biblical/theological knowledge and giftedness for service
3. Any prospective elder must agree to have his name placed before the congregation
4. The congregation must be informed of the names of prospective elders at least 3 weeks prior to the Annual Meeting
5. Elders being recognized for the first time must receive 75% majority vote of the votes cast

6. Elders being reaffirmed to the office must receive a majority vote of the votes cast
7. Moral failure, doctrinal heresy, or the failure of an elder to fulfill the duties of his office without valid reason for a period of one month, will be sufficient cause for the removal of the elder from office
8. Removal of an elder requires a 75% majority vote of the votes cast at a duly called meeting
9. In event of a vacancy mid-term, a special meeting may be called to recognize a replacement, following the selection process guidelines

### **Section 3.4. Pastoral Staff**

Pastors will be called by at least a 75% majority of votes cast at a meeting duly called for such a purpose. Their tenure in office is indefinite, but can be terminated upon a thirty-day written notice, by either the pastor or the church. A congregational vote of 75% or more is required to dismiss a pastor. The following process will be used when calling a pastor:

1. A pastoral search committee consisting of at least two Elders, two Deacons, and three members at large will be formed
2. The pastoral search committee will review the application materials of each applicant
3. When an acceptable applicant is found, the committee will recommend the applicant to the elders
4. If the applicant is acceptable to the elders, they will be presented to First Baptist Church as a candidate
5. A candidate will have the opportunity to preach/teach and meet with members of the congregation
6. A candidate MUST wholeheartedly subscribe to the Articles of Faith of First Baptist Church
7. Only one candidate will be considered at a time
8. Church membership is automatic for a pastor and his wife upon acceptance of a call

### **Section 4. Deacons**

#### **Section 4.1. Qualifications**

The qualifications for the office of deacon are found in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

*Acts 6:3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*

*1Timothy 3:8-13 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

## **Section 4.2. Duties of Deacons**

The deacons shall meet monthly following a schedule that is mutually agreeable to those holding office. They are accountable for the following work, to:

1. Provide care for the temporal needs of the church family
2. Dispense the benevolent fund
3. Ensure that integrity is maintained in the counting and depositing of all offerings into the church bank account
4. Review the financial statements of First Baptist Church, as necessary
5. Ensure that funds are dispersed in accordance with the established budget (NOTE: In the case of an EMERGENCY or an URGENT NEED, common sense will prevail and the deacons will act in the best interest of First Baptist Church)
6. Oversee the maintenance and care of the property, including oversight of the cleaning of the building
7. Coordinate with the elders concerning the use of the facility for other than normally scheduled activities

## **Section 4.3. Selection of Deacons**

The following process will guide the recognition of Deacons:

1. Names placed into nomination must be approved by the elders
2. The approval process will include an interview with the current elders to assess giftedness for service
3. Any prospective deacon must agree to have his name placed before the congregation
4. The congregation must be informed of the names of prospective deacons at least 3 weeks prior to the Annual Meeting
5. Deacon election requires a simple majority vote of the votes cast
6. Moral failure, doctrinal heresy, or the failure of a deacon to fulfill the duties of his office without valid reason for a period of one month, will be sufficient cause for the removal of the deacon from office
7. Removal of a deacon requires a 75% majority vote of the votes cast at a duly called meeting
8. In event of a vacancy mid-term, a special meeting may be called to recognize a replacement, following the selection process

## **Section 5. Treasurer**

The treasurer will be appointed annually by the leadership (elders and deacons) of First Baptist Church. They will be accountable for the following work, to:

1. Not disburse any funds without the proper authorization
2. Make records available to the deacons or the elders upon request
3. Submit a financial report to the elders and deacons each month
4. Not disperse funds for any discretionary expenses that exceed the amount budgeted by \$1,000

**Section 6. Clerk**

The clerk will be appointed annually by the leadership (elders and deacons) of First Baptist Church. The clerk will be registered as the legal representative of the church, and has the authority to sign legal documents, as required, or as ordered by the church. They will be accountable for the following work, to:

1. Keep a record of all congregational business
2. Provide minutes of all congregational meetings
3. Maintain the official membership list of the church
4. Maintain all church records, EXCEPT for financial records

**ARTICLE VI. Missions**

First Baptist Church is committed to the Great Commission and, therefore, our support for Missions and mission programs is unwavering. We purpose to be a congregation that is knowledgeable and passionate about missions – locally, regionally, and around the world. We seek to develop a genuine partnership with those individuals and agencies that we support. Our primary focus is evangelism and the establishment of evangelical churches. Individuals and organizations that we support should be in harmony with our articles of faith.

