

CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH *
INCORPORATED, CUBA, NY

PREAMBLE

We the Members of the First Baptist Church, Incorporated, Cuba, NY, in order to better implement our Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; form a more perfect church organization; provide a better Church Home; promote Soul Winning, Bible reading and study; insure Christian training for the young, guidance for the adult and care for the aged; and secure the blessings of religious freedom for all, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION for the First Baptist Church of Cuba, New York.

COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, 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 angels, 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; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to give it a sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin; 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.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk responsibly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all malicious gossip, back-biting and excessive anger; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in Christian love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other 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.

* Proposed changes are underlined.

ARTICLE I

The official name of this church is FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, INCORPORATED, OF CUBA, NEW YORK.

ARTICLE II

ARTICLE OF FAITH

The purpose of this Church shall be the advancement of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. It shall seek to attain this end through the public worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel, consistent Christian living by its members, evangelism, missionary endeavor, and Christian education. This purpose shall be fulfilled through adherence to the distinctive principles for which Baptists have stood.

1. **THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST.** He alone is the ultimate authority in all matters of life and faith for the believer.
2. **THE SUPREMACY OF THE SCRIPTURES.** The Bible, which can be read and understood by all believers, is supreme over all creeds.
3. **THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS.** It is the right of every person to approach God directly through Christ.
4. **BELIEVERS' BAPTISM.** Baptism is only for believers and the mode is immersion, as taught in the New Testament.
5. **REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.** Church membership is intended for baptized believers.
6. **SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.** The state should protect all religious groups, but favor none.
7. **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.** Every person is responsible only to God for his/her religious belief and practices; every person therefore should have the right to worship as his/her own convictions and conscience dictate.
8. **THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH.** Each local church is self-governing, choosing its own pastor and managing its own affairs.
9. **THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE WORLD.** Baptists take seriously the Great Commission of Christ, therefore, they endeavor to win people to Christ at home and abroad.

ARTICLE III

DENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION

This church shall cooperate with other Baptists in the Allegany-Cattaraugus Baptist Association, the American Baptist Churches of New York State, the American Baptist Churches of the U.S.A., the Cuba Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – Definitions:

- A. **Definition of a member in good standing:** One who is faithful in living out the spirit of the church covenant – regularly attending church services and activities; contributing to this church and its wider mission; serving according to one’s talents and abilities.
- B. **Definition of an inactive member:** One who has manifested no visible interest in the life of the church for a period of one year, and has failed to meet the obligation and responsibility of the church covenant.

Section 2 - Qualifications: Any person professing faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, who is in accord with the faith and practices held by this church, and who agrees to follow the church covenant, may be admitted to membership.

Section 3 - Reception of members: Persons may be received into membership by any one of four methods, as may be appropriate, upon recommendation of the Pastor, the Diaconate and the vote of the church.

- A. **By Baptism:** Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of a change of heart and a firm commitment to follow the example set by Christ, may be received into this church upon baptism by immersion.
- B. **By Letter:** By letter of transfer or recommendation from another church of like faith and order.
- C. **By Christian Experience:** Any believer, having been previously baptized, may be received upon a satisfactory statement of Christian faith and experience.
- D. **By Exception:** Persons physically or mentally unable to be immersed may be received by verbal confession of faith before the congregation. The Diaconate may wish to consider an alternate mode of baptism in such an instance.

Section 4 – Dismission of Members: Membership in this church may be terminated upon recommendation of the Pastor and the Diaconate, and by vote of the church in any of the following ways:

- A. **By Letter:** Members in good standing may, upon application, be dismissed to unite with some other church designated in the application. All Church letters shall be sent by the Clerk or Pastor of this church to the Pastor or Clerk of the church designated. A certificate of membership shall be granted for members whose names are on the inactive list.
- B. **By Request:** If a member wishes to withdraw from the church, his/her name, upon recommendation to the church by the Diaconate, shall be removed.
- C. **By Removal:** Upon recommendation of the Diaconate, the church may order the names of members dropped from the church roll for any of the following reasons:
 1. Name having been upon the Inactive membership list for two years.
 2. For unchristian conduct.

whereupon they shall cease to be members of the church and corporation.

Section 5 – Discipline of Members: When a member has been inactive for a period of one year, without manifesting any interest there-in by attending services, communicating with the church, or contributing to its support, the church may, upon recommendation of the Diaconate, transfer the name to the “Inactive Membership List”. Consideration for such action shall only be made after a reasonable number of calls have been made to encourage and assist in a renewal of the covenant relationship. This procedure may be excused by the Pastor and the Diaconate in case of sickness or other reasonable cause.

