

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
Of the
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SPRINGFIELD, GEORGIA

August 16, 2009
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John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

PREAMBLE

For the more certain preservation and security of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with New Testament teaching, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties of each member and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish this constitution.

I. NAME

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Springfield, Georgia and shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Georgia, as a religious non-profit institution.

II. ARTICLES OF FAITH

Section 1. The Church Covenant

Having been led to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior by the Spirit of God,
(John 3:16; Romans 3:21-26; Romans 10:9; Romans 8:1-4; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 John 1:9)

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,
(Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4)

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.

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 comfort;
(Proverbs 1:7; 1 Corinthians 13; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Philippians 1:9-10; Colossians 3:15; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 4:7-21)

To promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;
(Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:36-38; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Colossians 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 10:25)

To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the needs of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.
(Nehemiah 10:39; Isaiah 61; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 14:12-14; Acts 4:32-35; James 4:17)

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our family and acquaintances;
(Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalm 46:10; Psalm 119:9-11,105; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 5:11-16; Matthew 6:5-13)

To walk cautiously in the world; to be fair in our dealing, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our behavior, so that our actions will not cause another to stumble.
(Romans 14:13-23; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33; Ephesians 6:10-18; James 5:12; 1 John 2:9-10)

To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive wrath;
(Proverbs 10:19; Proverbs 16:28; Proverbs 21:23; Matthew 15:17-20; Ephesians 5:29-32; James 1:26; James 3:1-12)

To treat our bodies with respect, avoiding materials or excess which may harm our physical or spiritual health; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.
(Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:19-21, 31-35; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Ephesians 5:3-4, 18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love;
(1 John 3:11-24; Romans 12:9-21; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:15)

To remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech;

(Acts 1:14; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 1 Timothy 2:1; James 5:13-16)

To be slow to anger, but always ready for reconciliation, mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

(Numbers 14:17-18; Proverbs 29:11; Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:15-20; Colossians 3:12-15; James 1:19-22)

We moreover engage that when we leave this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Section 2. The Baptist Faith and Message:

1. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

2. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30;

2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

3. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

4. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

5. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

6. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

7. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

8. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

9. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

10. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

11. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

12. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

13. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

14. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

15. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

16. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

17. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

18. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. The word "marriage" means only the legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word "spouse" refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife. [Revised June 23, 2013] It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

BY-LAWS

Article 1. Membership

Section 1. Qualifications:

The membership of this church shall consist of those persons who:

- A. Publicly confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and
- B. After due examination by the church as to their Christian experience; and if coming from another church of like faith, as to their letter of dismission and recommendation, or satisfactory substitute thereof, and
- C. Have been accepted by a majority vote of those present and voting in a regular church conference, or a called church conference, and
- D. Have been baptized by immersion, and
- E. Enter into covenant relationship as expressed in this Constitution and By-Laws.

These rules may be suspended by unanimous consent of those members present and voting at a church conference.

Section 2. Duties:

Members are to be faithful in all duties essential to the Christian life; to regularly attend the services of the church; to give regularly for its support and cause; to share in its organized work; and abide by this covenant relationship.

Section 3. Rights:

Members meeting the qualifications of Section 1 and performing the duties of Section 2 are considered to be in good and regular standing, and may act and vote in the transactions of the church.

Section 4. Quorum:

A quorum shall consist of those members present at a regular church conference; and a quorum for a called church conference shall consist of those members present, providing that the time, date and purpose of the called church conference was announced in the morning worship service the Sunday prior to the called church conference. Those present and voting at any regular church conference, and any properly called conference shall constitute a quorum, and a majority of those voting shall be required to adopt a motion, except as herein else provided.

Section 5. Termination:

- A. Any member in good and regular standing who desires a letter of dismission and recommendation to any other Baptist church of like faith is entitled to receive said letter upon the request of the church with which said member affiliates; and after approval in a church conference a letter of dismission and recommendation shall be sent to the requesting church by the church clerk. Letters shall not be given to individuals, but shall be mailed to requesting churches.
- B. Any request for a letter of dismission and recommendation from a church not of like faith, shall, upon a vote of approval by the church, result in the church clerk removing said member's name from the church roll, and notifying the requesting church thereof.
- C. A member may be released from church membership, if the church deems such release necessary, by a vote of at least seventy-five percent of those present and voting at a church conference, and the church clerk shall be instructed to remove said member's name from the church roll and to notify said member of the action taken by the church.
- D. Upon confirmation of a member uniting with any other church which does not request a letter of

dismissal and recommendation, the church clerk, after approval by the church, shall remove said member's name from the church roll, and shall notify said member of the action taken by the church.

