

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

ST. JOHNS, MICHIGAN, CLINTON COUNTY

As Revised, Rewritten and Adopted January 19, 2022

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

Article I - NAME

The name of the corporation and by which it shall be known in law is: THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ST. JOHNS, MICHIGAN.

Article II - PURPOSE

The purposes of this corporation, from this point forward referred to as the church, will be: The facilitation of public worship, the study and teaching of the Bible, the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Christ, the administration of the New Testament ordinances, the spiritual growth of its members, the saving of the lost, and the exerting of godly influence in the community and the world at large.

Article III - RELATIONSHIPS

Sec. 1

The church is answerable to the Lord Jesus Christ only. It answers to no other entity in terms of the qualifications and discipline of its members, and the rules by which it governs itself.

Sec. 2

The church will not join with or withdraw from any organization or association except by two-thirds majority vote by ballot of qualified voting members who choose to vote. Notice of that proposal will be made available to members of the church at least ten days prior to said meeting.

Article IV - PERIOD

The time for which the church is created will be without end.

Article V - AMENDMENTS

These Articles of Association may be amended at any annual meeting of the church by proceeding according to the provisions of the Michigan General Corporation Act, Act No. 327 of the Public Acts of 1931, as amended, and by two-thirds majority vote by ballot after suggested change or amendment has been provided to members of the church at least ten days prior to said annual meeting.

OUR CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS PREAMBLE

Placing our faith wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, we believe and practice that which has characterized Baptists historically, namely:

Sec 1.

The preeminence of Jesus Christ as our divine Lord and Savior.

Sec 2.

The supreme authority of the Bible and its sufficiency as our only rule of faith and practice.

Sec 3.

The privilege and ability of every believer to interpret Scripture on their own and to approach God without human mediation.

Sec 4.

The separation of church and state.

Sec 5.

A regenerate church membership.

Sec 6.

The beautiful symbolic ordinances of believer's baptism and the regular observance of the Lord's Supper.

Sec 7.

The independence of the local church and its interdependence in associated fellowship with other evangelical churches.

Sec. 8

The commitment to majority rule, guaranteeing equal rights to all members and special privileges to none.

Sec. 9

The spiritual unity of all believers.

Sec. 10

A global effort to reach all peoples with the Gospel of Christ.

Accepting the general summary of doctrines and duties found in the Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, and Preamble, we unite ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, and adopt for our government, plan of worship, and service, the following articles:

Article I - MISSION STATEMENT

The First Baptist Church of St. Johns exists to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by exalting Him in worship, evangelizing the lost in our community and around the world, edifying believers through the ministry of the Word, and equipping the saints for the work of service.

Article II - GOVERNMENT

The government of this church is elder led, congregational rule. The church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body and recognizes no higher authority, except that of our Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, but is free to cooperate with other evangelical churches.

Article III - CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Sec. 1

The church recommends and accepts the following as the logical sequence of church fellowship:

Salvation: Confession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Baptism: Testimony of union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection and identification with other believers.

Communion: Fellowship with Christ and his people by partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Membership: Serving Christ through the work of the local church.

Sec. 2

Any person desiring baptism will make it known to a pastor, may be baptized upon giving evidence that he or she has been saved and has been properly instructed in the meaning and significance of baptism by immersion.

Sec. 3

Any person professing saving faith in Jesus Christ; giving evidence of a change of heart; adopting the views of faith, doctrine, and practice held by this church; and being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may be received into membership.

Sec. 4

The pastors, non-vocational elders and deacons will examine all applicants for church membership. Applicants may be received into membership upon recommendation by the pastors, non-vocational elders and deacons, subject to the approval of the church.

Sec. 5

Any person desiring to join the church will be asked to read the Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, and Constitution and to accept them and their responsibilities.

Article IV - DUTIES OF MEMBERS

Sec. 1

It is the duty of members to honor, esteem and love their pastors, uphold and protect their reputation in the community, pray for them regularly, and support them in the scriptural exercise of their pastoral duties.

Sec. 2

It is the duty of members to engage in Christian fellowship with each other, visit and minister to those who are suffering, and pray for each other. If necessary, members are to lovingly and privately admonish one another in their sins and work to promote and encourage the spiritual walk of one another.

Sec. 3

It is the duty of members to preserve the unity of the church. If at any time they find themselves opposed to the fundamental doctrines of this church, or, if for any reason are unable to harmonize with others, they will not seek to disrupt its fellowship, but will quietly resign their church membership.

Sec. 4

It is the duty of members to live their lives in their communities in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sec. 5

It is the duty of members to regularly attend the services of the church when able, and to regularly give to the financial support of the church according to their ability.

Article V - DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS**Sec. 1**

Any member of good standing who wishes to join a different local church is entitled to a letter of recommendation. This letter will be sent by the senior pastor or his designee directly to the church with which he or she desires to join. The member may request a copy of this letter of recommendation.

