

**BYLAWS  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
COOKEVILLE, TENNESSEE**

**ARTICLE I  
MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1: Membership**

The membership of this church shall consist of persons who have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior; who desire to be numbered among His disciples; who have experienced believer's baptism by immersion; who are in harmony with the faith and practices of this church; and whose membership is confirmed by the church.

**Section 2: Admission of Members**

Membership may be initiated and affirmed during any worship service with confirmation by the Church at the next regular business meeting. Membership shall be:

- a) By profession of faith followed by the ordinance of baptism;
- b) By letter transferred from another Baptist church, provided the candidate was baptized by immersion as a believer;
- c) By personal "statement of faith in Jesus Christ" when no letter is obtainable and the candidate has been baptized by immersion and is in agreement with the basic teachings of First Baptist Church regarding salvation and baptism;
- d) By Watch Care. A person wanting to retain membership in another church of like faith, but while residing in this community desires to worship in and minister through First Baptist Church of Cookeville may request membership by Watch Care. This person will have all the rights of membership except voting privileges.

If any member objects to a candidate's admission into the membership of this church, the objection shall be submitted in writing to the senior pastor prior to confirmation by the church. The matter of membership shall then be referred to the deacon body for review. A report shall be made to the church regarding the validity of the objection at either a regular or called business meeting. Following the report but before any action is taken by the church on admission, the candidate shall have the opportunity to respond.

Except in cases in which an objection is raised to a candidate's membership or a person is excluded from membership following disciplinary action, all admissions or terminations of membership shall be confirmed by a vote accepting the membership report presented at a regular business meeting. A simple majority vote will be required in all matters relating to admissions and terminations of membership.

**Section 3: Termination of Membership**

Church membership may be terminated in the following ways:

- a) By letter transferred to another church of like faith;
- b) By erasure upon evidence of membership in another denomination;
- c) By personal written request;
- d) By death;
- e) By exclusion following church disciplinary action.

This church emphasizes that every reasonable measure shall be taken to assist a troubled member. The senior pastor, other members of the ministerial staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. Biblical standards and Christian concern for redemption rather than punishment shall guide the attitudes of church members toward one another. Prior to any disciplinary action, said member shall be called before the senior pastor and deacons to be examined in regard to any charge of gross immorality, persistent failure to comply with covenant obligations or overt denial of any part of the doctrinal statement of this church. The failure of a member to appear when requested shall not serve to stay action of the examining body. After prayerful consideration, the senior pastor and deacons will then make recommendations for appropriate action to the church at either a regular or called business meeting.

#### **Section 4: New Member Orientation**

All new members are invited and encouraged to participate in a member orientation program at an early date.

## ARTICLE II CHURCH LEADERS

All persons who serve as leaders shall be active members in good standing of this church. An active church member in good standing is one who supports the church through regular attendance and stewardship.

The leaders of the church shall consist of the senior pastor, other ministerial staff, deacons, moderator, church clerk, parliamentarian, financial leaders, trustees and other lay leaders.

#### **Section 1: Ministerial Staff**

- a) Senior Pastor. The senior pastor is the spiritual leader of the church. The senior pastor shall be an ordained Baptist minister. The senior pastor shall give general administrative leadership to the work of the church and serve in whatever way he and the church mutually agree to be in the best interest of Christ's Kingdom. The senior pastor will work with the deacons, other ministerial staff, support staff and lay leaders to:
  - 1) lead the church in the achievement of its mission;
  - 2) proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers;
  - 3) provide pastoral care for church members, their families, and other persons in the community; and
  - 4) equip church members for the work of ministry and service to God.

The senior pastor shall be called by the church upon the recommendation of the Senior Pastor Search Committee and a vote by the church as herein provided for, to

serve for as long as he and the church mutually agree that his services as senior pastor are in accord with the purpose of God.

