

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WINTHROP HARBOR
CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
December 2022

PREAMBLE

For the more certain preservation of, and security of, the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner with the accepted tenets of the Southern Baptist Denomination and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation the other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish this Constitution and By-Laws.

I. NAME

This body shall be known as the FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WINTHROP HARBOR.

II. ARTICLES OF FAITH

This body accepts as “Articles of Faith” *the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000 Edition* common in use among Southern Baptist Churches, as indicated herewith:

i. 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.

ii. 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.

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.

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 Savior, 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.

iii. 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.

iv. *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 regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

- A. 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 Savior.
- B. 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 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 regenerated person's life.
- D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

v. *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.

vi. *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.

vii. *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 Savior, 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.

viii. *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.

ix. 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.

x. 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.

xi. 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.

xii. 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.

xiii. 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.

xiv. 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.

xv. 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.

xvi. 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.

xvii. 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.

xviii. 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. 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.

III. CHURCH COVENANT.

This body accepts as a church covenant the covenant commonly accepted by Southern Baptist churches as set forth in the Baptist church manuals common in use among Southern Baptist churches, as indicated in the Church Covenant herewith:

“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 Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as on body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; 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 secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feelings, 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.

We moreover engage that when we remove from 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.”

IV. CHARACTER

i. Polity.

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes the benefits of shared ministry, fellowship and cooperation which are common among Southern Baptist churches.

ii. Doctrine.

The Church receives the Scriptures as its sole authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in essential accord with the belief of the Southern Baptist churches as indicated in the Articles of Faith herewith.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP

- i. Qualifications - The membership of this church shall consist of:
 - a. Persons that confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior and have received believer's baptism by immersion.
 - b. Persons affirming of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 Edition.
 - c. Persons coming by statement of faith of their:
 1. Salvation
 2. Declaration that they have been baptized by immersion.
 - d. Any previous member of this church whose membership has been revoked by a vote of the church may, upon recommendation of the elders, public hearing, and affirmative vote of the church, be restored to membership. II Corinthians 2:6-8
- ii. Responsibilities – Members are expected to be faithful in all duties to the Christian life, to include:
 - a. Regular attendance of church services.
 - b. Faithfully work for the Lord through the church.
 - c. New members of the church shall attend the new members' class before obtaining voting rights as members of this church.
 - d. It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes. Each member shall be encouraged to tithe according to Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 14:22; Malachi 3:10.
- iii. Status
 - a. Active Members: Those who faithfully attend Lord's Day worship services at least once every two months, give regularly, and participate in church activities are eligible to vote in the business meetings of this church.
 - b. Active non-resident members: Members who are not in the geographical area or are unable to attend for an extended period of time. (For example, members of the armed forces, those doing missionary work, away at school or unable to attend by reason of ill-health or institutionalization). Individuals with the intent of returning at some time in the future will be placed in this status at their own request. They

are eligible to vote in business meetings of this church if in attendance at the time of the meeting. Absentee ballots will be provided for regular business meetings, but not for special called business meetings. (See Article X, Section g)

- c. Inactive Members: For those who have not attended worship service for over two months; if, after due notice and compassionate effort by the senior pastor, elders, and deacons, they do not resume attendance, the elders shall direct the church clerk to place them on the inactive list. Once placed on the inactive roll, members are ineligible to vote in the business meetings of this church until restored to an active status.

If, after six months from the date of being placed on the inactive list, they have not renewed their active status, they shall be removed from the church roll without further action of the church. The elders will be notified of the removal and the record of their membership will be permanently retained in the church's historical files.

If an inactive member resumes attendance, the elders may restore the membership to active status.

