

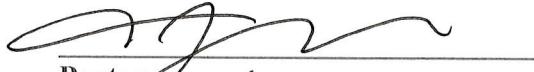
# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF TIFTON, INC.

## BYLAWS

Adopted this 9<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2023

at a church conference.

  
Gary Baxter  
Chairman of the Body of Deacons

  
Pastor  
  
Clerk

## **PREAMBLE**

The First Baptist Church of Tifton, Georgia, is a spiritual body, divinely instituted for worshipping God, making disciples, and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Believing that the New Testament provides the principles on which churches are established and governed, we adopt these Bylaws to assist in the orderly and efficient accomplishment of our mission and ministries.

## ARTICLE I

### INFORMATION, PURPOSE AND BELIEFS

**Section 1.** **Name:** The name of this Church body shall be “First Baptist Church of Tifton, Inc.”

**Section 2.** **Purpose:** First Baptist Church of Tifton is the Church built on LOVE, and our purpose is to:

- Love God and glorify Him through worship;
- Obey God through prayer, Bible study and discipleship;
- Venture into all the world as His witnesses; and,
- Equip believers for ministry and encourage Christian Fellowship.

**Section 3.** **Principal Office:** The principal office of First Baptist Church of Tifton shall be located at 404 Love Avenue, Tifton, Tift County, Georgia.

**Section 4.** **Seal:** The seal of the corporation and Church shall have inscribed thereon the words “FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF TIFTON, INC.” and the word “seal.”

**Section 5.** **Board of Directors:** The Body of active Deacons serving at any given time shall constitute and serve as the Board of Directors of this corporation. Unless otherwise provided herein, reference to the term Deacon shall refer to the active Body of Deacons.

**Section 6.** **Basic Beliefs:** Although Southern Baptists are not a creedal people, a statement of generally-held convictions called “The Baptist Faith and Message” serves as a guide to understanding our basic beliefs. The following are only a brief, partial summary of our convictions:

A. **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. We believe the Bible to be the Holy Word of God. We believe the Holy Scriptures to be “breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

B. **God**

There is one and only one living and true God. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes but without division of nature, essence, or being.

C. **God the Father**

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the stream of humanity according to the purposes of His grace. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **D. 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. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience. In His death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of men from sin.

#### **E. God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

#### **F. Man**

Man was created by the special act of God in His own image and is the crowning work of His creation. By his free choice, man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. 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 man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

#### **G. Salvation**

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes justification, sanctification, and glorification.

#### **H. God's Purpose of Grace**

Election is the gracious purpose of God according to which He justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. 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.

#### **I. The Church**

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith, fellowship of the church and seeks to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. This Church is an autonomous body. The New Testament speaks also of the Church as the body of Christ and includes all of the redeemed of all the ages. We believe in the autonomy of the local Church free of any external authority or control.

#### **J. Baptism**

Baptism, although not necessary for salvation, is an action ordained by Jesus in the New Testament for the Church for a believer. Christian baptism, the immersion of a believer in water, is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the former self, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.

## **K. The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is an action ordained by Jesus in the New Testament for the Church. The Lord's Supper is the celebration and remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as a substitute for our sin. We use two elements—bread and juice—to symbolize the broken body of our Lord and the blood He shed for the remission of our sins. When we observe the Lord's Supper, we should keep in mind that it is for believers who are in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:27), that it is not necessary for salvation, and that Jesus ordained it (1 Corinthians 11:23-24). Since it is the Lord's table, all who know Jesus as their Lord and Savior are welcome to participate.

## **L. Marriage**

We believe that the Bible consistently teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman (1 Corinthians 7:2-16), and further states that “a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (Ephesians 5:31). A biblical marriage ceremony is a worship service whereby a man and woman enter into a lifelong covenant or sacrament with each other while asking God's Divine blessing on their marriage. During this ceremony, God receives worship from the couple and the congregation as it witnesses the couple's vows. Because such a ceremony is a strictly religious function, and since God does not ordain or permit marriages of the same sex, bigamy, or polygamy, no minister shall participate or perform these types of ceremonies or any other ceremony that is contrary to our Church's religious beliefs based upon the clear teachings of the Holy Scriptures. The Church property may not be used for any marriage that is not a biblical marriage ceremony as defined above.

# **ARTICLE II**

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. General**

First Baptist Church of Tifton, Inc. (hereinafter referred to both as the “Church” and the “Corporation”) is a sovereign and democratic Baptist Church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The Church is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Georgia. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this Church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this Church and the conditions of such membership.

### **Section 2. Candidacy and Membership**

- A.** Prospective members shall be considered for membership in any of the following ways:
  - 1.** by profession of faith and for baptism according to the policies of this Church;
  - 2.** by transfer of membership from another Baptist church;

3. by statement of faith, including prior conversion experience and baptism by immersion, when coming from other Churches or denominations, or when no letter of transfer is obtainable;
4. in Absentia, in the event a candidate cannot physically attend Church, any of the three previous qualifications will be acceptable; and,
5. by restoration after exclusion (see Article II, Section 7).

**B.** Persons may offer themselves as a candidate for membership in this Church. Candidates should view the commitment to Church membership as a spiritual decision, and they shall indicate their desire for membership at any open meeting of the congregation. At that time, the congregation will affirm and celebrate the candidate's commitment. The vote on Church membership will take place during any open meeting of the congregation but only after the completion of the candidate attending a New Member Orientation program unless such attendance is waived by the Pastor. A vote for Church membership will take place upon recommendation of a minister, the Chairman of the Deacons, or their designee. A candidate shall become a member of the Church by a majority vote of the congregation at said meeting. Resources for prospective members may be outlined in the Church Manual.

