

First Baptist Church of St. John Core Documents

Church Mission

*To cultivate a compelling community of maturing disciples
that live on mission for the glory of God and the good of the city.*

I. Name

The name of this church shall be *First Baptist Church of St. John* also known as *FBC St. John*.

II. Statement Of Faith

The Scriptures:

We believe that the Bible is God's Holy Word; verbally inspired, without error in the original manuscripts, infallible, and sufficient for life and doctrine. **(2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31-32; Acts 20:32)**

The Trinity:

We believe that there is one God, eternally existing as three equally divine persons that know, love, and glorify each other. We believe that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; yet The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit, the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. **(Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-3)**

The Father:

We believe that God the Father is an infinite personal spirit. We believe that He is eternal, all-present, all-powerful, and all-knowing. We believe He sovereignly works all things according to His plan. We believe He mercifully sent His Son to ransom sinners from every people group. **(John 4:24; Psalm 90:2; Psalm 193:7-10; Jeremiah 32:17; 1 John 3:20; Isaiah 46:9-10; John 3:16)**

Jesus Christ:

We believe that the Son remaining what He was (God), became what He was not (man). We believe that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and performed miracles. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension and session at the right hand of the Father, His intercession for His people as great High Priest, and His future return. **(Romans 9:5; John 1:1-2, 14; Matthew 1:18-25; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; Acts 1:11; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:28)**

The Holy Spirit:

We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

We believe He regenerates sinners and unites them to Christ. We believe He indwells believers, sanctifies them, and seals them to the day of redemption. (**John 14:15-16, 26; 16:8-15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 1:13-14**)

The Fall:

We believe that in Adam, man who was created in the image of God, fell, and now inherits both Adam's guilt and corruption and is therefore now hostile towards God, dead in his sins, in bondage to sin, and unable to save himself. (**Genesis 1:26-27, Romans 5:12; Romans 3:9-20, 23; Colossians 1:21; John 8:34; Ephesians 2:1-3**)

The Gospel and Salvation:

We believe that the gospel is the good news of what God has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience for us and died a penal substitutionary death for our sins. We believe salvation is a gift that comes only by God's grace, and that all who trust in Jesus Christ alone are justified, and are eternally secure, unable to lose their salvation. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:8-20**)

The Church, Her Ordinances, and Her Leadership:

We believe that the church is the body of Christ, comprised of all regenerate persons. We believe the local church is to consist of persons baptized upon credible profession of faith covenanting together to be faithful to their Lord Jesus Christ. We believe the Lord gave two ordinances to His church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the baptism of believers by immersion. We believe a church is to be elder led and deacon served. We believe the office of elder is limited to qualified men. (**Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Hebrews 10:23-25; Matthew 28:19; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-12**)

Manhood, Womanhood, and Marriage:

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in His own image with equal dignity and worth but with differing gospel-communicating roles, whether single or married. We believe that marriage is the covenant union of one man and one woman before God. We believe that in obedience to the Lord husbands are to reflect Christ by loving leadership and wives are to reflect the church by respectful submission in the Lord. (**Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18-25; Matthew 19:3-12; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Hebrews 13:4**)

Our beliefs are rooted in historic Christianity and are in alignment with the ancient creeds such as *The Apostles Creed*, *The Nicæan Creed*, the *Athanasian Creed* as well as more modern statements of faith, such as the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.

III.

Church Covenant

1. Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord, Savior, and, supreme Treasure of our lives, and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.
2. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and peace; to promote its spirituality and fruitfulness; to sustain its worship, ordinances, and discipline; to welcome, and test biblically, instruction from the Scriptures by the elders of the church which accords with the our statement of faith, seeking to grow toward biblical unity in the truth; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.
3. We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to disciple and educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our behavior; to avoid gossip and unwholesome talk; to live a Spirit-filled life and to exercise wisdom in our Christian liberty, honor God with our bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and to be zealous in our missionary efforts to advance God's Kingdom of our Savior
4. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; we will remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.
5. We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will, if possible, unite with a like-minded church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

IV.

Character

Section 1. Polity: The government of this church shall be vested in its membership.

Section 2. Doctrine: The Bible shall be this church's final authority and guide to all matters of faith and practice.

V.

Church Authority

When duly adopted by the church, this Constitution and its By-Laws supersede all previously adopted governing documents.