The committee shall bring only one name at a time for consideration by the church. The vote to call shall take place at a called business meeting following Sunday morning worship. The resident membership shall be notified by mail at least five (5) days prior to the meeting. The vote shall be by paper ballot. An affirmative vote of at least eighty percent (80%) of those church members present and voting at such meeting shall constitute a call as senior pastor. The compensation and other fringe benefits shall be those agreed upon by the incoming senior pastor and the Senior Pastor Search Committee with concurrence of the Personnel and Stewardship Committees and vote of the church. The senior pastor, after accepting the call, shall serve until he: 1) resigns, giving the church at least two week's notice of his intention to relinquish the pastorate, or 2) is removed from his office by a vote of at least sixty percent (60%) of those present and voting by secret paper ballot at a called business meeting, after a two week's notice in writing of the purpose of such a meeting has been given by the deacon body to the church members.

- b) Other ministerial staff. Other ministerial staff may be called as the church determines the need, upon the recommendation of the senior pastor and the Personnel Committee. An affirmative vote by paper ballot consisting of at least eighty percent (80%) of those members present and voting at a called business meeting shall constitute a call. The compensation and other fringe benefits of the incoming minister shall be those agreed upon by the said minister and Personnel Committee with concurrence of the Stewardship Committee and vote of the church. All ministers shall have a job description approved by the church outlining their duties and responsibilities. All ministers shall be directly responsible to the senior pastor and the Personnel Committee for their areas of the church's ministry. Resignation and/or termination of service shall be subject to the same procedures as those outlined for the senior pastor. The church may vote to add, delete, modify or combine ministerial staff positions upon recommendation of the senior pastor and Personnel Committee.

## **Section 2: Lay Leaders**

- a) Deacons. The church shall have a Deacon Body. The qualifications for the office of deacon, the procedure for election, the duties and responsibilities of deacons, and all other information concerning deacons, shall be set forth in the duly adopted Deacon's Manual.
- b) Moderator. A moderator and an alternate moderator shall annually be nominated by the deacon body and elected by the church. The moderator's and the alternate moderator's term of office will run from January through December of the same calendar year.
- c) Church Clerk. The church shall annually elect a church clerk upon nomination by the Nominating Committee. The Clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The church may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to a church secretary, who will assist the elected clerk. All records generated by the church clerk will be maintained in duplicate. One copy will be located in the church office and one copy will be kept

off-site with the church clerk. At the end of each church year, the yearly records will be compiled and stored off-site in a secure location.

- d) Parliamentarian. The church shall annually elect a parliamentarian upon nomination by the Nominating Committee for all regular and called business meetings.
- e) Financial Leaders. 1) Stewardship Committee and Minister of Administration. The church shall annually elect a Stewardship Committee upon nomination by the Committee on Committees. The Stewardship Committee shall exercise general supervision over all financial affairs of the church. The church may delegate some of these responsibilities to the Minister of Administration (a ministerial staff position). The Stewardship Committee shall render to the church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements since the preceding report. All records and accounts kept by the church are the sole property of the church. The records, except contributions, shall be open to inspection by any church member. Upon rendering the annual accounting at the end of each fiscal year and its acceptance and approval by the church, the accounting report shall be delivered to the church clerk, who shall keep and preserve that report as part of the permanent records of the church. 2) Treasurer and assistant treasurers. The church shall annually elect a church treasurer and two assistant church treasurers upon nomination by the Nominating Committee. It shall be the responsibility of the church treasurer to be the primary co-signer of all church checks issued in payment of church obligations. If the church treasurer is not available or unable to fulfill this responsibility, it shall pass to either of the assistant church treasurers. The church treasurer shall serve as an *ex officio* member of the Stewardship Committee.

A church auditing committee or certified public accountant shall audit the financial report and records annually. Every third year an external person or firm shall conduct this audit. The church treasurer, the assistant church treasurers, and the Minister of Administration shall be bonded in an amount set annually by the Stewardship Committee with the church paying the premium cost of the bond. All checks issued by the church shall be signed by at least two of the following persons: 1) the church treasurer, 2) the assistant church treasurers, and 3) the Minister of Administration.