- iv. Quorum – Twenty (20) members of the active membership shall constitute a quorum during a regular or special called business meeting. This is the minimum membership necessary to vote on business transactions of the church. Regular called business meetings requiring a vote of the congregation must be verbally announced during regular church services at least one Sunday prior to the business meeting.
- v. Termination or transfer – The continuance of membership shall be subject to the principles and usages of the Southern Baptist Churches, especially as follows:
 - a. Any member in good and regular standing, as defined in Article 1 Section 2, who desires a letter of recommendation to a church of like faith and order is entitled to receive it upon their request. Letters shall not be given to individuals for personal transportation to the gaining church. The letter shall be approved by the church and then sent to the requested church by the church secretary.
 - b. If an active member becomes an offense to the church and to its good name by reason of immoral, unchristian conduct by persistent breach of the gospel and their church covenant vows, their membership with this church may be terminated, in accordance with Article XI.
- vi. Service - Active participation within the body of the church can be a means of developing Christian faith. Individuals may desire to experience the nature of our church by participating in its ministries and activities prior to joining. Additionally, unique ministries may be available within our church that members of other churches desire to participate in, while remaining members of their mother church. The following guidelines shall be used in all such cases:

- a. Service as a worker in the various ministries of this church do not require membership. This allows individuals to experience Christian brotherhood/sisterhood and may influence non-members to pursue membership at a later time. There shall be no deadline placed on individuals to join in membership.
- b. Recognizing that leadership bears special responsibility that must be accountable, individuals who serve as elders, bylaws and personnel committees, or as a ministry team leader must be members of this church.
- c. Persons serving in any teaching areas must teach biblically based content in accordance with our church; drawing from the Bible itself; sufficiently summarized in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000; and shall be interviewed by the senior pastor and/or deacons to ensure integrity and accountability.
- d. If at any time an individual serves outside of these guidelines, it shall always be brought to the attention of the elders. The individual will be made aware of these guidelines by the senior pastor or an ordained officer in his absence. This shall always be done in a gracious way that will not cause the individual to be discouraged about service in God's kingdom.

ARTICLE II – DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE

First Baptist Church believes in the sanctity of the marital union as described in Scripture:

- a. God created the first marriage as a sacred covenant relationship between one man and one woman for the purposes of procreation, companionship, and dominion over creation, in keeping with the covenant relationship God himself established with his own creation. Genesis 2:15-24; Romans 1:16-32
- b. Jesus blessed a marriage celebration between a man and a woman with his presence and his first public miracle, thereby affirming the traditional definition of marriage as a cornerstone of every culture and community (John 2:1-11); and further that he advised those who are for congenital or psychological reasons unable to enter into marriage (i.e., between a man and a woman) to remain single and therefore celibate. Matthew 19:4-12
- c. Society historically has embraced this traditional definition of marriage, eschewing all other unions as unnatural, inappropriate, and anti-social, and has advocated the family unit of husband and wife and their children as the chief building block of society. Leviticus 18:22-30; Psalm 127:3-5; Romans 1:16-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Hebrews 13:1
- i. Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

- a. We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in scripture.
- b. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.
- c. We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.
- d. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by, and agree to this statement on marriage and sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.
- e. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking his mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.
- f. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with scripture nor the doctrines of the church.

- ii. First Baptist Church adheres to the doctrinal statements on marriage and family by our denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, as stated in the most recent version of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, that marriage is to be defined biblically and theologically in God's own terms rather than man-made terms; and further that this church intentionally adheres to the highest standards for marriage, namely biblical standards, and that other legal definitions and court actions are secondary to biblical mandate.
- iii. First Baptist Church affirms that all marriage ceremonies performed in the name of this church and any related celebrations or activities allowed in its facilities shall be for unions that meet the standards named in this church constitution and bylaws, and further, that church ministers and staff engage only in marriage ceremonies in keeping with this church's adopted biblical and theological definition of marriage.
- iv. First Baptist Church does not rent our buildings, grounds, or any facilities for any reason. The church facilities, buildings, or grounds shall not be used for personal financial gain. No business shall operate anywhere on the property. All property of First Baptist Church may only be used for weddings that adhere to the biblical

definition of marriage and are solely reserved for use by current, active members of the church. These facilities may not be used by any individual, group, or organization that advocate, endorse, or promote homosexuality or any other form of sexual immorality, as defined herein, as an alternative or acceptable lifestyle. This policy also applies to birthday parties, reunions, anniversaries, wedding or baby showers, funerals, or any other form of celebration or gathering.