Any existing document empowering policy and procedure for the church and any of its organizations that conflicts in whole or in part with this Constitution and its By-Laws is null and void; and the responsible organization shall rewrite such documents in keeping with the spirit and stated provisions of this Constitution and its By-Laws.

VI.

By Laws

Article I. **Membership**

Section 1. **Admission:**

- A By a public and credible profession of faith in Christ, followed by New Testament baptism.
- B By letter from another church, provided the candidate has been baptized in the manner as taught in the New Testament.
- C By restoration with the recommendation of the elders and the approval of the church. [Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of the church, upon sufficient evidence of repentance and reformation.]
- D By believable confession of faith, provided a church letter is not attainable and the individual has had New Testament baptism.

Section 2. **Active Membership:**

Members are expected, first of all, to be faithful to all the duties essential to the Christian life according to the Bible, and to live according to the church covenant.

Section 3. **Removal from Membership:**

- E By letter of dismissal to a church of like faith and practice. (The letter of dismissal shall not be granted directly to the individual), or
- F by death, or
- G if the member requests termination, or
- H by discipline, as prescribed in the Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17),
 1. Church discipline should be initiated, when a member begins to live contrary to the Bible and the church covenant. This includes but is not limited to inactivity in the life of the church.
 2. Church discipline is automatic when the member is regularly inactive.
 - a. After six months of inactivity, the member will be placed on the inactive member list and will not be eligible to vote.
 - b. After one year of inactivity, the member may be removed from the membership of the church.
 - c. Inactivity does not include those members who are home-bound, have military duty, or have another valid reason as to why he or she is not able to take part in the life of the church. In each of these instances, the member is strongly encouraged to notify the elders so that we can provide the proper care.

- I Removal from membership shall come as a recommendation from the elders to the church. The church membership must approve the removal of any member.

Section 4. **Restoration:**

Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by a recommendation from the elders, and a vote of the church, upon evidence of their repentance and reformation.

Article II. **Officers**

Section 1. **Elders:**

- A First Baptist Church St. John shall have elders according to the model of biblical leadership given in the Bible.
- B Elders and Deacons are separate and distinct offices that can never be held concurrently by anyone.
- C The elders shall give oversight to all aspects of the church: spiritual and administrative. The primary responsibility of the elders is the spiritual oversight and protection of the church.
 - 1. Spiritually, the elders shall lead the church in vision and prayer. They will protect the doctrine and theology of the church (Acts 20:17-38), and they are to take the lead in the visiting and anointing of the sick (James 5:14). The elders shall be responsible for interviewing candidates for membership and make recommendations for membership to the church. The elders will lead in church discipline matters according to Matthew 18:14-20, and if necessary, shall bring discipline matters to the church. The elders will also assess the needs of the church and make recommendations to the church for needed deacons, team leaders, the formation of committees, etc. In the absence of a senior pastor/teaching elder, the elders shall lead the church in the search for a senior pastor and be responsible for the ministry of the church.
 - 2. Administratively, the elders lead the church in administrative matters by providing oversight to any committees called as needed, such as the personnel committee, the finance committee, and the trustees. They will provide general oversight of all church ministries. The elders will also be responsible for appointing messengers to convention meetings. Finally, the elders will lead the business/members' meeting.
 - 3. In all things, the elders will work closely with the paid ministry staff, deacons, and trustees to ensure the vision and direction of the church are clearly defined and being pursued.
- D **Qualifications:** Candidates for elders must be active members of First Baptist Church of St. John and meet the biblical qualifications. The calling of a senior

pastor/teaching elder is the sole exception to the membership requirement. Candidates for elders must be:

1. given consideration according to Acts 14:21-23, and 1 Timothy 5:22.
2. able to protect the church from false doctrine and errant theology according to Acts 20:17-38.
3. meet the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.
4. able to serve in the teaching ministry described in 1 Timothy 5:17-18.
5. able to minister according to Titus 1:5-9.
6. able to minister according to 1 Peter 5:1-4.

E Senior Elder (Pastor): We recognize that all elders must be able to teach, however, according to 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Ephesians 4:11, and evidenced by the Pastoral Epistles, there is a special calling of a senior pastor/teaching elder.