### **Section 3. Watchcare**

Any Christian may ask to come under the Watchcare of the Church. The person under Watchcare may take part in any of the activities of the Church but shall not be considered a voting member of the Church. Watchcare membership is intended for persons whose stay in this geographical area is short term by design, such as college students, temporary workers, or seasonal residents.

### **Section 4. Prospective or New Member Orientation**

Prospective or new Church members will be encouraged and expected to participate in the Church's New Member Orientation. The people under Watchcare will also be encouraged to participate. This orientation will acquaint candidates with FBC Tifton and insure that they believe the basic tenets of the Gospel. The orientation shall be led by the Minister of Spiritual Development or his designee.

### **Section 5. Voting Rights of Members**

Every member of the Church is entitled to vote on all matters of business submitted to the Church in Conference, and each member shall be entitled to one vote. In the case of written ballot votes, absentee votes will be accepted under such guidelines as are set out in the Church Manual or as directed by the Pastor.

### **Section 6. Termination of Membership**

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways: (a) death, (b) transfer of letter from this Church to another Baptist Church, (c) removal from the membership through uniting with a Church of another faith or denomination, (d) by request of the member, or (e) exclusions [see Section 7 below].

## **Section 7. Discipline and Exclusions**

- A.** The Pastor, other members of the Church staff, Deacons, and fellow members will be available for counsel and guidance for any member whose life demonstrates a disregard for Biblical authority or spiritual truth. Redemption rather than punishment should be the guideline which governs the attitude of one member toward another.
- B.** Should some serious condition exist as determined by the Pastor or the Deacon Officers which could cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the Church, every reasonable measure will be taken by the Pastor and by the Body of Deacons to resolve the problem. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. If a majority of the active Deacons present at any Deacons' meeting determine that the welfare of the Church would be best served by the exclusion of the member, then they will present such recommendation to the Church at either a regular Church Conference or a special Church Conference called for that purpose. The Church may exclude such member by a three-fourths vote of the members present at said meeting, and the Church thereafter may proceed to declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the Church.
- C.** Any person whose membership has been terminated for any condition may upon request be restored to membership by a majority vote of the Church upon evidence of repentance and reformation.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **MEETINGS OF MEMBERS**

#### **Section 1. Worship**

The Church shall meet regularly on Sunday for preaching, Bible study, instruction, evangelism, and for the worship of God and shall meet regularly on Wednesday evenings for prayer and discipleship. Other religious meetings may be called by the Pastor or any other ministerial staff at their discretion.

#### **Section 2. Regular Business Meetings**

##### **A. Church Business**

1. Subject to these Bylaws, the ultimate authority to conduct the affairs of the Church shall be in the members of the Church that make up the Church body. Members may vote to initiate a Church action, but any such vote shall require that the matter be sent back to the Body of Deacons and potentially referred to the appropriate committees in order to determine the proper direction that the Church should take on the issue. The matter shall then subsequently be presented back to the Church at a Church meeting with the recommendation of the various committees and the Body of Deacons for a Church vote. The vote of the Church shall control the issue presented at that meeting. The vote of a member is to confirm and ratify or reject the direction of the Church as determined by the Pastor and the Body of Deacons.

2. All ordinary course of business matters (regular and routine operations) shall be handled by the officers, ministers, and committees under the supervision of the Body of Deacons.

3. All extraordinary business matters as determined by the Deacon Body shall be handled by and, if required, shall be presented to the Church Body as set out in these Bylaws.

**B. Regular Meetings**

A meeting of the Church in Conference shall be held at First Baptist Church of Tifton, 404 Love Ave, Tifton, Georgia, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at a time designated in the Church Manual. A regular meeting may be rescheduled or cancelled by the Pastor or the Deacon Chair, not to exceed more than two (2) cancellations per quarter. A notice of rescheduling or cancellation shall be given at least seven (7) days in advance through a general Church publication.

**C. Annual Meeting**

The regular meeting scheduled for September of each year is designated as the annual meeting required under Georgia law. A notice of such meeting shall be given at least seven (7) days in advance through a general Church publication.

**Section 3. Special Business Meetings**

Special Church Conferences may be called by the Pastor, the Deacon Chair or by a majority of active Deacons, if matters need to be addressed prior to the next scheduled regular Church Conference. Notice of the place, date, and time of the meeting shall be given at least seven (7) days prior to said special meeting, along with a description of the matter or matters for which the meeting is called. Only the business specified in the notice shall be considered at a Special Church Conference. Notice set out herein shall not be required in order to enter into meeting for purpose of voting on new members.

**Section 4. Quorum**

More than twelve (12) active members must be present in order to constitute a quorum at any meeting of the Church membership for the transaction of ordinary course of business activities. More than one hundred (100) active members must be present in order to constitute a quorum at any meeting of the Church membership for the transaction of extraordinary business. All requirements for the calling and holding of meetings must be complied with as set forth in these Bylaws.

**Section 5. Voting**

- A. Unless otherwise specifically provided in these Bylaws, a majority vote of those present, qualified to vote, and voting at any meeting of the membership at which a quorum is represented shall control.
- B. Each active member shall have one (1) vote upon the occasion of the transaction of any business of this Church.

**Section 6. Order of Business**

At all regular meetings of the Church, the order of business shall be determined by the Moderator and may include: the adoption of minutes from previous meetings, reports from committees or officers, postponed business, new business, and other items as deemed appropriate. The Pastor or

his designee shall be the moderator of all Church meetings. The Minister of Spiritual Development shall be the moderator if the office of Pastor is vacant or if the Pastor fails to designate a designee. If both the Pastor and Minister of Spiritual Development are absent and there has not been anyone designated, the Chairman of the Deacon Body or his designee shall be the Moderator.