ARTICLE III – ROLES OF ELDERS

- i. Leadership Structure – The following structure is established to oversee the overall spiritual direction, activities, and ministries of the church. The senior leadership of the church consists of a plurality of elders (see elder selection process). The elders share the responsibility of ensuring the purity of the biblical doctrines being taught in the church, which in turn dictate the overall direction and activities of the church.
- ii. Elder selection process:
 - a. At the November meeting, candidates for elders shall be presented to the existing elders for consideration. After a thorough interview process with the candidates led by the existing elders they will decide, based on the biblical qualifications in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9, whether or not they recommend a particular candidate to be presented to be voted on by the membership at the first member meeting of the following year (April).
 - b. Steps 4-6 under Article 3i (ordained pastors/elders) applies to all elders.
 - c. Elders can step down from their role at any time as needed or as they feel led. There is no limit to how many elders can serve concurrently.
- iii. Responsibilities of the elders:
 - a. Oversee, supervise, and care for God's church (1 Timothy 3: 1-7)
 - b. Lead, preach, and teach (1 Timothy 5:17)
 - c. Guard biblical doctrines, and encourage the church (2 Timothy 4:1-5)
 - d. Shepherd the flock by exercising oversight while setting an example of godliness (1 Peter 5: 1-4)
 - e. Care for every soul within the church membership (Hebrews 13:17)
 - f. Meet monthly for prayer and to discuss the ministries of the church (Acts 6:4)

- g. Discuss any relevant key doctrinal issues
- h. Develop and propose the annual church budget (see budget approval process)
- i. Direct and advise the bylaws and personnel committees
- j. Present the next year's annual team roster to the church at the November business meeting. (See addendum A – church team roster)
- k. Authorize significant actions of the teams & ministries that require a decision by the elders
- iv. Each ministry and those who serve is accountable to the elders.
- v. Members of each ministry are accountable to the elders

ARTICLE IV – ORDAINED Pastors/Elders/Deacons

- i. Calling of a paid-staff pastor/elder – Elders are the under-shepherds of the church, called by God to willingly lead the congregation that is placed under their care. They are scripturally defined in I Peter 5:1-3, Titus 1:5-9 and I Timothy 3:1-7. They shall be selected in the following manner:
 1. Should an opening for a paid-pastoral position occur that involves candidates outside the current membership, a pastoral search team, or (PST) consisting of two men and two women in various age groups in addition to an elder shall be formed. If there are no elders, then a deacon shall assume the role of leadership of the PST. This team shall be nominated and elected at a special called business meeting, at least one week after being announced to the congregation.
 2. The Pastoral Search Team shall be elected by the church and given the task of seeking out a suitable pastor. The PST shall bring only one man at a time for consideration by the church, after doing extensive research, questioning, and interviewing of the candidate.
 3. When the PST is ready to present a candidate, they shall request a first special called business meeting. The meeting shall convene after Sunday morning services to present before the church a candidate for pastor. The PST shall be instructed by the elder/deacon and treasurer (Hebrews 13:17 and Acts 20:28) regarding the financial package offerings for the candidate. Discussion shall take place during this time, however there shall be no vote at this meeting. Active members will prayerfully consider the candidate for at least one week.
 4. The following Sunday, a second special called business meeting shall convene after Sunday morning services to vote. There shall be no discussion at this

meeting. Active church members shall cast their vote by secret ballot. An affirmative vote of 85% of the membership present and voting is necessary to extend the call.

5. Once called, pastors shall serve until the relationship is terminated by mutual consent or through a biblical mediation process. I Timothy 5:19-22
6. Terms of employment and termination are outlined in the First Baptist Church of Winthrop Harbor Policy Manual.

