CONSTITUTION
2023

ARTICLE 1 – NAME AND PURPOSE SECTION 1.01 - NAME
This body of believers shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Weston, Missouri. The main meeting place of the church shall be at 160 Walnut Street, Weston, Missouri. The church is incorporated according to the laws of the State of Missouri governing the incorporation of religious organizations as a not-for-profit corporation.

SECTION 1.02 – PURPOSE
This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, for such purposes, the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, day-care centers, and camps; the evangelizing of the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the educating of believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, both in Sunday and weekday schools of Christian education; and the maintaining of missionary activities in the United States and in any foreign country.

SECTION 1.03 – AFFILIATION
In order to better fulfill our purpose, we voluntarily choose to affiliate our church with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Missouri Baptist Convention, and any local association of Southern Baptist churches which we believe would be of mutual benefit. Further, we may associate in local ministries with the Weston Ministerial Alliance.

ARTICLE 2 – STATEMENT OF FAITH

THE SCRIPTURES
The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.
Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

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.

God the Father
God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.
Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

God the Son
Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.
Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

God the Holy Spirit
The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ.

He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.
Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

MAN
Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.
Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

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

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.
Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification 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 regenerate person's life.

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

GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE
Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.
All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.
Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39–12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

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/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.
The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.
Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

BAPTISM & THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.
The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.
Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

THE LORD'S DAY

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

THE KINGDOM

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

earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.
Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

LAST THINGS
God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.
Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

EVANGELISM & MISSIONS
It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.
Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

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

adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

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

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

STEWARDSHIP

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

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

COOPERATION

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

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

THE CHRISTIAN & SOCIAL ORDER

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

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

PEACE & WAR

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

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

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

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the

right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power. Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

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

SECTION 2.01 – AUTHORITY OF THE STATEMENT OF FAITH

This *Statement of Faith* does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing *Statement of Faith* accurately represents the teachings of the Bible, and therefore, is binding upon all members. All literature used in the church and all teaching shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.

SECTION 2.02 – CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of our Father, and of the

Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, the Heavenly Hosts, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. Its Elders and Pastors do hereby covenant and affirm that they will teach sound doctrine (in accordance with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000) leading to a healthy and growing body of believers, and its Deacons do hereby affirm that they will diligently serve the body in practical matters. God has given each local congregation all that it needs to individually and corporately mature and carry out the commands and commissions of our Lord (Col. 4:15). First Baptist Church of Weston, Missouri will equip the saints for ministry, edifying the body of Christ. As each member of First Baptist Church of Weston, Missouri has covenanted, so I join them in covenanting and affirming the following:

- I have repented of my sins and believe and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior.
- I have been baptized by immersion upon profession of faith.
- I affirm the Statement of Faith of First Baptist Church of Weston, Missouri.
- I desire to be a member of the First Baptist Church of Weston, Missouri.
- I affirm and accept the following responsibilities and will fulfill them by the Lord's grace:
    - Seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, especially through prayer and God's Word.
    - Support the church with my regular attendance in worship.
    - Seek to use my spiritual gift(s) in our church in service to Christ, to the glory of God.
    - Joyfully support the church financially, as the Lord leads.
    - Be accountable to the church in doctrine and conduct.
    - Submit to the loving rule, oversight, and authority of the Elders regarding reproof, instruction, correction, and loving discipline as outlined in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 5:16, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 13:17).
    - If/when I remove from this place, will as soon as possible unite with some other church where I can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Printed Name: _____ Signature:_____

Date: _____

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 3.01 – QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Upon a majority vote of members present at any church service or meeting, membership shall be extended to all who have had, and whose lives evidence a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; who renounce sin; who endeavor to live a consecrated life wholly unto the Lord; who fully subscribe to the *Statement of Faith* contained herein; who enter into *the Church Covenant* contained herein; who agree to submit to the authority of the church and its Elders and Pastors set forth herein; and upon compliance with any one of the following conditions:

- By baptism by immersion as a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior;

- By letter of transfer from another Southern Baptist church, or other written statement of good standing from the previous Christian church if the applicant has been baptized by immersion - and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost - subsequent to a profession of faith;
- By profession of faith and statement of baptism by immersion by another church of like faith and practice, and by willingly accepting the *Statement of Faith* and the teachings of this church; or
- By restoration, if having been removed from membership, upon majority vote of the congregation after confession is made publicly before the church membership of the sin or sins involved, and satisfactorily evidencing repentance to the Pastor and/or Elders.

SECTION 3.02 – EXPECTATIONS OF A MEMBER

Upon becoming a member of this church, in addition to the covenant contained in Article 2, Section 2.02, each one further covenants to love, honor, and esteem the Pastors and Elders; to pray for them; to recognize their authority in spiritual affairs of the church; to cherish a brotherly love for all members of the church; to support the church by regularly attending worship services (Heb.10: 24 -25), by prayer, tithes, offerings, and other financial support as the Lord leads and enables; and in accordance with Biblical commands, to support through a lifestyle walk affirming the beliefs and practices of the church.