## ARTICLE IV

### CHURCH OFFICERS

#### **Section 1. Officers**

The Church Officers shall be the Pastor, Deacon Officers, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Church Clerk, and Assistant Church Clerk.

#### **Section 2. Election**

The Church Clerk, Assistant Church Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer shall be elected annually to serve a term of one (1) year. The Nominating Committee shall nominate the Church Clerk, Assistant Church Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer; and the positions shall be filled by a vote of the Church body at a Church meeting.

#### **Section 3. Pastor**

##### **A. Duties of the Pastor**

1. The Pastor, who at times may be referred to as the Senior Pastor or Lead Pastor, is responsible for leading the Church to function as a New Testament Church. The Pastor shall lead the congregation and the organizations, and provide supervision for the Church staff in accomplishing the goals of the Church.
2. In accordance with the meaning of the word "Pastor" and the practice of the New Testament, a Pastor is to be the shepherd and overseer of the Church. In assisting the Church to be obedient to the Great Commission by preaching the Gospel to believers and unbelievers, the Pastor will enlist the service of the Deacons and the Church staff in equipping Church members for ministry to members of the congregation and the community (Ephesians 4:11-16); leading the Church in performing its tasks (1 Peter 5:1-4); and leading the Church to engage in its purpose as set forth in Article I of these Bylaws. The Pastor may from time to time be given other specific duties which shall be outlined in the Church Manual, or as directed by the Body of Deacons.

##### **B. Election of the Pastor**

The Pastor shall be called by the Church under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The call (election) of the Pastor shall be in the following manner.

1. Whenever a Pastoral vacancy occurs, if a majority of the Personnel Committee, in consultation with the current ministerial staff, believe there is a member of the ministerial staff who is qualified, equipped and called to serve as lead Pastor, the Personnel Committee may recommend such person to the Body of Deacons. If seventy-five (75%) of the Deacons present at a meeting

with a quorum present are in agreement with the recommendation, then the person shall be appointed by the Deacons to serve on an interim basis for a minimum of three months, after which time the Body of Deacons may by approval of seventy-five (75%) vote of those present at a meeting with a quorum present recommend presentation of the person to be called as the Lead Pastor to the Church in accordance with Paragraph 4 below. If the Deacon vote does not reach the seventy-five (75%) super majority required, then the procedure set out in Section 2 below shall be followed.

2. Whenever a Pastoral vacancy occurs and there is no current ministerial staff deemed qualified, equipped and called to fill the position, an ad hoc Pastor Search Committee (PSC) consisting of up to nine (9) members representative of the Church body may be nominated by the Deacon Officers. The Chairman of the Personnel Committee will serve as a member of the ad hoc committee. The PSC will be presented to the Deacons for their approval and then to the Church in Conference for final approval.
3. The Personnel Committee and/or Pastor Search Committee as applicable shall have the responsibility of prayerfully: (1) considering the Pastoral needs of the Church; (2) searching for a qualified Pastoral candidate who may meet those needs; and (3) recommending such a candidate to the Body of Deacons. The Body of Deacons shall bring to the consideration of the Church the name of only one candidate at a time. A background check shall be conducted on all potential Pastoral candidates.
4. The call (election) of a Pastor shall take place at a meeting of the Church set for that purpose, for which at least seven (7) days' notice has been given. The call (election) shall be by written ballot. An affirmative vote of seventy-five (75%) of those submitting written ballots shall constitute a Pastoral call. The PSC shall immediately notify the candidate of the Church's call and inform the Church in a timely manner of the candidate's response.

#### **C. Term of the Pastor**

The Pastor thus called (elected) shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his resignation, his retirement, the termination of his tenure as Pastor, or his death, whichever shall occur first.

#### **D. Dismissal of the Pastor**

The Church reserves the right to terminate the Pastor at their discretion. The termination of the Pastor shall be in the following manner:

1. Any recommendation to terminate the Pastor shall be referred to the active Body of Deacons who will determine the seriousness and veracity of any complaint brought against the Pastor. The Body of Deacons will first seek to bring reconciliation, forgiveness, and restoration as may be needed before proceeding further.
2. If seventy-five percent (75%) of the active Deacons present at the meeting in which a quorum exists determine that the termination of the Pastor is warranted, then they will present such recommendation, along with any proposed severance agreements, to the Church at either a regular Church Conference or a Special Church Conference.

3. The vote to dismiss a Pastor will be by written ballot, with a majority affirmative vote being required for approval.

#### **Section 4. Treasurer**

The Church Treasurer shall be the Chief Financial Officer of the Church and his duties shall be as set forth from time to time in the Church Manual or as determined and requested by the Body of Deacons.

#### **Section 5. Assistant Treasurer**

The Assistant Church Treasurer shall serve as the Church Treasurer in the absence of the Church Treasurer or the vacancy of the position and shall have such other duties as may be set forth in the Church Manual.

#### **Section 6. Church Clerk**

The Church Clerk shall oversee the creation and maintenance of the official records of the Church. The specific duties of the Church Clerk shall be as set forth from time to time in the Church Manual and as determined and requested by the Body of Deacons.

#### **Section 7. Assistant Church Clerk**

The Assistant Church Clerk shall serve as the Church Clerk in the absence of the Church Clerk or the vacancy of the position, shall assist the Church Clerk in overseeing the creation and maintenance of the official records of the Church, and shall have such other specific duties as may be set forth in the Church Manual and as may be determined or requested by the Body of Deacons.