Sec. 2

Any member who does not regularly attend church services will be contacted by the leadership. Steps will be taken to remove the individual from church membership if it is found that the member does not show a renewed desire to regularly attend or does not have a satisfactory reason why he or she is unable to attend.

Sec. 3

Any member who has fallen into a pattern of sin and who refuses to repent and turn from that sin, as determined by the elders, after having been lovingly and biblically confronted, will be dismissed as an act of church discipline by the congregation. The goal of this action is to restore the member to a right relationship with Jesus Christ and fellowship in the church.

Article VI - OFFICERS

Sec. 1

There are two scriptural officers in a New Testament church: pastor/elder (bishop) and deacon. For this document, when pastors and non-vocational elders are being referred to together, they will be designated elders.

Sec. 2

This church shall endeavor to maintain at least one pastor, one non-vocational elder, and seven deacons. All elders and deacons must meet the biblical qualifications of their respective office.

Sec. 3

In the case of a vacancy in the pastorate, the elders and deacons will immediately appoint a pastoral search committee. That committee will recommend to the elders and deacons, and ultimately the congregation, a candidate for the vacant pastorate.

Sec. 4

The election of non-vocational elders, deacons, and missions committee members will occur at the annual meeting in January.

Sec. 5

All church officers must be members of the church and live in a manner consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Article VII - DUTIES OF OFFICERS

A - PASTOR/ELDER

A1 - PASTOR - VOCATIONAL ELDER

Sec. 1

A pastor is called by a three-fourths vote of the church and continues as long as both parties are agreed.

Sec. 2

The pastors will perform the biblical duties of their office. They will be spiritual leaders of the congregation, faithful teachers of the Word of God and overseers of the church in its efforts to reach all peoples with the Gospel of Christ. They will pray about and work with the non-vocational elders concerning matters of general ministry oversight and issues of practical theology; identify needs and plan the implementation of new ministry opportunities; consider applicants for church membership; and identify and nurture future church leaders.

Sec. 3

The senior pastor will be the moderator of the church business meetings and a member of all committees, but he has the privilege of appointing another person as moderator of the business meetings, or committee member in his place, whenever he so desires.

Sec. 4

The pastors will administer the ordinances of baptism and observance of the Lord's Supper.

Sec. 5

The pastors will arrange for visiting the sick, following up with those who do not regularly attend church services, and working to restore those who have fallen into a pattern of sin.

Sec. 6

The pastors will accept our Statement of Faith and live in a manner consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sec. 7

When choosing a pastor the church will be called into a special business meeting for that purpose. This meeting will be called by the elders and deacons and notice will be given by public announcement during the Sunday services on the two preceding Sundays.

When a pastor resigns he will give the church one month's notice; and the church, when dismissing a pastor, must give him one month's notice, unless a different period of time is agreed upon by both parties.

When a pastor is accused of serious misconduct, apostasy, heresy, or departure from the doctrines of the church, he will be given a fair and proper hearing by the elders, then the deacons, and then the congregation. If accusations are proven to be true, he shall be dismissed at once.

Sec. 8

The pastors' salaries and benefits will be included in the church budget recommendation and approved by a vote of the church. The pastors will be encouraged to attend conferences and meetings which will be especially helpful to their ministry.

A2 - NON - VOCATIONAL ELDER

Sec. 1

The non-vocational elders will serve for a term of three years and be subject to reelection. They are not limited in the number of consecutive terms they may serve. They will accept our Statement of Faith and live in a manner consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sec. 2

The non-vocational elders will perform the biblical duties of their office. They will be spiritual leaders of the congregation, faithful teachers of the Word of God and overseers of the church in its effort to reach all peoples with the Gospel of Christ. They will pray about and work with the pastors concerning matters of general ministry oversight and issues of practical theology; identify needs and plan the implementation of new ministry opportunities; consider applicants for church membership; and identify and nurture future church leaders.

Sec. 3

The non-vocational elders will work with the pastors to visit the sick, inquire of those who do not regularly attend church services and work to restore those who have fallen into a pattern of sin. They will seek to pray for and discuss the spiritual well-being of church members. They will work with the pastors to care for all members and regular attendees.

Sec. 4

The non-vocational elders will work with the pastors on difficult and controversial cases, including those who are involved in, or at risk of falling into a pattern of sin. This involves discussing and praying for the individual. It may also involve meeting with the at-risk individual for prayer, encouragement, and warning, as appropriate.

B - DEACONS

Sec.1

Deacons will serve for a term of three years and be eligible for reelection for one more term. A year must elapse before they can be elected again to that office. The deacons will generally meet once a month. They will elect their own chairman who will serve as moderator of their meetings.

Sec. 2

The deacons will provide for and serve the elements of the Lord's Supper to the congregation.

Sec. 3

The deacons will work with the elders in considering applicants for church membership.

Sec. 4

The deacons will work with the elders in promoting the spiritual care of the church and in visiting the sick and those in need.