SECTION 3.03 – PRIVILEGES OF A MEMBER

- Only active members at least eighteen years of age who are physically present at a duly called meeting of the church are entitled to vote. There shall be no proxy or absentee voting. The eligible membership of the church has certain limited areas to exercise a vote. Members may not vote to initiate any action of the church, but rather to ratify or reject the direction of the church as determined by the Pastors and Elders with Deacons.
- This congregation functions not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the direction of the Pastors and Elders, as the under-shepherds with the counsel of the deacons and church body. Determinations of the internal affairs of this church are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the church's own rules and procedures. The Pastors and Elders shall oversee and/or conduct all aspects of this church with assistance and counsel provided by the Deacons and church body.
- Membership in this church does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based upon principles of democratic government. Although the general public is invited to all of the church's worship services, the church property remains private property. The Pastors and Elders and Deacons have the authority to suspend or revoke the right of any person, including a member, to enter or remain on the church property. If after being notified of such a suspension or revocation, the person enters and remains on church property, the person may, in the discretion of the Pastors and Elders or designated individual, be treated as a trespasser.
- A member, upon five business days prior written request made upon the church, may inspect or copy the prepared financial statements of the church or the Family Meeting minutes.

- A member may not, under any circumstances, inspect or copy any record relating to individual contributions to the church, the list of names and addresses of church members, or the accounting books and financial records of the church.

SECTION 3.04 – DISCIPLINE OF A MEMBER

- The Pastors and Elders will oversee any and all Church Discipline matters. The Elders and Pastors shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the *Statement of Faith* and violations of the Church Covenant and this Constitution. If the Pastors and Elders or a Deacon is the subject of a disciplinary matter, they shall be entitled to the same steps as other church members and be subject to the same discipline.
- Members are expected to demonstrate a special love for one another. When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother. Before he goes, he should first examine himself. When he goes, he should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration.
- If reconciliation is not reached, a second member is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. The second step should also be preceded by self-examination and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration.
- If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in bullet points 2 and 3 have been taken, Pastors and Elders shall hear the matter. If the matter is not resolved during the hearing before the Pastors and Elders they shall recommend to the members of the church that they, after self-examination, make an effort personally to go to the offending member and seek that member's restoration.
- If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in bullet points 2, 3, and 4 have been taken, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.
- No matter may be heard by the Pastors and Elders or the church unless the steps outlined in bullet points 2 and 3 have been taken, except in the case of a public offense.
- If an unrepentant offending party is removed from the church membership, all contact with him from that point forward (except by family members) must be for the sake of restoration. *Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; Titus 3:10-11*.

SECTION 3.05 – TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

Any Member, not under the disciplinary process of Section 3.04, who desires a letter of transfer to another Southern Baptist church, may receive it upon the request of the new church to which he desires membership. If the new church is not another Southern Baptist church, a letter of transfer will not be sent; however, upon membership in any other church, the member will be dropped from membership in this church, with a letter of dismissal in good standing, and a recommendation to the receiving church.

SECTION 3.06 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- No member of this church may hold membership in another church. If any member unites in membership with another church, that person is automatically terminated without notice from membership in this church.
- A member may resign at any time and a letter of transfer or written statement of good standing may be issued at the discretion of the Pastors and Elders.
- As a last resort, a member may be excluded from membership on grounds of doctrinal heresy or for the offense of seeking to produce a division within the church. Such an exclusion must be recommended by the Pastors and Elders and receive an affirmation two-thirds vote by the membership present at a special meeting called for such action.
- The active membership of any individual member shall be terminated after attempts have been made without notice if the member in question has not attended a regular worship service within the preceding twelve months – without just cause determined by the Pastors and Elders. Upon good cause being presented to the Pastors and Elders this provision for membership termination may be waived in the case of any member at their discretion.
- In the event that a member moves away the Pastors and Elders will dedicate a year to helping find a church of like faith. If, after a year, the member(s) have not committed to a church their membership will be removed and a written statement of good standing may be issued at the discretion of the Pastor and Elders at a later date.

ARTICLE 4 – OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH
The biblical offices in the church are Pastors, Elders and Deacons.

SECTION 4.01 – ELDERS
Elders are the men who are called and qualified to oversee the ministry and resources of the church. They are to devote themselves to prayer and a ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-6). They are responsible for shepherding and overseeing the flock according to the Scriptures.
- The Biblical terms "elder" (*presbuteros*), "overseer" (*episkopos*), and "pastor" (*poimen*) refer to three functions of the one office of Elder.
- The Elder's purpose is to teach, oversee, and lead the church in accordance with the New Testament and will have oversight of all spiritual and teaching ministry, including worship ministries.
- Elders may be paid or lay leaders in the church and this will be determined by the needs of the church. Regarding employment of the church see section 4.03.
- The qualifications of an elder are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- The elders shall meet regularly to pray for the congregation, discuss matters relating to the spiritual oversight of the church, membership, stewardship of resources, doctrine, and other matters relating to the body.
- The church shall seek to call a plurality of biblically qualified elders without setting a specific number of elders (Acts 14:4; 20:17; 21:18: Titus 1:5; James 5:14).
- The church shall nominate candidates for eldership and the current Elders will determine if candidates meet the biblical qualifications.
- Qualified Candidates will complete an elder candidate program lead by the current Eldership of the church and will be appointed by ordination of the same current Eldership.