- A. **Inactive Membership List:** Persons whose names are on the Inactive Membership List shall not be counted or reported as members; may not have part in church business meetings; and may not hold office.
- B. **Restoration:** Any person whose name has been placed on the “Inactive Membership List”, who renews his/her active walk with the church and the fulfillment of his/her covenant obligations, may be restored to active membership by vote of the Diaconate without further action of the church. Any person who has been dismissed from membership in this church may, upon evidence of his/her repentance and reformation, and on recommendation of the Diaconate, be restored to membership by vote of the church.

C. Non-resident Members:

1. Members moving from this community are requested to furnish the church office with their new address as soon as possible.
2. It is the sincere desire of this church that these members unite with a new congregation without delay – confident that the love and prayers from this congregation are with them.

ARTICLE V

OFFICERS

Section 1 – Officers needed: The elected officers of this church shall be a Pastor, and Boards consisting of both men and women: **The Diaconate** consisting of a minimum of twelve members; **Trustees** consisting of a minimum of nine persons; **Christian Education** consisting of a minimum of six persons; Moderator; Clerk, Financial Secretary; Current Expense Treasurer; Benevolence Treasurer; Head Usher; a Church School Staff, consisting of a Superintendent, Secretary-Treasurer; two representatives to the Cuba Council of Churches; three representatives to the Music Committee; a Nominating Committee consisting of three members; and any other officers deemed necessary by the Advisory Council and the Church.

Section 2 – Elections:

- A. The Nominating Committee shall present the slate for election at the Annual Meeting of the church, as provided for in Article VIII, Section I “Elections”.
- B. All officers, with the exception of the Pastor, shall be elected by written ballot at the Annual Meeting of the church. If only one name is presented for each office, and, after ample opportunity is given at the time of the Annual Meeting for others to be nominated, the Moderator may entertain a motion that the slate be accepted as a whole, and one vote cast.
- C. The following officers shall be elected for three year terms: Diaconate; Trustees; Board of Christian Education; Music Committee; Nominating Committee and Moderator. Cuba Council of Churches Delegates’ terms are for 2 years. All other officers are elected for one year terms, or until their successors are elected.
- D. Officers serving in one-year terms are eligible for re-election. Officers elected for a three year term shall not be eligible for re-election to the same office until the lapse of one year.

- E. Election of a replacement for an incomplete term may take place other than at the Annual Meeting, complying with rules contained in Section 4 and 5 of this Article V.

Section 3 – Taking Office and Organizing:

- A. The terms of all elected officers shall begin on the day following the Annual Meeting of the Church.
- B. Each Board and Standing Committee elected by the church shall organize, naming at least a chairperson and a secretary to serve for the current Fiscal Year. This organizational meeting shall be called by the retiring chairperson and shall be held within four weeks after the Annual Meeting of the church. A stated time for regular meetings shall be established by each Board and Committee.
- C. All officers shall be informed as to the duties and obligations pertaining to their respective offices. This is done by members of the Nominating Committee before the elections, and by the Pastor and the Chairperson of the various Boards and Committees following election.

Section 4 – Inactive Officers:

- A. Any elected officer, who, without good reason, fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Board or Committee to which he has been elected shall be contacted as to his/her intentions. To safeguard uniformity, the following steps shall be taken:
1. The secretary of each Board and Committee shall keep an accurate record of membership attendance at its meetings.
 2. The secretary shall call to the attention of the Board or Committee any unexplained absenteeism which totals three consecutive meetings.
 3. It shall be made known to each board member, upon appointment, that three consecutive unexplained absences will result in automatic dismissal of said board member and the office declared vacant.
 4. At the time the office is declared vacant, the chairperson or a designated officer from the Board or Committee shall personally or through the Church Clerk, inform the Church in a Congregational Meeting regarding the office vacancy and shall present the name of a successor, which report of vacancy and name shall be voted upon by the Church in usual procedure for election.

Section 5 – Resignation (Incomplete Terms):

- A. Resignations of officers shall be in writing to the interested Board or Committee, which shall act upon its acceptance. It then shall be submitted to the church in a Congregational Meeting for church approval, said submission to be made either by a representative from the Board or Committee, or by the Church Clerk.
- B. An incompleted term of an officer on all boards may be filled by the presentation of a name by the Board, and name to be voted upon by the church in Congregational Meeting. The Diaconate shall handle the resignation of Moderator, Clerk, Head Usher, members to Council of Churches, Music Committee, and Nomination Committee. Trustees shall handle the resignations of the Financial Secretary, Current Expense Treasurer and Benevolence Treasurer. Board of Education shall handle Church School Officers.