#### **Section 8. Church Staff**

As of the adoption of these Bylaws, the Church employs the following vocational staff: Pastor, Minister of Spiritual Development/Associate Pastor, Care Pastor, Minister of Youth/College/Singles, Minister of Recreation and Senior Adults, Minister of Music/Worship, Director of Children's Ministries, Media Director, Hispanic Pastor, and Vietnamese Pastor.

##### **A. Vocational Ministerial Staff**

1. The Church may employ or "call" such vocational ministerial staff members as are deemed necessary by the Church to carry out the purposes of the Church as set forth in Article I of these Bylaws.
2. The necessity of any ministerial staff position shall be determined by majority vote of the Body of Deacons upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee.
3. Whenever a ministerial staff vacancy occurs, if a majority of the Personnel Committee, in consultation with the current ministerial staff, believe there is a member of the ministerial staff who is qualified, equipped and called to serve in the vacant position, the Personnel Committee may

recommend such person to the Body of Deacons. If a majority of the Deacons present at a meeting with a quorum present are in agreement with the recommendation, then the person shall be appointed by the Deacons to serve on an interim basis for a minimum of three months, after which time the Body of Deacons may by majority vote of those present at a meeting with a quorum present recommend presentation of the person to be called by the Church in accordance with Paragraph 6 below. If the Deacon vote does not reach the majority required, then the procedure set out in Section 4 below shall be followed.

4. Whenever a ministerial vacancy occurs and there is no current ministerial staff deemed qualified, equipped and called to fill the position, an ad hoc Search Committee (SC) consisting of up to nine (9) members representative of the Church body may be nominated by the Deacon Officers. The Chairman of the Personnel Committee will serve as a member of the ad hoc committee. The SC will be presented to the Deacons for their approval and then to the Church in Conference for final approval.
5. The Personnel Committee and/or Search Committee as applicable shall have the responsibility of prayerfully: (1) considering the ministerial needs of the Church; (2) searching for a qualified candidate who may meet those needs; and (3) recommending such a candidate to the Body of Deacons. The Body of Deacons shall bring to the consideration of the Church the name of only one candidate at a time. A background check shall be conducted on all potential ministerial candidates.
6. Adoption of such recommendation shall be effectuated by a majority vote of the active membership present and voting at a regularly scheduled Sunday morning worship service after due notice.

#### **B. Non-ministerial support staff (clerical, custodial, etc.)**

1. All other non-ministerial support staff shall be supervised by the Pastor or his designee in consultation with the Church committee(s) concerned therewith. A background check shall be conducted on all potential support staff members.
2. Prior to offering a job to a potential employee, employment shall be approved by a majority vote of the Personnel Committee, unless such approval is waived by that Committee.
3. Such employees shall be under the general guidance and direction of the Personnel Committee, and specifically of the staff member and committee(s) concerned.

### **Section 9. Termination**

- A. All Church officers, vocational ministerial staff members, and support staff members are at all times subject to the control of the Church and may be removed from office. Vocational ministerial staff members may only be removed by a majority vote of the members of the Church.
- B. In the case of vocational ministerial staff members and elected Church Officers, the Personnel Committee, in consultation with the Deacon Officers, shall investigate and determine the seriousness and veracity of any complaint brought against the staff member or Church Officer and seek to bring reconciliation, forgiveness, and restoration as may be needed. If they determine that the dismissal of the staff member is warranted, then they will present such recommendation,

along with any severance agreements, to the entire Deacon Body for approval and then to the Church body as necessary.

C. Non-ministerial support staff members may be terminated by a majority vote of the Personnel Committee upon recommendation by the Pastor or other Ministerial Staff Member.

## ARTICLE V

### DEACONS

**Section 1. Body of Deacons:** The Deacons of this Church shall be classified as follows:

- A. Active Deacons shall be the voting members of the Body of Deacons.
- B. Reserve Deacons shall be any active member who has been elected and ordained a Deacon by this Church or any other Southern Baptist Church and who is not serving as an active Deacon.
- C. Lifetime Deacons shall be those elected under the guidelines outlined in Article V, Section 2(B).
- D. **Number of Deacons**

There shall be twenty-eight (28) active Deacons, plus such lifetime Deacons as may be elected from time to time.

**Section 2. Qualifications of Deacons**

- A. To be eligible for, and to serve in the office of Deacon of this Church, a person:
  1. must meet the spiritual requirements outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 6 of the Holy Bible;
  2. must be a male person at least twenty-one (21) years of age;
  3. must have been a Christian for at least three (3) years;
  4. must have been a member of this Church for at least one (1) year;
  5. must regularly contribute (as determined by the Pastor or his designee) to the financial program of this Church with his belief and efforts directed toward tithing;
  6. must be a faithful steward of his time to the cause of Christianity and this Church;
  7. must regularly support and attend the organizations and meetings of this Church; and
  8. must strive to accomplish the purposes of the Church as set forth in these Bylaws.
  9. meeting all of the qualifications listed in the Constitution and Bylaws will not be disqualified from being eligible to serve as a Deacon if (1) that person has been divorced but not remarried, or (2) that person has been divorced and remarried, or (3) that person is married to a person who has been divorced.

**B. Qualifications of Lifetime Deacons:** Former members of the active Deacon Body who are held in high esteem by the Church and who have served Jesus and His Church for many years may be invited to serve as Lifetime Deacons under the following minimal qualifications:

1. That he has served at least five (5) terms as an active Deacon of this Church;
2. That he is 75 years or more of age and has been actively involved in various ministries and/or missions of the Church;
3. That he waives the right to again be elected as a member of the active Deacon Body; and
4. That he be nominated by the Lifetime Deacons Committee and be elected Lifetime Deacon by the active Deacon Body and affirmed in Church Conference.
5. Other qualifications and limitations may be set out in the church manual.