- The Elders and Deacons shall appoint and have oversight of a Stewardship Team appointed to create and propose an annual budget to the congregation.
- Neither past divorce, current remarriage, current celibacy, or unbelieving children shall automatically disqualify an otherwise-qualified candidate for Eldership. Rather, the current Eldership will examine the candidate's life for strong evidence of faithfulness in all relationships, including but not limited to family, employment, and church membership.
- A quorum of Elders shall consist of two-thirds of the current elders.
- An Elder may not serve as the treasurer.
- Elders shall serve as active members of the Elder counsel.
- Any Elder, including Staff Pastors, may seek a sabbatical in which he shall temporarily take a respite from his responsibilities as an Elder. All sabbaticals must be approved by a majority of the other Elders. The duration of the sabbatical shall be determined through consultation with the other Elders.
- The termination of an Elder from his office may happen at the discretion of the Elders by unanimous vote.
- An Elder may resign at any time by written resignation.
- Elder Emeritus: Our church may confer the office of Elder Emeritus to honor any Elder upon the recommendation of the Eldership. An Elder Emeritus may attend regular meetings of the Elder Counsel at the request of the Elders.
- "*Understanding that we do not currently have an established plurality of elders the Deacons will serve in the interim until God provides men for this role. At that time, this bullet point in the Constitution will be put forward for a vote to be removed by the congregation at the recommendation of those Elders."*

SECTION 4.02 – LEAD PASTOR

The Lead Pastor shall be an elder of the church. He shall perform the duties of an elder and meet the qualifications of an elder described above. The Lead Pastor shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

- The Lead Pastor with the Elders shall be responsible for the church's public services, including the regular preaching and administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- The Lead Pastor, with counsel of the other Elders, shall have the primary responsibility of overseeing and evaluating staff and other leaders of the church.
- Along with the Elders of the church, the Lead Pastor will be responsible for overseeing the spiritual health and doctrine of the church.
- As the Elder who labors in preaching and teaching, the Lead Pastor shall receive paid compensation so that he may focus on his calling to minister to the body as long as the church is able (1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Corinthians 9:14).
- In the absence of the Lead Pastor, the Elders shall assume and share responsibility for his duties.
- The Lead Pastor shall be elected by the Elders of the church upon a three-fourths vote of affirmation of the congregation.

SECTION 4.03 - EMPLOYMENT AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

- The Elders of the church shall be in charge of assessing needs of the body and bringing employment suggestions and a plan to the church including but not limited to: additional paid Pastors, Ministry Directors, and/or support staff.

SECTION 4.04 – DEACONS

The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons are those gifted by God to serve the temporal needs of the church. The diaconate ministry will not serve a spiritual oversight or elder type function.

- The biblical term "deacon" (*diakonos*) signifies a servant.
- For the Christian Church, the office of deacon refers to men whom God has gifted, and the church has called, to serve a specific physical and logistical needs of the congregation (i.e., benevolence, care, stewardship, outreach, etc.) and are responsible for building ministry teams to accomplish the work.
- The church shall nominate candidates for deaconship and the Elders will determine which candidates meet biblical qualifications.
- Qualified candidates will complete a Deacon candidate program lead by the current Eldership and Deacon body and will be appointed by ordination of the the same current Eldership (1 Timothy 3:10).
- The diaconate ministry serves under the direction of the Elders and shall not operate as an independent ministry but one that works with the Elders.
- Deacons will meet as they deem necessary and at the request of the Elders.
- Deacons will meet the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- Any Deacon may seek a sabbatical in which he shall temporarily take a respite from his responsibilities as a Deacon. All sabbaticals must be approved by a majority of the Elders. The duration of the sabbatical shall be determined through consultation with the Elders.
- Deacon Emeritus: Our church may confer the office of Deacon Emeritus to honor any deacon upon the recommendation of the deacon body. A Deacon Emeritus may attend regular meetings of the deacon body at the request of the active Deacon body.
- A deacon may resign at any time by written resignation.
- Per the Articles of Incorporation the Chair of the Deacon Body serves as the president of the corporation.

ARTICLE 5 – ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES & DUTIES

In addition to the Offices above the church recognizes these necessary administrative roles and duties.

SECTION 5.01 – CLERK

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and Special Family Meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the Elders of the church.

- The clerk will be a member of the church in good standing.
- The clerk will be nominated by the Elders and elected by the congregation.

- In the absence of the Clerk, the Elders shall appoint a trusted member to perform the duties of the Church Clerk.

