FIRST BAPTIST AZLE

# CONSTITUTION

AND

# BYLAWS

FIRST BAPTIST AZLE

Transforming Lives...

If you have any questions about the Constitution and Bylaws, please feel free to call the office at (817) 444-4828 or email at office@fbcazle.org

# CONSTITUTION

## PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the church body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches. Upon approval, this constitution replaces any known or unknown previous constitutions involving this body.

## ARTICLE I. NAME

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Azle, Texas (First Baptist Azle). The principal office shall be located at 1017 Boyd Rd., Azle, Texas. Should the name and/or location of the church need to be changed, it shall be presented at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting with two (2) weeks' notice on the vote.

## ARTICLE II. NON-PROFIT STATUS

The Church is organized and shall be operated exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended, unless any law shall be repressive in scope and/or nature, that it is our duty to democratically oppose it on the basis of the right of free exercise of religious beliefs and peaceable assembly. The Church is formed for any lawful purpose or purposes under the laws of the State of Texas, including any purpose described by Section 2.002 of the Texas Business Organizations Code.

## ARTICLE III. PURPOSE

The focus and mission of this Church is to glorify God, transform lives, and bear good fruit in all that we do. The church, as individuals and as a whole, aims to achieve this mission by committing to knowing Christ, growing together, serving one-another, and showing God to the world.

# ARTICLE IV. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and the ultimate authority over the decisions and vision of the church. First Baptist Azle holds to the Baptist Faith and Message (2000) as its doctrinal statement. Concerning the current state of our culture, there are a few issues that shall receive further description:

A. Marriage

We believe that marriage is a biblical institution established by God as described by Scripture. We believe the biblical ideal for marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment.

B. Sexual Immorality/Orientation

We believe that sexual immorality is any sexual action outside the confines of holy marriage. Therefore, we believe that any sexual act outside that of one man and one woman in holy matrimony is considered sin before God. Concerning a person's sexual orientation, we believe that the action is the sin, not the temptation. If a person has a proclivity towards any sexual orientation other than that as prescribed by the Bible, we believe the biblical response is one of celibacy.

C. Sexual/Gender Identity

We believe that God creates each person as male or female. We recognize that sinful nature can distort the perception and thinking of a person concerning their sexual/gender identity. However, we do not believe that altering one's appearance, body, or anatomy in order to present themselves as a different sex than the one they are born with is the appropriate decision nor is honoring to God. We affirm the biblical teaching that one should live their life as the biological sex/gender that God had created in them.

D. Women in Ministry

We believe that God creates men and women equal in worth and in value. Both are made in the image of God. We also believe the Bible has placed the expectation that men take responsibility for leading the family and the church. Therefore, women are allowed to serve in any capacity at First Baptist Azle except the following, due to the authority that these positions carry: Senior Pastor, Pastoral Staff, and deacon.

# ARTICLE V. POLITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. The leadership of the church is the Senior Pastor and Pastoral Staff with the aid of the Ministry Staff and Deacon Body. Persons duly received by the leadership of the church shall constitute membership in the church. All organizations created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable to the church (as prescribed in the Bylaws). This church is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist Churches. First Baptist Church will voluntarily cooperate with and support the Tarrant Baptist Association, Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Southern Baptist Convention, provided such cooperation does not conflict with the church's own best interests.

# ARTICLE VI. CHURCH COVENANT

As born again believers in Christ, who have been called out of the world by God to be His people, together, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves willingly and joyfully as a body in covenant with God, and with each other to know Christ, grow together, serve one another, and to show God to the world. In this:

**WE COMMIT TO KNOW CHRIST**

- By submitting humbly to God through reading, studying, and applying God's Word to our lives.
- By affirming the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of God's Word, and the other foundational doctrines of the church, as described in our statement of faith.
- By pursuing holiness in submission to the Holy Spirit who lives in us.
- By keeping ourselves from sin and ungodliness, remembering that we have died with Christ, and have been raised with Him to walk in the newness of life.

*Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Romans 6:1-4; Romans 8:9-11; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 John 2:1-6; 1 Peter 1:13-16*

**WE COMMIT TO GROW TOGETHER**

- By regularly attending the gathering of God's people for worship and receiving instruction in the Word.
- By living communally in Christian love with one another.
- By preserving unity in the body of believers, resolving conflict biblically, and abstaining from all gossip and slander.
- By following the leadership of the church in submitting ourselves to the care and correction of leadership should the need arise.