- f) Trustees. The church shall have five (5) trustees, one of whom shall be elected each year for a five-year term, upon nomination by the Committee on Committees. A person must be a member of the church for a minimum of ten years before being eligible to be nominated as a trustee. After serving a five-year term, no trustee shall be eligible for re-election until the lapse of at least one year. Any trustee, however, who is elected to fill another's un-expired term, shall be eligible for re-election for a full term without the lapse of one year. The trustees shall be charged with administering the will of the church in all legal matters, but they shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property or contractually bind the church without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. Although it is expected that all five trustees will execute legal documents on behalf of the church, only three (3) trustee signatures are required to contractually bind the church in any legal matter.
- g) Other lay leaders. Teachers and other leaders of various church ministries shall be nominated annually by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church.

A lay leader who is: 1) physically or mentally unable to carry out the responsibilities of the leadership position, or 2) refuses to act to carry out the responsibilities of the leadership position pursuant to the directions of the church, shall be subject to removal from the position by vote of the church upon recommendation of the appropriate committee.

## ARTICLE III MEETINGS

### **Section 1: Worship, Evangelism, Bible Study, Training and Service**

- a) The church shall hold regular meetings open to all persons for the purposes of worship, prayer, praise, preaching, evangelism, teaching, training and fellowship on Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings and Wednesday evenings. Other meetings of the church as a whole or by authorized groups within the church shall be set according to the needs of the congregation, or the groups concerned, with the advice and consent of the appropriate minister. The senior pastor and/or ministerial staff, in consultation with the Chair of the Deacon Body, may cancel any worship service or church meeting for the following reasons: 1) if it is deemed that attending or attempting to attend such worship service or church meeting would jeopardize the safety of the members, or 2) for other good cause.
- b) Revival and other special services may be held when the church so chooses. The ministerial staff, in consultation with appropriate committees or groups, will schedule such services.

### **Section 2: Church Business**

- a) Regular business meetings shall be held at least quarterly.
- b) Called business meetings may be held when called by the senior pastor, Chair of Deacons or the Deacon Body, with one week's prior notice being given at regular services and the purpose of said meeting stated.
- c) A quorum shall consist of those members present and voting at a regular business meeting or one that has been properly called.
- d) For most motions brought before the Church Body, a voice vote will suffice to determine if the motion passes or fails. Upon request by any member of the church, or the moderator, a show-of-hands vote, a standing vote, or a paper ballot will be taken. On motions in which a set percentage is necessary for passage, the moderator shall take a show-of-hands, a standing vote, or a paper ballot, noting both the number of affirmative and the number of negative votes in order to determine the percentage of each vote.
- e) All notices for called business meetings must be given to the church membership with sufficient detail and specificity so as to inform members of what church matter is to be voted upon.
- f) *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest revision, shall govern all matters of parliamentary procedure unless superseded by this document.

## ARTICLE IV THE CHURCH COUNCIL

The Church Council shall lead the church in planning, correlating, coordinating, conducting, and evaluating the ministries and programs of the church and its organizations. All matters agreed upon by the Church Council which call for action not already approved shall be referred to the church for approval.

### **Section 1: Purpose**

The primary functions of the Church Council shall be to recommend to the church suggested objectives and church goals; to review and coordinate ministry and program plans; to recommend to the church the use of leadership and calendar time; and to evaluate program and ministry effectiveness.

### **Section 2: Membership**

The Church Council shall be composed of the ministerial staff, Chair of Deacons, and four lay representatives; one each from the following ministry areas: education, music, missions and preschool/children. Each lay representative shall be actively involved in the ministry from which he or she is selected and shall be chosen by the leaders in the particular ministry area.