ARTICLE VI

QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1 – Diaconate:

- A. The church shall elect a minimum of 6 men and 6 women for a term of three years (4 elected each year). All of which shall be members of the church in good standing. The Pastor and Benevolence Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of this Board.
- B. The secretary of this Board shall keep an accurate record of membership attendance at each meeting, and record complete minutes.
- C. The Diaconate shall, with the pastor, have general oversight of the Church's spiritual welfare, including the following responsibilities:
 - 1. Consideration of all matters pertaining to membership and new members.
 - 2. Assisting the Pastor in visiting the sick and caring for the needy.
 - 3. Nurturing the Church's fellowship and prayer life.
 - 4. Administering and preparing the Ordinance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - 5. Promoting a program of evangelism and social concern
 - 6. Cooperating with the Pastor in arranging pulpit supplies.
 - 7. Reviewing annually the Church rolls.
 - 8. Administering the Diaconate Fellowship Fund.

- D. In order to accomplish the above duties, the Diaconate shall organize into committees as needed – such as Program, Worship, Fellowship and Evangelism. Detailed duties of such committees shall be on file with the Board.

Section 2 – Board of Trustees:

- A. The Church shall elect a minimum of 9 members for a term of three years. (Three elected each year). At least six of which shall be members of the church in good standing. The Pastor and Current Expense Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of this board.
- B. The secretary of this Board shall keep an accurate record of membership attendance at each meeting, and record complete minutes.
- C. The Board shall hold in trust all property belonging to the church and the corporation, and shall take all necessary measures for its protection, management, and upkeep. It shall designate the bank where the funds of the church shall be deposited. It shall supervise the disbursement of the current expense budget and shall secure the funds required to finance the budget adopted by the church. To accomplish this, a budget committee shall present a proposed budget to the church prior to the pledge canvas and after pledges are made, the Board shall adjust the budget and recommend the final adoption at the Annual Budget Vote (Early December – after worship).
- D. The Trustees will arrange for the cleaning of the church building.
- E. After close consultation with the Pastor, the Board shall approve the employment of a church secretary, at such salary as is authorized by the church. The job analysis and hourly schedule shall be arranged between Pastor and secretary, with the Board setting the wage scale, as authorized by the church.
- F. This Board shall uphold the New York State laws governing Baptist Churches and shall be familiar with all laws concerning the legal aspects of the church. When necessary, the Board shall consult an attorney on legal advice.
- G. In order to accomplish the above duties, the Board shall be organized into standing committees: Finance (including budgets and investments); Every Member Canvas; and Building (including improvements and new equipment). Detailed duties of these committees shall be on file with the Board.

Section 3 – Board of Education:

- A. The church shall elect a minimum of 6 members to this Board for a term of three years (2 elected each year). At least four members of the Board shall be members of the Church in good standing. The Pastor and the Church School Superintendent shall be ex-officio members of this Board.
- B. The secretary of this Board shall keep an accurate record of membership attendance at each meeting and record complete minutes.
- C. After the election of a chairperson, the Board shall unify, supervise and promote all educational interests of the Church, including the Sunday Church School, Vacation Church School, Baptist Youth Fellowship and all other groups and classes operating in the field of Christian Education. It shall assist the Church School Superintendent in selecting teachers for the Church School and aid the youth in selecting adult advisors. It shall promote training sessions and promote any program that will benefit Christian Education. The Board shall recommend to the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees appropriate and adequate budget figures for the Christian Education work of the church.
- D. The focus of the board will be Children's Work, Youth Work and Leadership Education.

Section 4 – An Advisory Council:

- A. The Moderator, the three Board Chairmen and Organizational Presidents shall comprise (a Pastoral Relations Committee) an Advisory Council.
- B. To coordinate the work of the various Boards and Committees and to implement the combined purpose of the church, the Pastor, the Moderator or a Board Chairperson may call a meeting of the Advisory Council.
- C. The Pastor or Moderator shall serve as chairperson and the Church Clerk as secretary. (All Board Chairpersons and Organizational Presidents shall serve on the Council.)
- D. Whenever items of concern to more than one Board or Committee arise, whenever items of church-wide importance warrant discussion by a representative group, and so that each Board or Organization may know what the others are doing, this Council shall meet at least once a year.

Section 5 – Moderator:

- A. The Moderator shall preside at all business meetings of the Church, having first consulted with the Pastor and Board Chairperson on the agenda. He/she shall be a member of the Church in good standing.