SECTION 5.02 – TREASURER & ASSISTANT TREASURER

The Treasurer and/or Assistant Treasurer shall:

- Be responsible for all funds of the Corporation and deposit all funds in the name of the church in banks, trust companies, or other depositories as shall be selected by action of the church.
- Receive, and give receipt for all contributions, gifts, and donations to the church.
- Disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the church as long as may be directed by church action, or the budget adopted by church action, taking proper vouchers for the disbursements (i.e., a purchase order or receipt and request for reimbursement).
- Keep and maintain adequate and correct accounts of the church's properties and business transactions including account of its assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, and capital.
- Make all expenditures of the church.
- When and as requested, render to the Pastors, Elders and Deacon Body accounts of all his or her transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.
- Present a written report of itemized disbursements at the regular Family Meetings of the church.
- Serve as Treasurer of the Corporation and keep all church financial records and deliver them to any successor upon leaving the role.
- Selection of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer: the Elders shall recommend qualified persons to the church to fill the role of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

SECTION 5.03 – MODERATOR & ASSISTANT MODERATOR

- The Moderator or Assistant Moderator, if the Moderator is absent, shall conduct the Family Meetings of the church. In case of the absence of both the Moderator and the Assistant Moderator, and Elder shall serve as Acting Moderator.
- Selection of Moderator and Assistant Moderator: the Elders shall recommend qualified persons to the church to fill the role of Moderator and Assistant Moderator.

ARTICLE 6 – MEETINGS

SECTION 6.01 – MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Unless otherwise determined by the Pastors and Elders, the church shall meet each Sunday for public worship.

SECTION 6.02 – REGULAR CHURCH FAMILY MEETINGS

- Our church shall hold regular quarterly Family Meetings scheduled by the Elders and Pastors.
- The Agenda for quarterly Family Meetings shall be determined by the Elders of the church with advisement of the Deacons and congregation.
- The elected moderator shall determine the rules of order (based upon *Robert's Rules of Order*) according to his sense of fairness and common sense, giving all eligible members a reasonable

opportunity to be heard on a matter. The moderator is the final authority on questions and procedure, and his decision is final and controlling.
- A quorum shall consist of 25 eligible voting members being present.

SECTION 6.03 – SPECIAL FAMILY MEETINGS
- The Pastors and Elders may call a Special Family Meeting by giving notice of such meeting and the purpose for which it is called from the pulpit at least three days prior to the meeting. Or by a common petition of twenty-five (25) members of our church
    - This stipulation shall be excluded if in an emergency situation as deemed warranted by the Pastor, Elders, and Deacons.
    - A meeting for the calling of a Pastor or the severance of the relationship between the church and pastor shall be called in accordance with the provision of Section 4.02, point 6.

ARTICLE 7 – FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the church shall begin January 1 and end December 31, beginning upon the adoption of this Constitution.

ARTICLE 8 – INDEMNIFICATION

SECTION 8.01 – ACTIONS SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION
The church may indemnify any person who is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including all appeals (other than an action by or in the right of the church) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the church, against expenses, including attorneys' fees, judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding; and if that person acted in good faith and in a manner he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of *nolo contendere* (no contest) or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct as unlawful.

SECTION 8.02 – EXPENSES SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION
To the extent that a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Article, or otherwise

in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys' fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

SECTION 8.03 – LIMITATIONS OF INDEMNIFICATION
Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by the church only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 1 of this Article. The determination shall be made (a) by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of the pastor and deacons who are not parties to or threatened with the action, suit, or proceeding; (b) if the described quorum is not obtainable or if a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested deacons so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or (c) by a majority vote of the members of the church.

SECTION 8.04 – TIMING OF INDEMNIFICATION
Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by the church as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the deacon body in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by the church.

SECTION 8.05 – EXTENT OF INDEMNIFICATION
The indemnification provided by this Article shall be deemed to be discretionary unless otherwise required as a matter of law or under any agreement or provided by insurance purchased by the church, both as to action of each person seeking indemnification under this Article in his official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding that office, and may continue as to a person who has ceased to be a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent and may inure to the benefit to the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

SECTION 8.06 – INSURANCE
The church may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a pastor, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the church against any liability asserted against him and incurred by him in that capacity, or arising out of his status in that capacity, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify him against liability under the provision of this Article.

ARTICLE 9 – BINDING ARBITRATION

SECTION 9.01 – SUBMISSION TO ARBITRATION
Believing that lawsuits between believers are prohibited by Scripture, all members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration any matters which cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a

court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

SECTION 9.02 – NOTICE OF ARBITRATION
In the event of any dispute, claim, question, or disagreement arising out of or relating to these bylaws or any other church matter, the parties shall use their best efforts to settle such disputes, claims, questions, or disagreements as befits Christians. To this effect, they shall consult and negotiate with each other in good faith and, recognizing their mutual interests not to disgrace the name of Christ, seek to reach a just and equitable solution. If they do not reach such solution within a period of sixty (60) days, then upon notice by either party to the other, disputes, claims, questions, or differences shall be finally settled by arbitration as described in section 9.01, below, and such Procedures for Arbitration as are adopted pursuant to section 9.04, below.

SECTION 9.03– LIMITATIONS ON ARBITRATION DECISIONS
Should any dispute involve matters of church discipline, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures for church discipline as outlined under section 3.04, were followed. Should any dispute involve the removal from office of the pastor or any other church officer, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures set forth in section 3.04 were followed.