### **Section 3. Election of Deacons**

**A.** Annually the Church shall have a Deacon Qualification Committee composed of the current Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary of the Body of Deacons and at least two (2) individuals who have previously served as a Chairman of the Body of Deacons as designated annually by the Chairman of the Body of Deacons or his designee who are willing to serve on this committee. The Pastor or his designee shall serve as ex officio member and as an advisor on all key issues that may arise concerning this committee.

**B.** The current Chairman of the Body of Deacons shall serve as Chairman of this committee.

#### **C. Election Procedure**

1. To begin the process of annual election of Deacons, each Church family shall be notified in writing by letter or through other regular Church communication: of the names of the members of the Deacon Qualification Committee, the qualifications set forth in these Bylaws for Deacons, a list of the current Deacons, and duties of the Deacons as set forth in these Bylaws or the Church Manual. Said letter shall request nominations for membership on the Body of Deacons. The letter shall be sent on or before August 1<sup>st</sup> in each year.
2. The Deacon Qualification Committee shall accept nominations for membership on the Body of Deacons at a specified time designated by the Committee, such date to be on or before the third Sunday in August of that year. Said nominations shall be in writing. No single member shall nominate more persons than the actual number of vacancies occurring in any given year. Any list submitted containing more nominations than allowed shall be discarded.
3. The Committee shall also submit additional qualified nominations as the Committee deems appropriate and shall make all decisions concerning ballot irregularities.

4. The Deacon Qualification Committee shall meet on or before the last Sunday in August each year, at which time they shall compile a list of not less than fourteen (14) nominees, which shall include all nominations received from the members of the Church body. This list shall constitute the nominees for the Deacon vacancies. The Deacon Qualification Committee shall first determine that each person meets the qualifications outlined in Article V, Section 2A, (2) through (4); and if they do not meet those qualifications, the names shall be removed from the list. The Deacon Qualification Committee shall then contact the nominees to determine their willingness to serve. The name of any nominee who is not willing to serve shall be removed from the list.
5. The Deacon Qualification Committee shall then prepare a ballot listing the names of the qualified nominees in alphabetical order and then distribute such ballots to the Church body at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date set for the election. Said ballot shall be presented to the members of the Church for voting by written ballot at the regularly scheduled Sunday morning worship services held on or before the second Sunday in September of each year. The Church members shall be entitled to vote for a number of nominees equal to the number of Deacons to be elected. For example, if there are seven (7) Deacon vacancies, each member shall be entitled to vote for up to seven (7) from the names listed on the ballot.
6. Upon approval of a majority of the members of the Deacon Qualification Committee under the procedure set forth below, and after acceptance by nominees, the nominees receiving the most votes shall be declared an elected Deacon of this Church. All cases of tie votes shall be resolved by majority vote of the members of the Deacon Qualification Committee.

#### **Section 4. Procedures to Determine Qualifications**

- A. The Deacon Qualification Committee shall, as soon as practicable after said election, collect and count the ballots voted, determine those nominees receiving the greatest number of votes as related to the number of Deacon vacancies, confirm those receiving the highest number of votes to serve and assess the nominees' qualifications for a member of the Body of Deacons as set out in Article V, Section 2A, (1) through (9).
- B. In assessing the qualifications of a nominee for Deacon of this Church, the Deacon Qualification Committee shall meet with the nominee to make a determination as to the nominee's qualifications unless by a majority vote they deem that the meeting will not be necessary.
- C. If the Deacon Qualification Committee determines that a nominee is not qualified for a specific reason, one or more of the Deacons shall attempt to mentor said nominee to help the nominee overcome said disqualification for possible future service on the Deacon Body.

#### **Section 5. Terms of Deacons**

- A. All Deacons shall be elected for a four (4) year term (unless appointed to fill an unexpired term) which shall begin on January 1 of each succeeding year. The active Deacons serving the Church at the time of the adoption of these Bylaws shall become and be Deacons of this Church for the remainder of the term to which they were originally elected.

- B. Annually after the adoption of these Bylaws, one-fourth (1/4) of the number of members of the Body of Deacons shall be elected as is herein provided so as to create rotational terms and provide for continuing inspirational leadership in the Church.
- C. No active Deacon, upon completion of his term, shall, if he has served a term of two (2) years or more, be eligible for re-election as an active Deacon until two (2) years shall have passed after the expiration of his term.
- D. Any vacancy within the Body of Deacons, however occasioned, shall be filled at the discretion of the Deacon Qualification Committee from the qualified nominee receiving the next highest number of votes in the most recent Deacon election. A Deacon filling the unexpired term created by a vacancy shall serve the remainder of the vacant term.

## **Section 6. Meetings and Organization**

- A. The Body of Deacons shall consist of the active Deacons of this Church along with Lifetime Deacons and shall meet at least once each month at such times and places as are determined by resolution of the Body of Deacons to be in the best interest of the Church. Lifetime Deacons shall be eligible to attend the meetings, retreats, etc. of the Deacon Body.
- B. The Body of Deacons shall elect no later than the end of September of each year a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and such other officers as may be necessary from the current Body of Deacons who will not be rotating off the Deacon Body. Said officers shall be elected at the regular September business meeting of the Body of Deacons or at a special meeting in August called by the then serving chairman for such purpose. No notice of such election meeting shall be necessary if same is accomplished at a regular business meeting, but seven (7) days' notice to all active Deacons shall be necessary if said election is held during a specially called meeting.