Deacons shall be selected in the following manner:

- ii. Deacons are active members, faithful, trustworthy, mature men of the church called for the purpose of serving the congregation and supporting the roles of the pastors/elders. They are scripturally defined in Acts 6:1-4 and I Timothy 3:8-12.
1. The council of deacons or pastors/elders shall determine if a need arises for an appointment of a deacon(s).
2. The congregation will be notified of the need to appoint a deacon(s), and through prayerful consideration, nominate candidate(s) from within the body of active members of First Baptist Church Winthrop Harbor.
3. A special call business meeting shall be called within 2 weeks to accept the name(s) of the nominee(s) from the congregation. After it has been confirmed that the nominee(s) has the desire to serve as deacon, and after prayerful consideration, the pastor/elders shall observe and question the nominee(s) to determine the candidate(s) and their eligibility.
4. When a candidate(s) is determined, a special called business meeting shall be called to present the candidate(s) to the church. Discussion may take place at this time. The church shall consider the candidate(s) for one week.
5. The following Sunday a special called business meeting shall be held to vote on the appointment of the deacon(s). There shall be no discussion at this meeting. Active church members shall cast their vote by secret ballot. An affirmation of greater than half of the voting congregation is necessary to extend the call.
 - a. Deacons may serve as long as they desire and may also choose to be removed from the office of deacon. If they choose to be removed from the office of deacon, they shall approach the pastor/elders for discussion. The congregation shall be notified whenever there is a change in the council of deacons. Deacons can also be removed from their office due to moral failure, in which case it would be decided by the pastor/elders to determine if the offense warrants removal from the office of deacon.

- b. Until a sufficient body of deacons is established, the elders may waive the requirement for deacon's membership on the various committees, teams, and ministries of the church.
- c. Deacons are not paid employees; they are voluntary servants of the church.
- d. Deacons shall appoint a leader (chairperson) to serve on an annual rotation.
- e. The deacon leader (chairperson) shall establish a regular meeting schedule.

iii. Duties of deacons:

- a. Be active in the ministries of the church.
- b. Zealously guard the unity of spirit within the church, always endeavoring to maintain the bonds of peace.
- c. Have no authority over other church members, serving only in spiritual and advisory capacity.
- d. Confer privately with the senior pastor about any matters of discipline which, in the deacon's judgment, should be handled in private by the pastor.

ARTICLE V – GENERAL OFFICERS

General officers perform duties that require clearly defined rules for the performance of their role in the church. They are not paid employees but are voluntary servants of the church. In some instances, an individual may fulfill the duties of a general officer, yet also serve in another capacity for which they are paid.

i. Moderator:

- a. The moderator is charged with maintaining good order and discipline during business meetings. All procedural decisions of the moderator are final. During business meetings, the moderator shall follow Robert's Rules of Order and be responsible for:
 - 1. Calling business meetings to order.
 - 2. Recognizing a motion.
 - 3. Calling for a vote.
 - 4. Declaring motions out of order.
 - 5. Declaring meetings adjourned.

- b. The senior pastor shall serve as the moderator. In his absence, an elder shall preside as moderator. In the absence of elders, a deacon shall preside as moderator.
- c. Should a meeting lose the Christian spirit, any member of the church may make a motion to recess; if the moderator concurs, the meeting shall be adjourned until a future date.
- d. The moderator shall recuse himself from the role of moderator if they are the subject of the meeting.

ii. Clerk:

- a. The clerk is charged with maintaining all records of the church and shall maintain on file all written communications and reports.
- b. The clerk shall be charged with keeping a record of all membership matters for the church. They shall issue letters of transfer or dismissal voted on by the church.
- c. The clerk shall maintain a membership book that shall contain the name of each member, the date of each member's baptism and the date of each member's admission and dismissal, transfer, or death.
- d. The clerk shall prepare and mail absentee ballots and voting materials to active non-resident members as outlined in Article X, Section f.
- e. There shall always be at least one associate clerk, who shall have the same duties as the clerk. It is the responsibility of the clerk to ensure that the associate clerk is knowledgeable in the duties of the clerk and familiar with the location of all files pertaining to the office.

iii. Treasurer:

- a. The church shall annually elect a church treasurer and associate treasurer.
- b. It shall be the treasurer's duty:
 - 1. To receive or distribute all monies or things of value received or distributed by the church.
 - 2. To maintain an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.
 - 3. To make all payments by check or electronic funds transfer.