SECTION 9.04 – PROCEDURES FOR ARBITRATION
The procedures of arbitration shall be as adopted by the Pastors and Elders.

ARTICLE 10 – MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH
"Our statement of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, expresses our fundamental biblical conviction that Christian marriage is, by definition, the spiritual and physical uniting of one man and one woman in an exclusive covenant commitment for their joint lifetime. Christian marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church. As such, this local church believes that wedding ceremonies on church property are spiritual observances of worship of God who created this divine institution. As worship services, weddings on church property shall be officiated by one or more ordained ministers of the gospel. The church may decline to make its facilities or ministers available for any wedding if it is determined that one or both of the parties are not biblically and/or legally qualified to marry. Such determinations may be made by the pastors and elders. No minister (or employee) of the Church shall officiate at any marriage ceremony unless such marriage is consistent with this policy." Approved by unanimous vote at the church business meeting April 10, 2014. The wording of this amendment came from the White Head legal firm, a well-known firm used by the Missouri State Baptist convention.

ARTICLE 11 – AMENDMENTS
This Constitution may be revised or amended by as recommend by the Elders & Pastors by a majority vote of the eligible members present and voting at any regular church business meeting, provided that said revision or amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous business session and announced from the pulpit fourteen (14) days prior to the vote being taken.

ARTICLE 12 – ADOPTION OF CONSTITUTION

This Constitution was adopted by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the eligible members present and voting at a duly called Family Meeting of the church in which a quorum was present.

This Constitution supersedes any and all previous constitutions of First Baptist Church of Weston, MO.

Pastor_____ Date_____
Deacon Chairman_____ Date_____
Church Clerk_____ Date_____
Treasurer_____ Date_____
Church Member_____ Date_____

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WESTON, MO

A REPORT ON THE QUALIFICATIONS AND ROLE OF ELDERS AND DEACONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AND OUR WAY FORWARD

BY

RICKY SANDS, PASTOR

WESTON, MO

JUNE 25, 2023

This report was adopted by majority vote of the church as an appendix to the

First Baptist Church of Weston, MO Church Constitution on

December 17, 2023

Over the course of the last two and a half years while preaching through the book of Acts, Ezra-Nehemiah, Philippians, and various stand alone sermons First Baptist Church has been confronted with God's prescribed church polity and government. This prompted a study through the book of 1 Timothy that brought even more clarity to this and has challenged us to re-think our current ecclesiastical operation.

Our church is currently operating under the guidance of a single pastor, the services of a plurality of Deacons, operated by a plurality of committees, heavily influenced by a Church Council consisting of each Chair of every committee, and congregational in its final form of government. While there are some good elements of this (i.e. congregationalism), on the whole our current structure is out of sync with what the Bible instructs us in 1 Timothy and Titus.

I want to give you an idea of where we are going in this paper. First, I will define our terms. Secondly, I will give a brief explanation of the role of the Pastor/Elder and Deacon. Finally, I will attempt to give practicality to what a change in our governance that would follow a model of a plurality of Elders and Deacons will look like.

Definitions

1. **ἐπισκοπῆς** (episkopēs) – bishop, pastor, shepherd, elder, or overseer.
2. **διάκονος** (diakonos) – servant.

Office of Elder

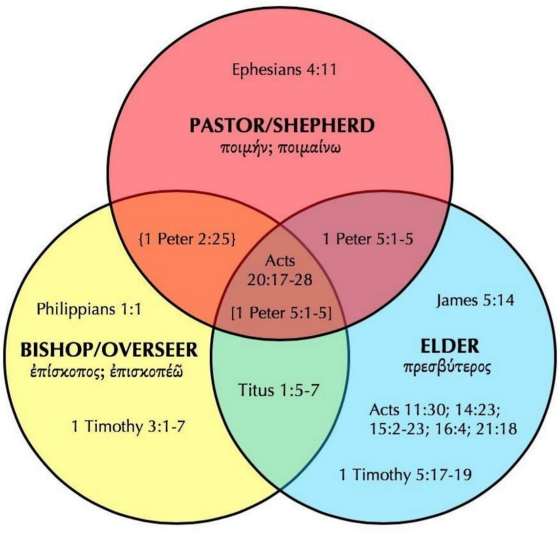
1 Timothy 3:1-7

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9
This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Hebrews 13:17
Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

We have covered much of this in detail as we have walked through 1 Timothy this year so I want to be brief. First, we see that Elders/Pastors/Bishops/Overseers are all terms that are used synonymously in the New Testament. Here is a helpful diagram:



Secondly, these leaders are the succession of the apostolic ministry. Paul writes to Titus that he was to appoint them in the church in Crete in his absence. Thirdly, the general responsibility of a plurality of Elders in the local church is to guide, guard, and govern the flock of God through the ministry of the Word of God and prayer. As we see here they are to devote themselves to teaching/instructing sound doctrine, to keep a watch, or oversee, the flock. There are a plethora of reasons for this but many Southern Baptist churches over the years have abandoned this practice of having a plurality of elders in place, even though our statement of faith calls for it. The BFM 2000 makes clear that, "Its scriptural officers are pastors (notice the plurality in language here) and deacons." At the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention a motion was made by the messengers to actually put the word "elders" back into the BFM 2000 as it originally stated in the 1925 version of our statement of faith. Lastly, this office is reserved for biblically qualified men per 1 Timothy 3:1-7. At the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention there was a motion that passed amending the Southern Baptist Convention constitution that included language to state that churches in the convention will only employ male pastors of any kind.