Section 6 – Church Clerk:

- A. The Clerk, a church member in good standing, shall keep accurate minutes of the business proceedings of the Church, including the reception and dismissal of members; keep a complete roll of the members of the Church and their addresses; issue letters of dismissal and certifications of Christian standing as authorized by the Church; preserve and properly file all letters, reports and other documents pertaining to this office; assist in preparing all necessary reports; and shall be the Secretary to the Advisory Council. The clerk shall deliver immediately to the successor all books, files, records, and other documents.

Section 7 – Current Expense Treasurer:

- A. A church member in good standing shall be the recorder of all monies contributed for the general expense of the Church. All disbursements shall be authorized by the Church, through the annual budget, and payment of all bills shall be by check, after having been approved by the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer shall present to the Board at its Annual Business Meeting, an itemized report of receipts and disbursements, showing the actual financial condition of the Church. In cooperation with the Church Secretary, the Treasurer shall present the books to be audited at the close of the fiscal year, or more often if so requested by the Church or Trustees and deliver immediately to the successor all books and records pertaining to the office.

Section 8 – Church Secretary:

- A. A church member in good standing, the Financial Secretary shall receive all monies and deposit such in the authorized bank and the Church Secretary shall credit pledges and other contributions to the proper accounts. The Financial Secretary, in cooperation with the Current Expense Treasurer, shall prepare a monthly report for the Trustees and an annual report for the church.
- B. Notices shall be sent by Church Secretary annually to all givers of record noting their contributions to date. This will be done in cooperation with all church treasurers and upon approval by the Board of Trustees.

Section 9 – Benevolent Treasurer:

- A. A church member in good standing, the Benevolent Treasurer shall be the recorder of all monies contributed for missionary and other benevolent purposes. All disbursements

shall be authorized by the Church through the annual budget by check. The Treasurer shall present, in writing, to the Diaconate at its monthly meetings and to the Church at its Annual Business Meetings, an itemized statement of receipts and disbursements. The Treasurer (shall present the books to be audited at the close of the fiscal year, or more often if so requested by the church and) shall deliver immediately to the successor all books and records pertaining to the office.

Section 10 – Church School Officers:

- A. The Church School Staff as listed in Article V, Section 1, shall be responsible for the planning, promoting and administering of the Church School. They shall work closely with the Board of Christian Education. The General Superintendent of the Church School shall preside at all meetings of the Officers and Teachers and shall be an ex-officio member of the Board.

Section 11 – Council of Churches:

- A. In addition to the Pastor two delegates shall be elected - one each year for two year terms - to represent the Church at the monthly meetings of the Cuba Council of Churches. These representatives shall keep the Church informed about the work of the Council, through the Diaconate, and shall represent the best interests of the Church at the Council meetings.

ARTICLE VII

CALLING A PASTOR

Section 1

- A. When it is necessary to call a Pastor, the Church shall select a representative Pulpit Committee of eight (8) members from the following: Diaconate; Board of Trustees; Board of Christian Education; Youth Fellowship; Men’s Fellowship; Ladies Society; Church School and Clerk. It shall be the duty of this Committee to take necessary steps to secure a Pastor. The committee shall investigate the merits of every person under consideration in regard to – personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability, in determining fitness for said pastorate. The Candidate shall be an ordained Baptist Minister upholding and abiding by “The Code of Ethics of American Baptist Ministers”. When a suitable person is found, the committee shall recommend said candidate to the Church for consideration.

Section 2

- A. The call of a Pastor shall come before the Church at a regularly called business meeting, and its purpose having been read from the pulpit on two successive Sundays. A vote of

three-quarters (3/4) of the members present and qualified to vote shall be necessary to extend a call.

- B. Only one candidate shall be presented to the Church at one time. The vote shall be by written ballot.

Section 3

- A. The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period of time; the salary shall be fixed at the time of the call, and may be changed by vote of the Church at any regular business meeting. The salary shall be paid in bi-weekly installments. The Pastor shall be entitled to an annual vacation of one (1) month with full salary.

Section 4- Termination of Pastorate:

- A. The term of office may be ended upon thirty (30) days notification on the part of the Pastor or the Church. Termination of the office shall be voted at a regularly called business meeting, notice of such meeting and its purpose, having been read from the pulpit on two successive Sundays. A vote of three-quarters (3/4) of the members present and qualified to vote, shall make valid termination of said office.

ARTICLE VIII

ELECTIONS

Section 1 –Time:

The Annual Election of officers shall be held the last Sunday in January.