4. To prepare and present a report of all financial transactions at the regular business meetings. An annual financial report shall be filed with the clerk.
- c. All books, records, and accounts kept by the treasurer are the property of the church. The books shall be always open to inspection by any active member of the church upon request to the senior pastor or the elders. The time and date of the inspection shall mutually accommodate the needs of the requesting member and the treasurer.
- d. There shall always be at least one associate treasurer, who shall have the same duties as the treasurer. It is the responsibility of the treasurer to ensure that the associate treasurer is knowledgeable in the duties of the treasurer and familiar with the location of all books, records and accounts pertaining to the office.
- e. When a successor to the standing treasurer is elected, the standing treasurer shall promptly deliver to the active treasurer all books, records and accounts pertaining to the office.
- f. At no time shall the standing treasurer or associate treasurer serve on the financial secretary, trustees, or money counting ministries.

iv. Trustees:

- a. A team of six trustees shall hold in trust the property of the church. One third of the trustees shall be elected annually to serve for three years and until their successors shall be elected. A one-year period of time must elapse before becoming eligible for re-election as a trustee.
- b. At no time shall a standing trustee serve on the financial secretary, money counting, or treasury ministries.
- c. Without a specific vote of the church for such action, the trustees shall have no authority to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property, or legal documents of the church.
- d. With a specific vote of the church for such action, the trustees shall sign for the sale, mortgage, lease, or transfer the specified property and legal documents of the church.
- e. The trustees shall be responsible for securing an annual audit of the financial records and shall render such a report to the church at the annual business meeting.

v. The Bylaws committee and the Personnel committee shall each be directly responsible to the elders.

- a. Both committees shall consist of five members, each of whom shall serve a three-year term. One shall be a deacon, at least two shall be men and at least two shall be women. An elder may sit on the committees as an advisor and observer but shall not be a voting member.
- b. At no time shall an individual serve concurrently on both committees.
- c. Each committee shall elect a chairman and a secretary from their number to facilitate their business.
- d. The bylaws committee shall be responsible for:
 1. Maintaining, editing, and revising the church constitution and by laws with the concurrence of the elders.
 2. Ensuring that the spirit and intent of the church constitution and bylaws are honored, particularly at business meetings and voting matters.
- e. The personnel committee shall be responsible for:
 1. All personnel actions and human relations functions for paid employees of this church.
 2. All hiring actions for paid employees of this church. They shall advertise vacancies, screen applicants, and make recommendations for hiring of employees to the elders. With their concurrence, the elders shall present recommended applicants for paid positions to the church. Applicants shall be hired with a majority vote of the church.
 3. All disciplinary and evaluation actions for paid employees of this church. The committee shall take appropriate actions based upon predefined business practices. Disciplinary and evaluation actions shall be made with the concurrence of the senior pastor.
 4. All firing actions for paid employees of this church. They shall make recommendations for firing actions to the elders, who shall have final authority in all firing actions. Only firing action initiated against an ordained officer shall be brought before the church for a vote.
 5. Background checks for all paid employees and all volunteers that work with legal minors.