### **C. Quorum**

- 1. A majority of the members of the Body of Deacons, which includes the active Deacons and lifetime Deacons, must be present in person in order to constitute a quorum at any meeting thereof for the transaction of business. The members present at any meeting thereof less than a quorum may adjourn the meeting from time to time without notice other than the announcement at the meeting until a quorum shall be present.
- 2. At any such meeting at which a quorum shall be present, any business may be transacted which might have been transacted at the meeting originally called.

### **D. Voting**

- 1. Unless otherwise specifically provided in these Bylaws, a majority vote of those present, qualified to vote, and voting at any meeting of the Body of Deacons at which a quorum is represented shall control. Any lifetime Deacon who is present at a meeting shall be eligible to vote.

2. Each active member shall have one (1) vote upon the occasion of the transaction of any business of this Church.

## **Section 7. Duties of Deacons:**

**A. Active Deacons:** In accordance with the meaning of the Word of God, the active Deacons of this Church shall have duties as follows:

1. be zealous to guard the unity of the spirit within the bond of peace;
2. serve as a council of advisors for conference with the Pastor;
3. initiate, formulate, and consider plans for a constant effort toward the welfare, work, and progress of the Church;
4. establish and maintain personal fraternal relations and inspiring oversight with and of the membership of the Church;
5. seek to know, and to aid in the resolution of, the physical, moral, and spiritual needs and struggles of the membership of this Church;
6. have the oversight of the discipline of the Church according to the New Testament teachings and the direction of the Holy Spirit;
7. serve as general finance consultants in and to this Church;
8. assist the Pastor in the observance of the Lord's Supper and other Ordinances;
9. work actively in the fields of visitation, soul winning, and the spiritual ministry of this Church;
10. regularly attend the meetings of the Body of Deacons;
11. oversee the functioning of the committees of the Church; and
12. review, and if the Spirit leads him, voice his position on any major issue to be presented to the Church body.

**B. Reserve Deacons**

1. The duties of the reserve Deacons of this Church shall be to assist the Pastor and the active Deacons in all spiritual matters and to otherwise meet the needs of the membership.
2. Reserve Deacons may attend the regular meetings of the Body of Deacons for such service as may be requested of them but shall have no vote and shall not be eligible to serve as an officer of the Body of Deacons.

## ARTICLE VI

### COMMITTEES

#### **Section 1. Purpose**

The Church shall utilize committees to carry out its objectives and accomplish its goals. All committees shall be accountable and answerable to the Body of Deacons. Except as is set out herein, the duties, regulatory guidelines, and make up of each committee shall be set out in the Church Manual. The Body of Deacons shall have the authority to create *ad hoc* committees at any time, and each shall last until its purpose has been completed. In addition, other than the permanent committees, the Body of Deacons shall have the authority to terminate and/or merge any committees as it deems appropriate.

#### **Section 2. Permanent Committees**

Permanent committees function on an ongoing basis, accomplishing essential organizational objectives that assist the Church in fulfilling its mission. In addition to the descriptions provided in the Bylaws, permanent committees will follow the guidelines set forth in the Church Manual. Permanent Committees shall initially consist of the Finance Committee, Nominating Committee, Personnel Committee, and Policies and Procedures Committee. All committees shall be designated as an operations, ministry, business, or special finance committee, even though any such committee may be a committee not intended to terminate in the foreseeable future.

##### **A. Finance Committee**

1. The Finance Committee is responsible for:
  - a. Formulating an annual budget in consultation with the Pastor and other ministerial-level staff and Church leadership;
  - b. Recommending to the Church in conference an annual budget consistent with the goals and objectives of the Church. The budget shall be brought first to the Deacons for consultation and then to the Church for approval;
  - c. Insuring that the financial policies approved by the Church are followed properly;
  - d. Serving as the audit committee of the Church to receive and review the annual audit report, if one is obtained; and
  - e. Determining and recommending to the Church Body all supplemental appropriations and expenditures for projects as may be needful as determined by the Body of Deacons that are not then currently within the Church budget.
2. Two (2) signers must sign any checks to bind the Church. The Finance Committee shall determine the appropriate persons who can sign checks on behalf of the Church. The Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Finance Committee Chair shall automatically be authorized to sign checks without the Finance Committee's approval.

## **B. Nominating Committee**

1. The Nominating Committee shall be composed of nine (9) active members of this Church who shall serve rotational three (3) year terms.
2. The Minister of Spiritual Development, or his designee, shall be an ex-officio member of the committee.
3. The Nominating Committee, in consultation with the Pastor, ministerial-level staff, and Chairman of the Body of Deacons, shall be responsible for recommending Church members to serve as committee members and chairs of committees on an annual or as-needed basis for all other committees unless otherwise directed by the Body of Deacons.
4. The procedure for selection of the Nominating Committee shall be set out in the Church Manual.

## **C. Personnel Committee**

The Personnel Committee shall assist with employee management issues related to staff members and all employees of the Church, as specified in the Church Manual, by: (1) providing oversight for the employment practices delegated to staff members, (2) monitoring Church compliance with all applicable employment laws, (3) assisting in the development of the personnel budget, (4) acting as investigators and arbitrators related to any charge brought against a staff member or employee of the Church, and (5) to have such other duties and guidelines as set out in the Church Manual. To the extent required by Georgia law, all issues shall be kept private within the committee.

## **D. Policies and Procedures Committee**

1. The Policies and Procedures Committee is responsible for systematically and regularly reviewing the Bylaws and Church Manual by conferring with the Pastor and other ministerial-level staff, committees, the Body of Deacons, and others deemed appropriate by the Committee.
2. The Committee shall recommend revisions and additions to the Church Manual and/or Bylaws to the Body of Deacons who shall ultimately be responsible for the creation, publication, and maintenance of the Church Manual and Bylaws. Any changes to the Bylaws must be voted on by the Church as provided in Article VIII, Section 13.
3. The Committee shall from time to time hear disputes that arise as to the interpretation of this or any future set of these Bylaws.