- E. Upon confirmation of the death of a member, the church clerk shall remove said member's name from the church roll.

Section 6. Resident Church Members:

Resident church members shall consist of those members residing within Effingham County, Georgia and surrounding counties.

Article 2. Church Officers

Section 1. Pastors:

The pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff to perform their tasks.

The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such he works with the deacons, church ministry leaders, and church staff to:

1. lead the church in the achievement of its mission
2. proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers, and
3. care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

The pastor's duties shall be stated in a job description provided by the Personnel Committee, consistent with this Constitution, and approved by the church. A contract, provided by the Personnel Committee and approved by the church, shall state the terms and conditions of employment, and shall be signed by the pastor and the chairman of the Personnel Committee.

The pastor shall meet the qualifications as stated in 1Timothy 3:2-7.

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. A Pastor Search Committee (pulpit committee) consisting of seven members shall be nominated by the church Nominating Committee and elected by the church, providing however that additional nominations may be made by the church members. The Pastor Search Committee shall seek out a suitable pastor, and the committee's recommendation shall constitute a nomination. The election of a pastor shall take place at a called Church Conference (Business Meeting) on the Lord's Day, with at least one week's public notice being given. The Pastor Search Committee, with the approval of the Personnel Committee, shall bring for the consideration of the church only one man at a time. Election shall be by written ballot, and an affirmative vote of at least eighty-five (85) percent of those present and voting being necessary to extend a call.

The pastor shall meet with the Personnel Committee at least once a year, or as often as necessary, for a job performance evaluation and/or to discuss and resolve any matters that may be adversely affecting the church program. The first meeting shall be held on or before the date of the pastor's first anniversary and shall include positives as well as negatives. Should, at any time, an extreme situation concerning the pastor occur, which is detrimental to the church, and cannot be resolved, the Personnel Committee may recommend to the church that the pastor be dismissed from his office. The church shall consider such a recommendation at a called church conference on the Lord's Day with at least one week's public notice being given; a majority vote of those present and voting being necessary for the adoption of the recommendation. The pastor may resign or the church may request his resignation. This procedure is standing for all church ministerial staff.

Section 2. Deacons:

There shall be one active deacon for every fifteen resident church families.

A. Deacon Nominations

Nominations for deacons shall be made by the church at the regular July church conference. Each member of the church shall, by written ballot, nominate one person for each vacancy to be filled. Those church members unable to attend the conference may submit their nominees in writing to the church clerk or church secretary prior to the conference.

All nominees for deacon must be members in good and regular standing and active participants in church activities and organizations. All nominees must have been a Christian for at least four years, and a member of the First Baptist Church of Springfield for at least two years, and must be at least twenty-one years of age. Nominees must be qualified according to the scriptures; 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

B. Deacon Elections

The list of nominees from the September church conference shall be submitted to the pastor and active deacons who shall, after prayer and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, carefully consider the scriptural qualifications, the willingness to serve, the extent of church participation, the previously expressed wishes of the church members in the nominating process, and all other important matters which may relate to the nominees. After deliberation, the deacons shall vote by secret ballot for one nominee for each vacancy. This final list of nominations is to be brought to the October church conference by the Chairman of the Deacons for a church vote. It is at this conference that new deacons will be elected. The deacons elected at the October conference will begin their term of service on January 1 of the coming year. Any deacon so elected who has not previously been ordained shall be ordained by the church before January.

C. Deacon Terms of Service

Deacons shall take office January 1st of each year. The deacons shall serve on a rotation basis. Each year the term of office of one-third of the number (or as near as possible) of deacons shall expire. After serving a term of three years a deacon shall be eligible for re-election only after a lapse of one year. In case of a vacancy among the active deacons due to death, incapacity to serve, or removal, the active deacons shall recommend to the church a nominee from the inactive deacons to fill the unexpired term.

D. Duties of Deacons:

In accordance with the meaning of work and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. The task of the deacons is to serve with the pastor and staff in performing pastoral ministries tasks; proclaim the Gospel to believers and unbelievers; care for church members and other persons in the community; lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, ministry and it's application; and lead the church in performing it's tasks.