Section 2 - Quorum:

At least 25 qualified voters shall constitute a quorum. A majority of members voting, at any regular or special meeting, shall be sufficient to decide any question presented, unless otherwise provided by this constitution.

Section 3 – Qualification of Voters:

All matters pertaining to the purchase, sale or mortgaging of property shall be voted on only by members in good standing, and who are of legal age. On all other matters, members of church or congregation in good standing and fifteen years of age, or older, are entitled to vote.

Section 4- Procedure:

At least one week before the election, the Nominating Committee shall present to the Church the names of one person for each office to be filled. Upon presentation of said report, it shall be the privilege of any members present, qualified to vote, to place in nomination the name of any eligible person not nominated for any other office. All elections shall be by acclamation unless more than one name is submitted for election to any one office, then the election shall be by written ballot. No voting by proxy shall be allowed.

ARTICLE IX

STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 1 – Committees:

The following named committees, and any others that may be deemed necessary by Church, shall constitute the standing Committees: Nominating, Ushering, Auditing, Music and Memorial.

Section 2 – Duties of Committees:

- A. The Nominating Committee shall prepare a list of names from the membership of the church of those qualified to fill the various offices. It shall interview each nominee proposed and ascertain his or her willingness to serve in case of election. The Committee shall nominate one person for each office to be filled, and report the names to the Church at least one week before the election is to be held. The Committee shall have prepared ballots for use at the election Chaired by the Moderator, the committee shall consist of elected members-at-large, plus representatives from all boards and organizations.
- B. The Ushering Committee shall be responsible for the comfort and safety of the congregation during worship services. It shall also be responsible for the proper collection of regular Sunday Offerings.
- C. The Auditing Committee shall audit all financial records of the Church at least once each year, and shall make a report in writing to the church, not later than thirty days after the annual meeting.
- D. The Music Committee shall cooperate with the Pastor in the selection of an organist and a Choir Director, and arranging for the musical part of the Church Services. It shall incur expense only as authorized by the Church through its annual budget.
- E. The Memorial Committee shall:
 - 1) Keep an up-to-date listing of suggested memorials so that it will be available to any individual or group concerned.
 - 2) Work with families and individuals in selecting appropriate memorials.

- 3) Keep an annual record of memorials.
- 4) Work with the Pastor in recognizing and dedicating the memorials.
- 5) Meet as needed to fulfill the above. (Meetings chaired by the Chairperson or the Pastor).
- 6) All Memorial Committee monies shall be received and dispensed at the discretion of members. The chairman and recorder shall be elected by the Church for an indefinite period, one at large member elected by the congregation for a 5 year term and three representatives from the three official boards, approved by the respective boards. The committee shall chose a chairperson and a recorder of funds received, deposited and expended. It is to be understood that this committee would not replace the power of the official boards in making decisions pertaining to their work. In all cases the board representatives on this committee would represent the board and refer back to the board questions that need their decisions.

ARTICLE X

MEETINGS

Section 1 – Devotional Meetings:

- A. The Church shall meet regularly each Lord’s Day and at such other times as the church shall decide for worship and the preaching of the Gospel. The Church School shall be in session each Lord’s Day for Christian Education – September - Early June.
- B. The Church shall meet for the observance of the Lord’s Supper upon the First Lord’s Day of each month, or at such other times as the Church may decide.

Section 2 – Business Meetings:

- A. The Annual Election of officers shall be held as stated in Article VIII, Section 1.
- B. The Annual Corporation Business Meeting shall be held on the last Sunday in January for the purpose of receiving the annual reports of individual Officers, Boards, and Committees of the Church, and its auxiliary organizations; the transaction of such other business as is proper to come before this meeting. Notice of the Annual Meeting shall be in the bulletin and newsletter and given from the pulpit on two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting. The Annual Budget vote is held in early December after worship.
- C. Special business meetings may be called at any time by the Pastor, or by the Clerk upon written request of a quorum of the members of the Church. Notice of such meeting, and

the object for which it is called, shall be given from the pulpit at least one week in advance of the date of the meeting.

ARTICLE XI

CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year of the Church shall begin on the first day of January and close on the last day of December.

ARTICLE XII

AMENDMENTS

The constitution may be amended at any regular or called business meeting of the Church by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, provided a quorum is present and voting, and that notice of such amendment, stating the proposed change, shall have been given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays.

ARTICLE XIII

RULES OF ORDER

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the business proceedings of this Church in all cases where they are not consistent with this Constitution.