## **Section 3. Additional Committees**

The Body of Deacons may create other standing committees as it deems appropriate that shall function on an ongoing basis. The description of each additional committee will be included in the Church Manual which shall be approved by the Body of Deacons.

#### **Section 4. *Ad Hoc Committees***

The Body of Deacons at its discretion may create *ad hoc* committees that serve a specific purpose. Each established *ad hoc* committee shall be disbanded by the Body of Deacons once the purpose of said committee has been completed. The size, makeup, nomination and election of an *ad hoc* committee shall be by majority vote of the Body of Deacons but generally will be set up under the guidelines of Section 5 below.

#### **Section 5. *Makeup of Committees.***

- A.** Each committee, except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws or the Church Manual, shall consist of eight (8) members.
- B.** Members of all committees shall be selected/elected for four (4) years, their terms arranged so that one-fourth (1/4) shall be replaced each year.
- C.** After serving four years on any committee, no person shall be eligible to serve again on the same committee until the expiration of one (1) year, unless the Chairman of the Body of Deacons, in agreement with the Pastor and the Chairman of the Committee in question, decides that due to the circumstances, one or more committee members should remain on the committee for another year or years.
- D.** Committee members shall attend meetings on a regular basis. If the Chairman of a committee notifies the Chairman of the Body of Deacons that a committee member has resigned, is not attending regularly, is not participating or is being disruptive in any meaningful way, the Body of Deacons by majority vote may replace that member for the remainder of said member's term.
- E.** If a Chairman of any committee is failing to properly lead a committee to carry out its purpose and plan, the Body of Deacons has the authority to replace the Chairman.
- F.** A list of the committee chairs and members shall be published and made available for the Church members to review each year.
- G.** The Pastor, or if the Church is without a Pastor, the Associate Pastor, or his designee shall select a Staff Member to be an ex-officio member of all committees.
- H.** The Nominating Committee shall select the replacement for any vacancies that may occur on any committee without the necessity of the vote of the Church Body.
- I.** The Chairman of any committee shall not vote on any issue unless it is necessary to make a decision as the result of a tie and can vote if the Chairman's presence is needed to constitute a quorum.

#### **Section 6. *Quorums for Committees***

- A.** A majority of the members of any committee must be present in person in order to constitute a quorum at any meeting thereof for the transaction of business. The members present at any meeting thereof less than a quorum may discuss but not vote on any issue until a quorum is present and may adjourn and reschedule the meeting in order to obtain a quorum.

- B. At any such meeting at which a quorum shall be present, any business may be transacted which might have been transacted at the meeting originally called.

**Section 7. Voting for Committees**

- A. Unless otherwise specifically provided in these Bylaws, a majority vote of those present, qualified to vote, and voting at any committee meeting at which a quorum is represented shall control.
- B. Each committee member shall have one (1) vote upon the transaction of any business of the committee.
- C. Written consent by a majority of members to a resolution or action adopted by a committee shall constitute official action of the committee. Procedure and restriction regarding such voting shall be outlined in the Church Manual.

**Section 8. Records for Committees**

The Chairman of each committee, or his/her designee, shall keep a record of all minutes and shall submit them to the succeeding Chairman and to the Church Secretary at least annually to be preserved in a centralized location. Emailing or other electronic transfers are an acceptable and preferred procedure.

**Section 9. Church Manual**

The Church Manual shall set out the duties and other requirements of the committees.

**ARTICLE VII**  
**CHURCH MANUAL**

**Section 1. Composition**

- A. The Church Manual shall serve as a guide for Church staff, officers, committees, and members.
- B. The Pastor or his designee shall maintain the official copy of the Church Manual and shall ensure that it is readily available for all members of the Church.
- C. The Church Manual shall consist of various sections detailing policies and procedures related, but not limited to, the following: committees, organization, personnel, use of Church facilities and equipment, finances, Church office, calendar, and administration.

**Section 2. Amendments to the Church Manual**

Any amendment, change, or revision to the Church Manual shall be made in the following manner:

- A. Changes to the Church Manual can be offered by any Church member by submitting the proposed change in writing to the Policies and Procedures Committee. Any recommended change to the Church Manual proposed at a Church Conference will be automatically referred to the Policies and Procedures Committee for consideration. Any Church committee may recommend changes to the Church Manual related to that committee.

- B. Changes to the Church Manual approved or disapproved by the Policies and Procedures Committee are then referred to the Deacons along with the Committee's recommendation. An affirmative vote of the majority of the Deacons is required for any amendment to the Church Manual. It is recommended that the Policies and Procedures Committee discuss with a committee any suggested changes for that committee for their consideration and discussion before referring the requested changes to the Deacons.
- C. The Church Secretary shall incorporate any amendments into the Church Manual adopted by the Body of Deacons.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **Section 1. Coordination of Financial Activities**

The Church's financial activities shall be coordinated by appropriate Church Staff, working with the Pastor, Deacons, Treasurer, Finance Committee, and others as necessary.

#### **Section 2. Release of Financial Information**

Annual budgets and monthly financial statements shall be provided to members of the Church upon request. Requests for all other financial information shall be presented to the Pastor or his designee and handled according to established policies and procedures as outlined in the Church Manual. Under no circumstance will contribution records be provided to anyone except the donor without written permission from the donor except as required in the ordinary and necessary course of business of the Church.

#### **Section 3. Corporate Year**

The Corporation shall function on a calendar year basis and will operate on the calendar year as its Fiscal Year.