ARTICLE VI – CHURCH STAFF

- i. Church staff are employees, paid by the church to perform specific functions that support the ministry of the church.
- ii. Church staff positions shall be filled as follows:
 - a. When a position becomes vacant, the personnel committee, upon direction from the elders, shall initiate a search for qualified candidates.
 - b. The personnel committee shall review applicant's resumes and make a hiring recommendation to the elders.
 - c. If the elders concur, a special called business meeting shall be held to present the candidate to the church. Discussion shall take place, however there shall be no vote at this meeting. Active members will prayerfully consider the candidate for one week.
 - d. The following Sunday, a second special called business meeting shall convene after Sunday services to vote. There shall be no discussion at this meeting. Active church members forming a quorum shall cast their vote by secret ballot. Candidates who receive an affirmative vote from more than half of the congregation shall be approved for hiring by the church.
 - e. The personnel committee shall then initiate the actions necessary to hire the approved candidate.
 - f. Terms of employment are outlined in the First Baptist Church of Winthrop Harbor policy manual.
- iii. The following positions are authorized as paid employees of the church:
 - a. Worship team leader
 - b. Secretary
- iv. Contractual services are used to maintain the cleanliness of the church. The personnel committee is responsible for overseeing the conditions of the contract. When a vacancy or absence occurs in this position, a (non-paid) temporary custodian may be selected by the personnel committee to fill the void until a new contract is formed.
- v. If the need for an additional employee arises, the personnel committee shall develop a job description and bring it before the elders. Upon the approval of the elders, the matter shall be brought before the church in a special called business meeting. If approved by the church, the position shall be filled as outlined in Article V, Section ii.

ARTICLE VII – EMPLOYEES VACATION

Employee vacation is outlined in the First Baptist Church of Winthrop Harbor policy manual.

ARTICLE VIII – TEAMS MINISTRIES AND MISSIONS

- i. Administrative team: This team is responsible for the following ministries:
 - a. membership & records ministry
 - b. money counting ministry – at no time shall those on the money counting ministry serve on the financial secretary, treasury, or trustee ministries.
 - c. trustees ministry – at no time shall trustees serve on the financial secretary, money counting or treasury ministries.

ARTICLE IX – CHURCH FINANCE

- i. This church recognizes and adopts the Scriptural method of regular, purposeful, and sacrificial giving with humility understanding that we are to be faithful stewards and are to give cheerfully in order to support the church's financial opportunities and obligations. I Corinthians 16:2; II Samuel 24:24; Luke 21:1-4; Matthew 6; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; II Corinthians 9:6-7
- a. Offering envelopes shall be made available for use in the giving of tithes and offerings. Online giving is also available on our website.

- ii. Management of church finances:
 - a. There shall be an annual unified church budget.
 - b. There shall be one treasurer and one associate treasurer.
 - c. All financial obligations shall be paid as soon as possible.
 - d. Money designated for denominational causes shall be paid monthly unless otherwise approved by the elders.

Only special offerings recommended by the senior pastor or elders, or those approved by the church, shall be taken. At a minimum the following special offerings shall be taken:

1. Benevolent offering on the first Sunday of every month.
2. Annie Armstrong Easter Offering
3. Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
4. State missions offering

- iii. Allocation of Gifts:

- a. Designated gifts will be accepted for any line item of the approved church budget. Non-monetary gifts will only be reimbursed with the approval of the elders.
- b. All designated gifts received by the treasurer shall be transmitted to their assigned destination. With the approval of the elders any excess balance shall be transferred to the general fund.

iv. Financial Roles – There are five entities that make up the fiscal accountability of this church: the treasurer, the money counters, financial secretary, the trustees, and the elders.

- a. Treasurer:
 1. Receives or distributes all monies or things of value received or distributed by the church. All payments shall be made by check or electronic funds transfer.
 2. Maintains an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.
 3. Prepares and presents reports of all financial transactions at regular business meetings, or as directed by the elders.
- b. Money Counters:
 1. Receive the offering plates from the ushers, separating the money and the offering envelopes.
 2. They shall deposit all monetary offerings into the church bank accounts.
 3. For the purpose of having checks and balances in place, and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, there should always be at least two money counters who are not married or close relatives.
- c. Financial Secretary:
 1. They shall maintain a ledger of all gifts and offerings based upon the offering envelopes.
 2. They shall distribute tax statements to all members at the end of each year.
- d. Trustees:
 1. Sign for the sale, mortgage, lease, or transfer the specified property and legal documents of the church when authorized by a vote of the church.
 2. Secure an annual audit of all financial records of the church.
- e. The annual budget

1. Immediately after being elected at the annual August business meeting, the elders shall begin discussion on the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.
2. There shall be an outside independent audit of the church's financial records annually. The elders shall add a line-item to the annual budget to provide pay for this audit.
3. The elders shall have a finalized proposed budget to submit to the church for approval no later than the December business meeting. The elders and treasurer shall present the proposed budget at this meeting.
4. Once the annual budget is approved by the church, the elders shall then work with the treasurer throughout the year to monitor the financial status of the church.