1. They are to be zealous to guard the unity of the spirit of the church in the bonds of peace.
2. With the pastor they are to consider and formulate plans for the progress of the church in all things pertaining to the saving of souls, the development of Christians, and the extension and growth of the Kingdom of God.
3. By proper organization among themselves, they are to maintain inspiring oversight over all the membership of the church. They are to seek to know the moral, spiritual, and physical needs of all the membership; and to serve the whole church in relieving, encouraging and developing all who are in need.
4. In counsel with the pastor, and by such methods as the Holy Spirit may direct in accordance with New Testament teachings, they are to have oversight of the discipline of the church as they are always to be guided by Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. All problems of this nature are to be brought to the attention of the deacons.

5. Deacons are to aid in the observance of the Lord's Supper when called on by the pastor.

E. Methods of Procedure for Deacon Ministry:

1. Deacons are to meet regularly at least once a month, and shall form their own plans for each meeting.
2. They shall apportion the membership among themselves, or make plans whereby the entire membership of the church shall have the benefit of the oversight of the deacons in Christian pastoral care.
3. Each deacon shall freely confer with the pastor about all matters and cases of discipline which in his judgment would be most wisely handled in private.
4. The chairman and other officers of the deacons shall be elected annually by the active deacons.
5. Deacons unable to attend regular meetings are to notify the chairman in advance, either by word or written notice. Promptness in attending deacon's meetings shall be considered as important as the faithfulness of the pastor in preaching at the scheduled times. Any deacon missing three meetings a year without proper excuse in advance of the meetings shall be dismissed from his position as active deacon and, shall be replaced by the procedure for filling vacancies.

Section 3. Moderators:

The moderator shall be the pastor. In his absence another ministerial staff person or the chairman of the deacons shall preside, or in the absence of all afore mentioned, the church clerk shall call the meeting to order and a moderator pro-tem shall be selected. The pastor shall not serve as moderator when matters concerning the pastor personally are being discussed.

Section 4. Church Clerk:

The clerk shall keep in a suitable book a record of all actions of the church in conference for permanent reference. They shall keep a record of the names of members with dates of admission, dismissal, death and baptism. They shall issue letters of dismission voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give notice of all meetings where such notice is needed as indicated in these By-Laws. They shall be elected annually. The clerk shall serve as Secretary of the Corporations, and as member of the Board of Directors.

Section 5. Treasurer:

The church shall elect annually a treasurer, and their duties shall be given them by the pastor and deacons. The treasurer shall serve as Treasurer of the Corporation and as a member of the Board of Directors.

Section 6. Trustees:

The church shall annually elect seven members, nominated by the church Nominating Committee, to serve as trustees. The trustees shall buy, hold, and sell property as directed by the church members in conference. The trustees shall serve as Directors of the Corporation, with the chairman of the trustees serving as President of the Corporation, and the vice-chairman serving as Vice-President of the Corporation.

Trustees shall take office September 1st of each year. The trustees shall serve on a rotation basis. After serving a term of five years a trustee shall be eligible for re-election only after a lapse of one year. In case of a vacancy among the active trustees due to death, incapacity to serve, or removal, the active trustees shall recommend to the church a nominee from the inactive trustees to fill the unexpired term.

Section 7. Music Director:

The church shall elect annually, as nominated by the Nominating Committee, a music director and their responsibilities shall be given by the pastor and the worship committee.

Section 8. Chairman of the ushers:

The chairman of ushers shall, on approval of the church, associate with himself a sufficient number of aides to care for the seating and comfort of the congregation, the greeting and introduction of visitors, and prevention of interruptions and distractions, and similar needed service.

Section 9. Officers of church organizations:

All organizations of the church shall be under church control, and the heads of each being elected annually, and reporting regularly to the church. It is understood that the pastor is ex-officio head of all organizations, and his leadership is recognized in them all.

- A. Woman’s Missionary Union Officers shall be elected by the Woman’s Missionary Union and a list furnished to the church for approval.
- B. Brotherhood Officers shall be elected annually by the Brotherhood and a list furnished to the church for approval.
- C. All other officers shall be nominated by the church Nomination Committee for election by the church, except as herein provided.
- D. Staff members and employees: Additional staff members and employees shall be recommended by a Search Committee to the pastor and Personnel Committee, who, after approval, shall recommend the prospective employee to the church for final approval. All staff members and employees shall be under the direction of the pastor, aided by the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee shall consist of five members: three of which will be active deacons, and two of which will be active church members which may or may not include non-active deacons. The Personnel Committee shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Deacons and approved by the Deacon body.