**ARTICLE VII. Dissolution of Corporation**

If this organization should bring its work to a conclusion and dissolve its corporation, none of its assets remaining after meeting all responsibilities and payments of all just obligations, will be allocated to the benefit of any individual member of the corporation, board member, employee, or any other private individual. All such assets, if any, in the event of its dissolution, will be turned over to an organization(s) which is (are) in harmony with the Articles of Faith and the purposes of First Baptist Church, and in conformity with the IRS as a 501.c.3 organization.

## **By-Laws of First Baptist Church, Fremont, Michigan**

### **ARTICLE I. Congregational Meetings**

There will be two congregational meetings held each year for the purpose of conducting Church business, in November and May. Notice of any congregational meeting must be given at least two successive Sundays PRIOR to the meeting.

The November meeting will be considered the “Annual Meeting.” Prior to this meeting, quarterly financial reports will be made available to those who request them through the church office. The following activities will take place at the Annual Meeting:

1. Elections are held
2. Budgets for next year are approved

Special meetings may be called for the transaction of business by the elders, a majority of the deacons, or by a quorum of the members of the church. Discussion at a special meeting will be limited to the subject(s) for which the meeting was called.

### **ARTICLE II. Voting Rights**

Only members who are at least seventeen years of age are eligible to vote. The voting members will vote on the following:

1. Calling of pastors
2. Election of elders and deacons
3. Approval of real estate transactions
4. Approval of the annual budget
5. Taking on of indebtedness
6. Approval of discretionary expenditure in excess of \$1,000 that was not budgeted  
(NOTE: In the case of an EMERGENCY or an URGENT NEED, common sense will prevail and the deacons will act in the best interest of First Baptist Church)
7. Approval of changes to the Constitution and its attending documents

### **ARTICLE III. Constitutional Changes**

The church may make changes to the Constitution and its attending documents, provided that suggested changes are made available in writing at least two successive Sundays PRIOR to the meeting where the changes will be voted on. A change to any part of the constitution requires a 75% majority of all votes cast.

### **ARTICLE IV. Committees**

The Leadership of First Baptist Church is encouraged to establish committees to assist them in carrying out the function and duties of their offices.

**ARTICLE V. Rules of Order**

Congregational meetings will be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

**ARTICLE VI. Quorum**

First Baptist Church declares a quorum to be 30% of the eligible voting membership. A quorum is necessary to conduct any official church business.

**ARTICLE VII. Method of Voting**

There are various methods that may be employed to record votes of the congregation. Voice votes, hand votes, or paper ballots are all acceptable forms of recording a vote. However, any vote concerning the calling of a pastor must be by paper ballot.

An eligible member who cannot attend a congregational meeting because they are out of town, working, or extremely ill may request an absentee ballot from the clerk. The following requirements apply to absentee voting:

1. Only absentee ballots that have been distributed by the clerk will be counted
2. Only absentee ballots that have been received by the clerk PRIOR to the meeting will be counted
3. Absentee ballots are limited to matters relating to the electing of leadership (elders, deacons, or pastoral staff)



## First Baptist Church of Fremont, Michigan

### Covenant of Fellowship

I have put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. After my salvation, in obedience to Him, I have been baptized by immersion. Because I am in harmony with the Articles of Faith, ministries, mission, vision, strategies and structure of First Baptist Church, Fremont, I willingly choose to unite with the believers of First Baptist Church in membership. In doing so, I commit myself to the Lord Jesus Christ and to my brothers and sisters at First Baptist Church. **With the Lord's help, I will endeavor to do the following:**

- 1. Promote and protect the unity of the body, by:**
  - a. **ACTING** in love towards all
  - b. **RESOLVING** conflicts according to Matthew 18
  - c. **SUBMITTING** myself to private confrontation and public discipline of sin (if necessary)
  - d. **FOLLOWING** the leadership of First Baptist Church
  
- 2. Support and enhance the testimony of First Baptist Church, by:**
  - a. **ATTENDING** faithfully
  - b. **GIVING** regularly and cheerfully in proportion to God's blessing
  - c. **STUDYING** God's Word regularly
  - d. **PURSUING** personal holiness in public and private in obedience to God's Word
  
- 3. Serve others and the ministries of First Baptist Church, by:**
  - a. **DISCOVERING** my spiritual gifts
  - b. **EXERCISING** my spiritual gifts
  - c. Being **EQUIPPED** to serve
  - d. **DEVELOPING** the heart of a servant
  
- 4. Share the responsibility of our local church, by:**
  - a. **PRAYING** for its health and growth
  - b. **SHARING** my faith with others around me
  - c. **SEEKING** to make disciples
  - d. **INVITING** others to attend
  - e. Warmly **WELCOMING** those who visit

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Member's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Signature (if under 17): \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Elder/Deacon Signature: \_\_\_\_\_