Office of Deacon

1 Timothy 3:8-13
Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. *They* must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let *them* also be tested first; then let *them* serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. *Their wives* likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Acts 6:1-7
"Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the

apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."

While Elders bear primary responsibility for oversight Deacons are called upon to meet physical needs in the church under their direction. Here we see in Acts 6 where the first proto-deacons are selected. Men of "good repute" is expanded upon in Paul's qualifications of Deacons in 1 Timothy 3. It is clear that these two offices in the church are complimentary of one another for the purpose of keeping unity, meeting both physical and spiritual needs, and for the upholding of the ministry of the Word of God. Elders bear responsibility of spiritual oversight and direction of the church and Deacons bear responsibility of physical execution of the church's operations. Both are vital and necessary to the church.

(For a detailed understanding on women serving as Deacons, please see Appendix 1)

A Way Forward for First Baptist Church of Weston

As we inch closer to discussing a move to this form of church governance and polity a question that has been asked is the practicality of this for First Baptist Church of Weston. I want to attempt to lay out what that could look like.

Currently we operate under a "Committee" system that requires a Nominating Committee be put together to evaluate and recommend service in the church. I share this because, in some ways, things would look similar. However, instead of a Nominating Committee selecting members for service in the various ministries of the church we would agree to allow the burden of responsibility to fall on the Elders and Deacons of the church. Here are the notes from my sermon preached on May 21, 2023 on 1 Timothy 3:8-15 where I broke this down for the congregation:

"Taking what we've learned in Acts 6 and joined it here with 1 Timothy 3 here we have determined that this polity is a plurality of highly qualified Elders and Deacons who are selected by the congregation, examined by the Elders of the church, and affirmed through some kind of ordination. The Elders spend their time devoting themselves to the spiritual affairs of the church and her people that would include but not necessarily limited to preaching & teaching ministries, prayer ministries, counseling ministries, and collectively guide, guard, and govern the overall direction of the church through the Word of God and prayer.

The Deacons spend their time devoting themselves to the physical affairs of the church and her people that would include but not necessarily limited to benevolent needs of the congregation and community, needs of the building and grounds, security, finance and stewardship, under the leadership of the Elders who provide direction for the execution of their operation. To sum that up succinctly. Elders and Deacons work together to serve the church. Elders providing spiritual direction. Deacons providing physical operation.

Which leads to an inevitable question that I have been asked. Does this mean that you have to be an Elder or a Deacon to serve in the church? Or another way it has been asked, "Do the Elders and Deacons do ALL of the ministry?" To both, I say no. They are not responsible for doing all of the work, they are responsible for making sure it is all accomplished.

So, how would this look at First Baptist Church of Weston? In a similar way to how Committees and their Chairs are selected, the burden of responsibility for building teams to accomplish ministry would fall on the shoulders of the Elders and Deacons. Let me give a couple of really specific examples in both areas of oversight. Elders would not necessarily do all of the teaching but they would be responsible for vetting qualified and gifted teachers. Likewise,

Deacons would not necessarily be responsible for doing all of the work on our building, they would be responsible for vetting gifted members of the church to the service. In many ways, things would look similar, but this would put in place a leadership that models after the qualifications as laid out in our study here. A leadership that ensures godliness is elevated over giftedness which leads to the overall health of the church and actually promotes heavy congregational involvement. For the purpose of holding up the truth."

This does leave room for a few questions that must be asked and answered. First, does this mean that all of this work the Nominating Committee did is now moot and void. No. Actually, it would simply require that newly appointed Deacons and Elders would assume the leadership role for current active committees. Members of these teams moving forward would be selected by Elders and Deacons alongside recommendations from the church. This would not happen annually but by ongoing evaluation. This would require the Pastor and Deacons to simply determine which committees would fall into spiritual ministries and which fall into physical ministries. We would no longer call these "committees" but "ministries" of the church. It may require we dissolve any inactive/unnecessary committees. Secondly, what happens with the Church Council? Currently, the Church Council "serves as the administrative body of our church and is responsible for setting church goals and for implementation of programs, events, and/or activities necessary for the accomplishment of those goals." (First Baptist Church of Weston Constitution, Article 4, Section E) The Church Council would dissolve as we have already made a shift to committees and ministries setting their own schedules and working with Breeze Communication Software to make sure everything is on the calendar and working with the First Baptist Church of Weston Church Office on making sure everything is up to date. However,

collaboration in ministry is vital! In its place a First Baptist Fellowship of Ministries would be made up of the previous Church Council but with a renewed purpose of equipping ministry leaders and volunteers to carry out the mission/vision of the church and would be lead by the Pastors and Elders of the church. This would include a time of teaching, praying, and fellowship among co-laborers. Thirdly, does this mean that we will not have any committees? No. As we begin to work through this we may determine that some committees are necessary to retain under the oversight and support of an Elder or Deacon. Generally speaking a committee is a temporary (though exceptions may apply) task force for accomplishing a specific goal and committees could be put together from time to time, as necessary. This would happen under the oversight of the Elders and Deacons, with the church body.