ARTICLE X – MEETINGS

- i. Worship:
 - a. The Church's goal is to hold regularly scheduled public worship services on the Lord's Day and on other times as directed by the pastoral staff and/or elders.
 - b. The ordinance of the Lord's supper is also to be observed at least once each quarter or at other such times at the senior pastor's discretion. Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28
 - c. Seminars, conferences, special meetings, retreats, and other Christian events shall be recommended by the senior pastor at his discretion. Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28
 - d. The church shall endeavor to conduct outreach events each year and shall cooperate in the simultaneous crusades of the Southern Baptist Convention when possible.
- ii. Business:
 - a. All business meetings of the church shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order.
 - b. The church may act upon the reception of new members, the dismissal of members to other churches, or the appointment of messengers to councils at any regular worship meeting.
 - c. The Moderator shall, when necessary, call from the pulpit a special called business meeting. The particular object of the meeting must be published.

- d. Regular scheduled business meetings shall be held on Sundays in April, August, and November, unless otherwise directed by the elders Hebrews 13:17 and Acts 20:28
- e. Active non-resident members shall be eligible to vote by absentee ballot in regularly scheduled business meetings. Absentee ballots shall not be provided for special called business meetings. The church clerk shall be responsible for mailing an absentee ballot and, if available, appropriate materials to make informed decisions. The voting material shall be mailed in reasonably sufficient time for the active non-resident member to vote and return the ballot to the church clerk before the regular meeting. Absentee ballots must be received prior to the regular vote in order to be counted at the meeting. If the absentee ballot is received after the meeting, it will not be counted.

ARTICLE XI – DISCIPLINE

- i. Definition - Church discipline is the correction or expulsion by the church of one or more of its members for unchristian conduct or unscriptural doctrine.
- ii. Purpose - The primary purpose of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of fallen members and the consequent strengthening of the church and glorifying of the Lord. When a sinning believer is rebuked and he turns from his sin and is forgiven, he is restored back to fellowship with the body and with its head, Jesus Christ. James 5; I Timothy 5:19-20; Matthew 18:15-17.

Necessity:

- a. Church discipline is critically essential to the spiritual health and blessing of any church. Hebrews 12:11
- b. Church discipline is necessary to maintain the dignity and authority of Christ, and to sustain the purity of the church. The church must not shun its duty in dealing with the wayward.
- c. Church discipline involves the instruction of the ignorant; conviction of those in error; correction of wrongdoers; restoration of transgressors and, in extreme cases, exclusion from the congregation of members who persist in unrepentant wickedness. I Corinthians 5:12-13; Hebrews 12:6

- iii. Methods: In all of the below listed means of discipline the pastor, elders, deacons, and church members must be judicious, impartial, loving, and prayerful “taking heed to themselves lest they also be tempted.” Galatians 6:1
 - a. Public instruction: The various teaching and preaching services of the church should be a general means of discipline; a source of Godly restraining influences. These services should be used as a means of acquainting the congregation with the principles of Christian conduct. II Timothy 4:1-5

- b. Private instruction and exhortation: These may be wisely given when the circumstances require. Attempt to resolve the issue in accordance with Matthew 18:15, confronting the individual in a spirit of Christian love. Accusing an offender who may be ignorant of the teaching of God's word, is to defeat the purpose of discipline.
- c. Private rebuke or admonition: If the issue remains unresolved, approach the member in accordance with Matthew 18:16. This should take precedence over any public recognition of wrongdoing, and should be administered in the presence of an elder and at least one other believer. Witnesses selected should be disinterested parties, not ones aggrieved by the offense.
- d. Public Censure: The action of public explanation and rebuke is only necessary in extreme cases. It should be used to save the church from internal dissension or public reproach. It is done to rescue the transgressor and to restrain others from pitfalls. (James 5:20). Approach the matter in accordance with Matthew 18:17, bringing the matter before the church. The elders shall consider the statements of the offender, the aggrieved and the witnesses individually before making a recommendation for action.