## ARTICLE V CHURCH COMMITTEES

The church shall establish such standing and *ad hoc* committees, as it deems necessary to fulfill its stated mission. Much of the work of the Church is carried out through committees, who work closely with the ministerial staff and make regular reports and bring recommendations to the church at business meetings. The Committee on Committees shall nominate members of these committees to the church. Committee membership is then subject to be voted on by the church in a regular or called business meeting. The Nominating Committee shall recommend to the church for election members of the Committee on Committees.

### **Section 1: General Guidelines**

Guidelines concerning committee duties and responsibilities are specified in the Church Committee Manual, which is to be kept up-to-date and made available by the Committee on Committees.

### **Section 2: Standing Committees**

Standing committees are listed and described in the Church Committee Manual, along with their purpose and duties. Additional standing committees may be added upon the recommendation of the Committee on Committees, or other church committee or organization, and approval by the church. At least one member of the ministerial staff shall be named as a liaison member of each committee.

### **Section 3: Special Committees**

Appropriate committees or organizations may recommend special *ad hoc* committees to the church for specific tasks. Upon approval by the church, the Committee on Committees shall recommend members for an *ad hoc* committee. Upon completion of the assigned tasks, the *ad hoc* committee shall be deemed dissolved.

## ARTICLE VI LICENSING, ORDAINING, COMMISSIONING

### **Section 1: Licensing**

The church may grant a license to preach to any person who gives evidence of being called to preach the gospel. When needed, the senior pastor shall call a Licensing Council composed of the ordained persons of the church and ordained persons from surrounding like-minded Baptist churches. The senior pastor shall serve as chair *pro tem* with the first item of business being the election of a chair by the Council membership. The Council shall examine the qualifications of the candidate and bring a recommendation to the church. Upon recommendation by the Licensing Council and approval by the church, a licensing service shall be held.

### **Section 2: Ordination**

The church may set a person apart to an office of leadership in the Christian ministry by ordination as a minister of the gospel for a specific calling in which ordination is required, such as pastor, chaplain, evangelist, or other ministerial position. The candidate must give satisfactory evidence of being called to the ministry and of the scriptural qualifications for ordination. Procedures as outlined for licensing will be followed for examination of the candidate. Upon recommendation of the Ordination Council and approval by the church, an ordination service shall be held.

### **Section 3: Commissioning**

The church may demonstrate support for and encouragement to church members who are going to the mission field, for short or long term assignments, by having them participate in a commissioning service.

## ARTICLE VII

## CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year of the church will begin on January 1 of any particular calendar year and end on December 31 of the same calendar year. The program year of the church shall be that determined by the church council.

## ARTICLE VIII CHURCH OPERATIONS MANUAL

A Church Operations Manual shall be kept in and maintained by the church office. It will include such things as Church Policies and Procedures Manual, Church Committee Manual, Personnel Policy Manual, Deacon's Manual, Constitution, Bylaws and other information relevant to the smooth operation of church functions. It will be available for church members to review any time that the church office is open. Any changes in policies, procedures, or committees may be initiated by any individual or group, but shall proceed through the proper channels of committee(s), council, and/or staff. If approved by the appropriate committee and the Church Body (if necessary), these changes will be reflected in the manual as soon as possible, with revision dates stated. The Church Operations Manual will be reviewed annually by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

## ARTICLE IX AMENDMENTS TO THE CHURCH BYLAWS

Proposed amendments to the Church Bylaws will be submitted to the Chair of the Church Constitution and Bylaws Committee in writing. The Chair of the Church Constitution and Bylaws Committee will present the proposed amendment or amendments to the Church Body at a regular business meeting with the committee's recommendation. Wording of the proposed amendment or amendments will be distributed in writing to the Church membership at least one week before the business meeting. A simple majority of those members present and voting in favor of the amendment at two consecutive business meetings is required to approve an amendment to the Bylaws. If the proposed amendment or amendments does not receive a simple majority vote at both meetings, at least six months must elapse before that amendment can be brought back to the church for further consideration.