Perhaps, by now your questioning what steps are next? Part of that is your reading this right now. This paper was written to bring about even more clarity on the subject. Here is the current plan presented by the Pastor and Deacons of First Baptist Church of Weston for consideration of the congregation: *(because of our current polity this would require the Deacons to continue to work in the gray until a plurality of Elders has been established):*

1. Pastor and Deacons bring this report and plan on moving forward to the June Family Meeting.
2. Pastor continues to preach, teach, discuss, and bring clarity to this.
3. Pastor and Deacons draft a new Church Constitution that would reflect this change.
4. Pastor and Deacons bring a newly drafted constitution for discussion at October's Family Meeting.

5. Allow time between October & December's Family meeting for the congregation to read, reflect, seek clarification, and provide input.

6. Vote on the change and adopt the new Constitution at December's Family Meeting.

7. Pray for God to reveal to us who our next Elders and Deacons are and for His ministry to take shape in this.

   A. Pastor & Deacons would receive input from the congregation on who they believe is qualified per 1 Timothy 3 and will begin the examination process. This part of moving forward is not on a static timeline but will function as the Lord leads.

Why Does This Matter?

I do want to make one more appeal for why this matters. Paul writes to Timothy, ”I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:13-15)

As you are aware from our study in 1 Timothy, Ephesus was the home of a large temple of Artemis. It was literally known as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It had over a hundred massive marble pillars, studded with jewels, and covered in gold. Paul is intentionally using imagery that would have been familiar to them. As they walked the city streets they could not hide from the view of the pagan temple. I love what John Samson writes here commenting on this passage, "Paul’s obvious intention in describing the Church as a pillar is two fold. First, He wishes to express the Church’s immense dignity and value in the sight of God. Though often scorned by men, the Church is exceedingly precious and beautiful to Him. Secondly, the term

“pillar” denotes the Church’s function; that of holding up the truth of God to the world around her.” A buttress is a support beam. Perhaps some more imagery will help here. The buttress holds up the walls of the temple. What Paul is conveying here is this is the way in which the church supports the truth. The pillars hold up the truth. The buttress supports it. How does the church do that? We uphold the the truth in word and support it in witness. Which means we obey it. We don't just preach it but we put it into practice.

God has done a great work in and through us these last few years. He has brought about much health and growth to First Baptist Church of Weston. I truly believe He has done so because we have continued to devote ourselves to the Word in proclamation and practice. This is just another step, a big step, in that process of partnering with God in being a church that is for the Kingdom and for the community!

Appendix 1: May women serve as Deacons or Deaconesses?

When we develop a biblical and healthy understanding of a plurality of Eldership to guide, guard, and govern the local church we conclude that the Bible is explicit on this office being reserved for male leadership and is rooted in God's created order (Genesis 1-3). Admittedly, there *does* appear to be a bit more haze when it comes to qualifications of Deacons and there is no actual qualification that requires they must be male (outside of the 'husband of one wife' qualification that I address below) like that of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 - each verse in the usage of "he" paired with husband of one wife). Notice that when discussing Deacons Paul uses the word "they and them" in verses 9 & 10.

I wanted to provide for you the exact notes in my sermon preached on May 14th covering verse 11 which is where the confusion comes. For the record, there are excellent scholars that are very orthodox and conservative on both sides of the fence on this.

"Some find it a little odd that there are no qualifications for Elders wives, but there are for Deacons. Thus, some have deemed this translation as inappropriate and have opted to translate the passage to read, "The women likewise must be dignified." Matt Smethurst, managing editor of The Gospel Coalition and NAMB Church Planter in Richmond, VA, wrote a great little book titled, "Deacons", actually arguing for this based off of sentence structure and the original Greek, of which I am no expert in. If translated to say "the women" rather than "their wives" this opens up room to interpret the passage as addressing women serving as Deaconesses. I'll admit to you that this did cause me pause and drove me deeper into study. And rather than I regurgitating much of what I've learned I want to read to you a somewhat long explanation (which actually summarizes Matt Smethurst's argument very well and responds to his conclusion

that women can serve in the office of Deaconess) and tie all of this together and close this bracket.