iv. Offenses:

- a. Between brethren: The offended person is instructed by scripture to go to the offender; if reconciliation fails, he then should take witnesses with him to the offender; if, with the witnesses, he fails in reconciliation, he then should report to the church through the pastor or elders. Matthew 5:23-24 & 18:15-17
- b. Heresy of doctrine: Any church member who holds or propagates heretical views of doctrine contrary to the doctrinal statement of the church shall be subject to church discipline. Galatians 1:8-9; I Timothy 6:3-5
- c. Unholy conduct: Any members guilty of serious offenses against Christian standards of life, conduct, and character as set forth in the scriptures and as restated in the church covenant, shall likewise be subject to disciplinary action. I Corinthians 5:1-13; Galatians 5:19-21
- d. Propagation of discord: Any member or members of the church who disturbs the unity and peace of the congregation by trouble making, backbiting, gossiping, or spreading contention is a viable candidate for discipline by the church. Having secret meetings to engage in such conduct will result in disciplinary action against all members who participate. Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:9-11.
- e. Same sex unions: No pastor, elder, deacon, or member of First Baptist Church of Winthrop Harbor may participate, abet, or sanction in anyway the union of persons of the same sex in any form of marriage. Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1: 9-10

- v. In cases of grave discord within the church body, the church will be ready, if requested, to ask advice of an acceptable council from neighboring churches of like faith and order.

ARTICLE XII – DISSOLUTION

- i. In the event that the First Baptist Church of Winthrop Harbor votes to dissolve as an organized association, all assets of this church shall be liquidated in accordance with state laws in effect at the time of dissolution.
- ii. No member or former member of this church may claim any asset, nor enrich themselves in any way in the dissolution of this church.
- iii. It is the wish of this congregation that the proceeds from the liquidation of this church's assets be passed to the Southern Baptist Convention, through the state or national office, for use in the furtherance of God's work.
- iv. Furthermore, this church agrees that we are and always shall be Southern Baptist, in accordance with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 Edition. We believe in and support the Cooperative Program and will continue to give our tithe to this entity. In the event of an attempted hostile takeover, no person or persons shall be allowed to sell or transfer ownership of any building or any other asset of this church, unless the proceeds of which go directly to the Southern Baptist Convention, through the state or national office.

ARTICLE XIII – AMENDMENTS

- i. The constitution, articles of faith, church covenant and bylaws may only be amended with extended notice, hearing, public discussion, and a vote by the membership of this church.
- ii. Any proposed changes to this document must be presented to the church in writing, not less than one month prior to the proposed meeting to vote on the change.
- iii. The change shall be read from the pulpit at a special called business meeting one Sunday prior to the vote. A presentation by the bylaws committee shall be made to explain the rationale for the change. Public discussion shall occur, however there shall be no vote at this meeting.
- iv. The following Sunday, a special called business meeting shall be held solely for the purpose of voting and approving changes to the bylaws. There shall be no public discussion at this meeting. Changes to the bylaws must be approved by a three-fourths (75%) vote of the active, voting church members present to be implemented. Any changes to the constitution, articles of faith, or church covenant must be approved by a 90% vote of the active, voting church members present.

- v. Once approved, the revised document shall be dated, and a copy handed over to the church clerk.

Latest Revision, November 2023. By Laws team: Bob Frost, Jessel Moore, Jean Mountz, Sheryl Spears, Pastor Corwin Wong.

Addendum A – annual team roster

- Elders
- Deacons
- Treasurer
- Trustees
- Office manager
- Worship leader