Sec.5

The deacons will be responsible for all money coming through the church, seeing that it is carefully handled and properly spent. They will prepare an annual budget recommendation for approval by the church. With the counsel of the non-vocational elders, they will consider the financial needs of the pastors, and supervise their remuneration and benefits. They are to recommend gifts and remunerations for guest speakers. They will distribute resources from the church's benevolence fund.

Sec. 6

The deacons are to determine the property insurance company and keep all church property adequately insured. They will make recommendations to the church concerning needed improvements, but necessary and emergency repairs are to be cared for whenever needed. They will oversee the necessary people to take care of the maintenance and upkeep of the church buildings and property, and recommend their salaries to the church for approval through the annual budget.

Sec. 7

The deacons will be familiar with the laws of Michigan pertaining to churches and church properties and see that the church faithfully complies. They are to be responsible for the safekeeping of all titles, deeds, and official documents of the church. They are to execute all financial contracts, mortgages, trusts and other instruments of indebtedness as the church so instructs. The title of all property will be vested in the name of the church.

C - MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Sec. 1

The church will endeavor to maintain at least nine members on the missions committee. Any expansion is to be approved by the church. An elder, chosen by the elders, and a deacon, chosen by the deacons, are members of the missions committee; all other committee members, including not less than two men and three women, are selected by the nominating committee and voted upon by the church membership.

Sec. 2

Terms of elected missions committee members will be three years in duration. No one will serve more than two successive terms. A year must elapse before they can be elected again to that office. The missions committee members will elect their own chairperson who will moderate their meetings.

Sec. 3

The missions committee will coordinate the entire missions program of the church. They are expected to meet with prospective missionary candidates and recommend support of candidates to the elders and deacons. They will promote missions through all the ministries of the church.

Sec. 4

The missions committee will work with the pastors to communicate with our missionaries and their mission agencies to learn of their needs, and seek to meet those needs. They will work with the congregation to facilitate participation in missions conferences and visits by missionaries or missions speakers.

Sec. 5

The missions committee will recommend an annual missions budget and any changes in missionary commitments to the deacons.

D - CHURCH CLERK**Sec. 1**

The church clerk will be appointed annually by the elders and deacons and will keep an accurate record of the proceedings of the church, baptisms and church membership. He or she will make a full report to the church at the annual business meeting and at such times as the church may require.

E - TREASURER**Sec. 1**

The treasurer will be appointed annually by the elders and deacons, and is responsible for the financial record keeping of the church. He or she will oversee the financial secretary and counters as they carry out their duties, and be authorized to write checks as outlined by the financial policies of the church.

Sec. 2

A financial secretary will carry out the day-to-day financial responsibilities. He or she will write checks as authorized, keep a record of all transactions, submit a monthly report to the treasurer and deacons, and record giving of the people for annual statements.

Sec. 3

The treasurer will make full reports to the church at quarterly and annual business meetings and at such other times as the church may require.

Article VIII - MEETINGS AND COMMITTEES

Sec. 1

The church year will run from January through December. An annual business meeting will be held on the third Wednesday of January, and quarterly business meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of April, July, and October. An announcement of all business meetings must be made on the two Sundays prior to those meetings.

Sec. 2

A special business meeting of the church may be called by the elders or deacons as any need arises, and an announcement must be made on the two Sundays prior to that meeting.

Sec. 3

Communion services will be held on the first Sunday of every month unless changed by the elders and deacons.

Sec. 4

The elders and deacons will establish any other committees, as needed.

Sec. 5

A budget subcommittee will meet before the annual business meeting. On the basis of information received from the deacons, missions committee, and ministry leaders, this subcommittee will recommend an annual budget to the deacons.

Sec. 6

A nominating committee responsible for nominating officers and missions committee members will consist of the elders, two deacons chosen by the deacons, and two members elected by the congregation. To determine the two elected members, the congregation will be asked to submit names to the elders and deacons one month prior to the October quarterly business meeting. The names of all qualified persons will be placed on a ballot for election at the October meeting. The nominating committee will act for a period of one year.

Article IX - BYLAWS

Sec. 1

The financial policy of the church is that all income will come from voluntary contributions. No socials, suppers, entertainments, or other fundraising events will be conducted for the purpose of raising money.

Sec. 2

All annual church business meetings will begin with the reading of Scripture and prayer.

Sec. 3

A reliable translation of the Bible will be used in all the services and teaching ministries of the church.

Sec. 4

The church will conduct its business in a manner in which the majority rules. The minority has a right to differing opinions in all matters and the right to appeal in a godly manner, but they must not engage in any activity which might disturb the unity of the church.

Sec. 5

A majority vote by ballot of all qualified members who choose to vote is required to elect missions committee members, officers (other than pastors) and enact business. Approval for the acceptance of absentee ballots must be given by the elders and deacons prior to each specified business meeting.

Sec. 6

All members must be eighteen years of age or older to vote.

Sec. 7

All articles and bylaws in this document replace any in previous documents.

These articles and bylaws may be amended or changed at any regular business meeting of the church by two-thirds majority of qualified members who choose to vote. Written notice of any proposed changes must be given two Sundays prior to the date of the business meeting.