1. This man shall be called of God, approved by the elders, and elected by three-fourths (3/4) the church membership that gathers at a called business/members' meeting.
2. This elder shall serve as long as God has called him to this position.
3. Should his qualifications come into question. First, the Biblical process laid out in Matthew 18:14-20 in coordination with 1 Timothy 5:19 must be followed. Then, he may be removed by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the active elders, followed by a recommendation to the church, and by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a called business/members' meeting.
4. When the senior pastor's calling is in question, he shall not have a vote as an elder concerning the matter.

F Teaching Elders (Lay): We recognize that the New Testament model of church leadership calls for a plurality of elders to serve, and lead, the church. Lay elders must be men who meet the biblical qualifications for an elder, have the approval of the active elders, and ultimately are approved by the three-fourths (3/4) of the active church membership present at a called members'/business meeting. In addition, the number of lay elders should always outnumber the staff elders. The lay elders will not be paid by the church; however, they may be reimbursed for ministry related expenses incurred as an elder.

1. **Nomination:** The church membership shall nominate potential candidates for the position of elder. Once the church nominates a candidate, the candidate will be given consideration based upon biblical requirements. Candidates will then be asked to prayerfully consider their nomination. The candidate will then be interviewed by the existing elders and enter an apprenticeship process of examination and testing. If approved by the elders, next, the church will be asked to prayerfully consider the qualified candidate(s). Finally, the church must approve any candidate for the position of elder by three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present as a called business/members' meeting.

2. **Meetings:** The elders shall meet in order to pray, study the Bible, assess the needs of the members, and consider the ministries of the church. In order to maintain a spirit of unity and Biblical purpose of the elders, they should meet frequently.
3. **Terms:** Recognizing that scripture does not define terms for elders, it is still beneficial for the church to consider new elders on a regular basis.
 - a. Each elder shall, on a yearly basis, prayerfully consider his qualifications and the requirements of the position.
 - b. In addition, we recognize there might be times when an elder might be struggling with issues that might negatively impact his effectiveness as an elder, but these issues do not rise to the level of termination. In these times, the elders might ask, or the elder might request, that there be a time in which the elder might step away from the ministry of the elders for a period of time.
4. **Termination:** An elder shall no longer serve, or be called an elder if:
 - a. He offers his resignation as an elder to the elder board, and then the church.
 - b. He moves his membership from First Baptist Church of St. John and identifies with another church.
 - c. He no longer meets the qualifications.
 - 1) When it is believed that an elder no longer meets the qualifications, Matthew 18:14-20 should be pursued, and careful consideration must be given to 1 Timothy 5:19-20.
 - 2) In order to remove an elder, the elder board must vote to remove an elder at a called elder meeting. The elder in question will not have a vote, and the remaining voting elders must reach a three-fourths (3/4) vote.
 - 3) The elders will present the issue to the church. To remove an elder, a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a called business/members' meeting is required.
 - 4) In the event that a lay elder shall no longer serve, and this leaves the elder board without a majority number of lay elders, the elders will strive to restore the elder board to a majority of lay elders. The staff elder(s), apart from the Senior Pastor/Teaching Elder, shall continue to have a vote so long as there is at least an equal number of lay elders and staff elders.

G Support Staff: We recognize that God calls others to serve alongside our elders and senior pastor as support staff. Support staff might include, but are not limited to: paid ministry staff, and other paid positions in the church. These persons have a unique relationship assisting the elders, and particularly the senior pastor/teaching elder, in the implementation of the vision for the church, by its elders. Support staff

shall not automatically be placed as elders. Their consideration will be assessed by the elders based upon the needs of the church and the person's qualifications.

Section 2. **Deacons:**

The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3: 8–13. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions, those who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6, these members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. They shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration. The elders, with assistance from the deacons, shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

- A The number of deacons is to be determined by the elders based upon the needs of the church.
- B The term of office shall be three years. At the conclusion of the three-year term, deacons are eligible to immediately succeed themselves, but must go through the election process again.
- C There is no obligation to constitute as a deacon one who comes to the church from another church where they have served as a deacon.
- D To be eligible for the election to the deacons, one must qualify under Scriptural qualifications as found in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- E The duties of the deacons are as prescribed in the Scriptures and whatever work is recommended by the elders
- F The deacons shall have regular monthly meetings for the purpose of reviewing the Deacon Ministry of the church. This is to be done in counsel with pastor or elders.