#### **Section 4. Seal**

The corporate seal shall be in such form as the Deacon Officers may from time to time determine in accordance with Article I.

#### **Section 5. Annual Financial Statements**

The Pastor or his designee shall maintain a record of the Church's audited financial statements and the accompanying Auditor's Report, if such audit is obtained by the Church.

#### **Section 6. Voting**

Unless otherwise specifically provided in these Bylaws, a majority vote of those present, qualified to vote, and voting at any meeting of any committee, Body of Deacons, or Church membership at which a quorum is represented shall control. Each qualified active member shall have one (1) vote upon the occasion of the transaction of any business of this Church at any committee meeting,

Deacon meeting, or Church business meeting. On any major item of business, the Deacon officers in consultation with the Pastor may allow absentee ballots. In addition, any committee may conduct business by electronic votes or in writing without the necessity of actually meeting. Any procedures related to this issue may be placed in the Church Manual.

## **Section 7. Rules of Order**

Robert's Rules of Order shall be the governing authority for procedure in conducting all business meetings of the Church, its organizations, and committees.

## **Section 8. Written Contracts**

- A.** Unless otherwise determined and directed by the Body of Deacons, all deeds including deeds to secure debt made by the Church and all other written contracts and agreements not in the ordinary course of business to which the Church shall be a party and which have been approved by the Church shall be executed by any two (2) of the following current officers, after the appropriate Church approval:
  - 1.** Chairman of the Body of Deacons;
  - 2.** Vice-Chairman of the Body of Deacons;
  - 3.** Secretary of the Body of Deacons;
  - 4.** Church Clerk or Assistant Church Clerk; and,
  - 5.** Church Treasurer or Assistant Church Treasurer.
- B.** Contracts made by the Church in the ordinary course of business may be signed by a member of the ministerial staff.
- C.** The "ordinary course of business" means any action or activity that takes place on a routine or regular basis.
- D.** Extraordinary business shall mean all business that does not take place on a routine or regular basis.

## **Section 9. Disputes**

- A.** Any question or controversy that may arise regarding the construction or interpretation of these Bylaws shall be resolved by a majority vote of the Policies and Procedures Committee. All disputes shall be handled in a timely manner.
- B.** The decision of said Committee may be appealed by any member of said Committee or any Deacon to the Body of Deacons within thirty-one (31) days after notice of said decision, whereupon a majority vote of the Body of Deacons shall be the final decision upon the question or controversy.

## **Section 10. Due Notice**

Unless otherwise specifically provided herein, “due notice” as used in these Bylaws shall be defined as announcement in regularly scheduled worship services of the Church and announcement in all regular newsletters or like publications of the Church at least seven (7) days prior to the event for which notice is being provided.

## **Section 11. Use of Church Facilities**

- A.** The use of the facilities of First Baptist Church of Tifton shall be reserved solely for activities approved or designated in the Church Manual.
- B.** In no event shall the facilities of First Baptist Church of Tifton be used for any activity which would promote or encourage sinful behavior by its members or by anyone outside of the Church. This shall specifically include, but not be limited to:
  - (1) A prohibition against the use of our facilities for an event at which alcoholic beverages will be served. The Bible is consistent in its warnings against the abuse of alcoholic drink. That being the case, the Church desires to err on the side of caution so as to not promote the abuse of alcohol on its premises or through the use of its facilities;
  - (2) A prohibition against the use of our facilities for the performance of a same sex marriage;
  - (3) A prohibition against the use of our facilities for the performance of a marriage which would result in bigamy or polygamy; or
  - (4) A prohibition against the use of our facilities for any activity, event, or purpose which would or may result in the promotion, encouragement, or acquiescence to sinful behavior by its members or by any person participating therein.

- C.** The determination of which events or purposes other than those specifically prohibited above that would violate the provisions of this section shall solely be determined by the Body of Deacons in consultation with the ministerial staff or so designated in the Church Manual.

## **Section 12. Absence of the Pastor**

### **A. Temporary Absence**

If the Pastor is unavailable or unable for any reason to carry out any duties given to him, he shall have the right to designate a person or persons to carry out said duties.

### **B. Permanent Absence or Failure of the Pastor to Nominate a Designee**

Should the Pastor’s position be vacant, or if the Pastor fails to designate a person to handle a particular matter, then the Minister of Spiritual Development/Associate Pastor shall either handle

such matter or designate a person to handle such matter. Should the position of Pastor and Associate Pastor be vacant at the same time, then the person to carry out such duties shall be selected by the Body of Deacons.

**C. Interim Pastor**

An interim Pastor shall not have any duties as set out in the Bylaws except to preach the Gospel unless the Body of Deacons delegates additional duties to the interim Pastor.

**Section 13. Amendments**

These Bylaws may be amended or additional Bylaws adopted by a majority vote of the active members present and voting at a regular or special business meeting of the Church after due notice has been given setting forth verbatim the proposed change. No approval of any body of this Church shall be necessary for the submission of such proposed changes, but the Policies and Procedures Committee shall be available for consultation and advice in regard to any proposed change. No change shall be presented to the Church Body until it has been first presented to the Policies and Procedures Committee. Any proposed change may be presented to the Church without endorsement of said committee but the committee, unless it waives such right, shall have the right to present its position for said amendment and reasons therefore.

**Section 14. Dissolution**

In the event of dissolution of this Church as a non-profit organization, the assets of the organization shall be given and paid over to a non-profit organization of like faith and order as outlined in the Articles of Faith of this Church which would satisfy the remaining membership and qualify under the provisions of Section 505(c)(3) of the 1996 Internal Revenue Code and its regulations. None of its assets shall be divided among its members, individuals, or any groups not holding tax exemption.