"The Greek word that Paul uses here is gynaikas, which can mean either "wives" or "women" (as it is translated several times in 1 Timothy 2:9-12). Some scholars suggest, therefore, that in verse 11 gynaikas does not refer to wives but to deaconesses, or female deacons. So the question arises whether women served as deaconesses in the New Testament church. The strongest reason for thinking that these women were deaconesses is the way they are introduced. Both verse 8 and verse 11 contain the word "likewise" (hösautös), which sounds as if it introduces a new office. Furthermore, these women are to be "dignified" (1 Tim. 3:11), which is the same phrase used to describe deacons (1 Tim. 3:8). Both of these verses are grammatically dependent on the main verb in verse 2, which strengthens the connection between them. Taken together, these parallels make it sound as if the women Paul had in mind were to fulfill a separate but equal office in the church. Furthermore, if the Bible meant "wives" we might expect it to say " their wives" so as to eliminate any possibility of confusion. ***(This is the exact argument Smethurst makes in his book, Appendix 1 pg. 141-148.)***

Nevertheless, there are several reasons for thinking that "wives may be the better translation. The first is that if Paul meant deaconesses he would have said so. The word "woman" is such a common term that it hardly seems sufficient to designate an office in the church. Furthermore, the word gynaikas appears in the very next verse (1 Tim. 3:12; cf. 3.2), where it clearly means "wife." It would make perfect sense, therefore, for Paul to have the same women in view in both verses. Then there is the fact that the instructions for these women (or wives) are very brief. One short verse hardly seems adequate to cover the qualifications for

deaconesses, especially since it is embedded within the qualifications for deacons. We are bound to conclude that by itself, 1 Timothy 3:11 is not sufficient to prove that women should serve in the office of deaconess." (Philip Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary, pg. 133)

Okay, but the inevitable next question is, "What about other places in the Bible? What about other women who Paul even commends as servants of the church?" We think of women like Lydia in Philippi mentioned in Acts 16, Dorcas in Acts 9, Tryphena and Tryphosa in Romans 16, and the always and rightly mentioned Phoebe in Romans 16 who is literally called a "deaconess of Cenchrae" by the Apostle Paul. *(I wish I would've expanded on this more but did not so I'll insert a note here: 1 Timothy 3 is prescriptive text and the only place in the Bible explicitly outlines the formal offices of a plurality of Elders & Deacons in the church and their qualifications. The purpose of this prescriptive text is to call the church to put into practice installing a multiplicity of qualified Elders and Deacons. The other texts mentioned (Acts 16, Acts 9, Romans 16) are what we would call descriptive texts, meaning they are describing the occurrence of an event or thing. There are certainly prescriptive principles found within the descriptive narrative but I would argue that it is not to install female Deacons. In each of the other passages it more clearly indicates a prescribed principle of having a heart of servitude, regardless of "official" title.* ***Because of this we are bound to conclude that these passages also are not sufficient to prove women should serve in the office of deaconess.")"***

It has been brought to our attention that there could be a correlation between the wives and/or women being mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and the widows in 1 Timothy 5. At this time we have concluded that we do not have enough information to draw a definitive conclusion. To be absolutely clear, this does not bar women from diaconal work under the leadership of a deacon.

Similarly, women are not barred from spiritual ministry to other women and children as instructed in 1 Timothy 2, 5, and Titus.

Appendix 2: Is there a connection to "the women" or "the wives" mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 to the widows mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:9-16?

At the Quarterly Family Meeting in June a question was asked regarding whether the women mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 had any correlation to the women mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:9-16. This question has actually come up on more than one occasion during our time walking through the book. At the time it was determined that we did not have enough evidence to answer this question in the affirmative. However, after a deeper study into 1 Timothy 5:1-16 it was determined that this was a question worthy of deeper exploration. Here is the direct quote from Pastor Ricky's sermon titled, "Widows for Care", preached on Sunday, July 31, 2023.

"But a question that did come up that I agreed was worthy of further study is the connection to "the women" or "the wives" mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 to the widows in 1 Timothy 5:9. I have concluded that there is. While I do see a connection, I do want to make it clear that I did not conclude that these women are female Deacons. To be sure I really wanted to look at some history on this.

Some of our greatest theological influences, guys like John Calvin, the early Protestant Reformer and a more modern theologian, John Stott, and many others actually called for a specific office in the church for these widows. The Office of Widow. I couldn't determine if that was in a formal sense or just a great sensitivity to the vital and influential ministry but I did find it interesting that they were unwilling to budge on the idea that these were female Deacons. And

while I don't agree that there is a specific Office of Widow in the church, I understand the tension some of our forefathers wrestled with.

I think the conclusion is much more simple and it is one that we have already come to. The involvement of women in diakonal service is vital. These women that Paul is calling for enrollment of are godly widows called upon to help with diakonal service in the church. The list or enrollment in 1 Timothy 5 is Paul's expansion on the shorter qualification list in 1 Timothy 3. And because these are widows the translation of the word "gynakias" could appropriately be translated as women in general or as the wives of these widows.

I think I concluded before that "their wives" may be a better translation because the Office of the Deacon may require, at times, the involvement of his wife. Today, I submit to you that perhaps "the women" is a better translation because it includes both. The wives of Deacons, the wives of men who have passed, and perhaps even women in general that may be called upon for help. All of them would still serve under the leadership of a male qualified Deacon."

After further study it was determined that there likely is a connection between these women. However, it deepened our conviction that these women mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 and 1 Timothy 5:9-16 were not female deacons or deaconesses. Rather, these were Godly women who had been widowed that were called upon by the Elders & Deacons of the church to assist in the diakonal work when necessary.