ARTICLE 3. COMMITTEES

The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees, and his counsel is to be sought by all. All committees, except as herein provided, shall be nominated by the church Nominating Committee and approved by the church. All committee members and chairpersons will begin their term of service on September 1 each year.

Members of all Administrative Committees of the church will serve on a rotation basis with terms of service listed as follows:

Constitution and By-Laws Committee	Term of Service = 3 years
Debt Retirement Committee	Term of Service = 3 years
Finance Committee	Term of Service = 4 years
Nominating Committee	Term of Service = 3 years
Personnel Committee	Term of Service = 3 years
Trustees	Term of Service = 5 years

Administrative Committee members and chairpersons shall serve on a rotation basis. After serving according to the term length defined, Administrative Committee members shall be eligible for re-election only after a lapse of one year. In case of a vacancy among the active members of an Administrative Committee due to death, incapacity to serve, or removal, the active members of the relating committee shall recommend to the church a nominee from the inactive members of the relating committee to fill the unexpired term.

ARTICLE 4. CHURCH COUNCIL

The church council shall consist of staff members and the heads of all church organizations. The council will plan and outline the work of the church and schedule of activities, and submit them to the church for approval. The council will meet as often as the pastor deems necessary.

ARTICLE 5. CHURCH FINANCE

Section 1:

The Finance Program of the church shall be under the direction of the Finance Committee for administration of all funds.

Section 2:

Tithing by the members shall be the means of financing the work of the church but the Finance Committee shall propose a specific "financial policy" to be adopted by the church, and shall submit a budget each year for approval by the church.

Section 3:

The church shall have a "unified budget" except for items and special offerings recommended by the Finance committee and approved by the church. This does not exclude a person from designating an offering to an already approved designated item as he is lead by the Holy Spirit.

Section 4:

Finance Committee members shall take office September 1st of each year. The Finance Committee members shall serve on a rotation basis. After serving a term of four years, a Finance Committee member shall be eligible for re-election only after a lapse of one year. In case of a vacancy among the active Finance Committee members due to death, incapacity to serve, or removal, the active Finance Committee members shall recommend to the church a nominee from the inactive members of the Finance Committee to fill the unexpired term.

ARTICLE 6. MEETINGS

Section 1:

Worship – Public services shall be held at designated times on the Lord's Day, and on a regular evening or evenings during the week. The Lord's Supper shall be observed on the first Sunday in each quarter. Special evangelistic services shall be held on approved dates during the year.

Section 2:

Church Conference (Business Meetings):

- A. A regular quarterly business meeting will be held on the 3rd Sunday evening of January, April, July, and October following the evening worship service / ministry activities. The conduct of all business meetings will be according to Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition.
- B. The pastor shall call business meetings when requested by the deacons, the purpose being stated in the morning worship service on the Lord's Day preceding the fixed day of the called meeting. Business meetings may also be called upon written petition by ten members in good and regular standing and the purpose and the call shall be read by the church clerk in the morning worship service on the Lord's Day preceding the fixed date of the called meeting. No other business, other than specifically stated in the call, shall be conducted at a called meeting.
- C. The church may act on the reception or dismissal of members, adopt resolutions, and appoint delegates at any duly called business meeting.
- D. The annual report of the church Nomination Committee shall be submitted to the church conference either in July or August of each year. At such times other nominations may be offered from the floor by any church member. The officers and committees duly elected shall assume office September 1st, and shall serve until August 31st of the following year.

ARTICLE 7. AMMENDMENTS

This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting at any conference, provided the proposed change has been printed and distributed among the members one month prior to the conference. The proposed change shall be announced on the Lord's Day prior to the conference.

ARTICLE 8

This Constitution and By-Laws is hereby adopted by the First Baptist Church of Springfield, Georgia on August 16, 2009, and previous Constitutions and By-Laws are hereby repealed.

Revision Log

2007: Section 2, Subsection 1 "The Church Covenant" Amended

August 16th, 2009: Numerous amendments were made in the following sections: Above The Preamble. In the By-Laws: Article 1, Section 6, Article 2, Sections 1-6,9; Article 3, Article 5, Section 2-4, Article 6, Section 2.

June 23rd, 2013: Constitution, Section 2, Subsection 18 “The Family” Amended.

April 19th, 2015: By-Laws, Article 6, Section 2 “Church Conference”, Item A Amended.

July 19th, 2015: By-Laws, Article 2, Section 2 “Deacons”, Item A Amended.