Section 3. **Trustees:**

- A **President of the Corporation/Chairman of Trustees:**
 - 1. The Chair of the Trustees shall serve as President of the Corporation and shall be recommended by the elders and elected by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a called business/members' meeting. The president shall sign and execute all documents on behalf of the corporation when directed by proper action of the church.
 - 2. The position shall include (1) member
 - 3. The term shall be for (3) years commencing in January

B Clerk/Secretary of the Corporation:

1. The clerks shall be recommended by the elders and elected by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a called business/members' meeting.
2. The position shall include (1) member
3. The term shall be for (3) years commencing in January
4. The clerk of the church shall keep in a suitable book record of all the actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided.
5. The clerk shall keep a register of the names of members with dates of admission, dismissal, death together with a record of baptism.
6. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give all notices required by law.

C Treasurer:

1. The treasurer shall be recommended by the elders and elected by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a called business/members' meeting.
2. The position shall include (1) member
3. The term shall be for (3) years commencing in January
4. All books, records, and accounts kept by the treasurer shall be considered the property of the church. The books shall be open to inspection by any member of the church.
5. The treasurer shall make monthly detailed statement available to the church of all obligations incurred, purchases made, and of all receipts and disbursements.
6. The treasurer and counters shall be bonded in such an amount as the church shall designate.
7. The treasurer is to make available to the church an annual report showing the total amount of receipts and an itemized statement of all disbursements.

Section 4. All Officers:

- A The number of church officers shall be determined by the needs of the church.
- B All officers shall be elected every (3) years with the exception of those in Sections 1 and 2.
- C Be it hereby understood that officers of this church, or its organizations shall regard their bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit, abstaining from any practices detrimental to their health and influence, and shall be zealous in their efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior and His Church. While this should be the goal and effort of all church members, the officers serve as example and model of this lifestyle.

Article III. **Committees/Teams**

- A Committees may be formed upon the recommendation of elders and with church approval to assist them in their responsibilities.
- B Committees remain in effect until their purpose has been fulfilled and they are dissolved.
- C The power of any given committee is limited to the scope of their assignment and constrained by the budget where relevant and the leadership of the elders.
- D Committees will report to the elders on a monthly basis or as otherwise agreed upon between the elders and that committee.

Article IV. **Church/Members' Meetings**

- A The church fiscal year shall begin January 1, and end December 31st.
- B The church shall hold at least one meeting per quarter. A special meeting may be called to take care of emergencies or at any time provided it has been announced by the elders at least a full week before the proposed date.
- C At any of the regular meetings for worship, the church may, without special notice, act upon the reception of members or the appointment of servant team members or messengers to the conventions and associations.
- D Privileges of voting. On all matters that come before the church for action each active member must be present at the meeting at the time of the vote.
- E Those present at a regularly scheduled members' meeting or a properly announced special meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Article V. **Budget Planning Process**

The elders shall oversee the budget planning process and appoint a committee as needed to assist in those efforts. The annual budget shall be approved before the fiscal year commences. Should the budget not be in place by that time, the church shall operate on the previous year's budget. The annual budget shall not exceed 10% over the previous year's budget giving unless authorized by the church.

- A At least three months before the fiscal year, the elders shall lead in examining the financial status of the previous 12 months to start the budgeting process of the coming fiscal year. (This would be a place for assistance from a committee would be practical.)
- B Requests to adjust or change individual items in the budget respective to ministries in the church must be submitted before the budgeting planning of the next year begins.
- C When budget giving is over the budget goal for three months, the elders may lead in reviewing the budget to see if the budget needs to be amended. Any recommendation to amend the budget must be brought before the church.

Article VI. **Affiliations**

- A This church shall be affiliated with properly constituted Association as may be hereafter organized and recognized by the Southern Baptist Convention. The church is likewise associated with the St. Louis Metro Baptist Association, the Missouri Baptist Convention and the Pillar Network.
- B Any affiliations with denominations or networks must be approved of by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a called business/members' meeting and a recommendation of the elders.

Article VII. **Amendments**

The Constitution and any accompanying By-Laws may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a stated meeting, provided the amendment has been offered in writing at a previous regular business/members meeting.