*Matthew 18:15-17; John 15:12; Acts 2:44; Romans 1:28-32; Romans 12:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:1-6; Ephesians 4:29-32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 10:25; Hebrews 13:1; Hebrews 13:17*

**WE COMMIT TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER**

- By serving faithfully with the gifts that God has given to us for building up His church.

- By giving generously of the time, talents, and resources that God has given us with a joyful heart.
- By watching over one another and admonishing one another in humility and in love.
- By praying consistently for ourselves, for one another, and for the leadership of the church.

*Genesis 4:9; Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 15:30-31; 1 Corinthians 12; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Peter 4:8-11*

**WE COMMIT TO SHOW GOD TO THE WORLD**

- By engaging missionally in declaring the gospel to those who have not heard or believed, and praying for them with a desire to see them trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved.
- By standing firm and refusing to compromise on the gospel, despite all resistance from the world, so we can be the salt of the earth, and light of the world in order to give glory to God.
- By teaching God's truth of his Word to our families, our children, and those we meet in the world.

*Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 5:11-16; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 14:35; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; 2 Timothy 2:24-26*

# BY-LAWS

## ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

### SECTION 1

### GENERAL

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

### SECTION 2

### MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

Any person may offer themselves as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates must complete the following criteria in order to be considered for membership:

a) Has made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

b) Has followed up with believer's baptism.

c) Has attended the church's membership class (in which the church's doctrine, governance, membership expectations, and church covenant is communicated).

d) Has completed the membership form (in which the candidate can affirm a statement of faith and the church covenant).

After these criteria have been met, the leadership of the church will review the candidate and approve the membership.

In the review process, should the leadership of the church have sufficient reason to believe that the candidate is not living in accordance with the church's covenant, a meeting will be conducted with the candidate to resolve the issue. Should the issue not be resolved, the candidates membership will be declined.

## SECTION 3

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

During normal scheduled or special-called business meetings, every active member of the church, provided they are present, is entitled to vote on matters pertaining to the following:

- The changing of church's name and/or location
- Amendments to the Church Constitution and Bylaws
- Major structural changes to, selling of, or purchasing of property
- The hiring/termination of the Senior Pastor and Pastoral/Ministry Staff
- The licensing of ministers and ordination of pastors and deacons
- The adding/removing of deacons
- The adding/removing of trustees
- The adding/removing of treasurer
- The adding/removing of members of the Budget and Finance Committee
- The annual church budget and amendments of it

Every member carries the responsibility of the well-being of the church (i.e. its community, culture, ministry, spiritual health, financial health, etc.). Each member should seek to support the mission of the church and maintain the unity of the church, as outlined in the church covenant, to the best of their ability.

## SECTION 4

## TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

A. Death

B. Moving away

The member has moved far enough out of the area that they are no longer able to participate in person in the life of the church. The membership is terminated at the date of notification to the church office or upon confirmation of moving. Should the person move back to area and wish to reinstate their membership, they would need to go through an abbreviated membership process, as determined by the leadership. This cause for termination of membership does not apply to members that are homebound or have devoted themselves to foreign missions.

C. Leaving the church or regularly attending and/or joining another church

The member, for whatever reason, has decided on their own volition to no longer be part of the life of the church or has starting attending or joined another church. The membership is terminated at the date of notification to the church office or upon confirmation of leaving. Should the person return to the church and wish to reinstate their membership, they would need to go through the an abbreviated membership process, as determined by the leadership.

D. Inactivity

If a member of the church should go a year without any regular activity within the church (attending services, small groups, serve teams, events, or tithing), that membership shall be deemed inactive. The process for determining the member's inactivity will be a combination of the data provided by our church management software (which tracks Small Group attendance, serving in ministry, checking-in kids, tithing, etc.), the investigation by the leadership of the church, and the attempted contact of said member. Inactive members do not have voting rights in any business meetings. Once a member has been deemed inactive, they will have to go through an abbreviated membership process, as determined by the leadership, to reinstate membership.

E. Church Discipline

It is the hope and goal of the church to partner with and care for its members, spurring them on to greater devotion to Christ, as outlined in the church covenant.

Should a serious situation arise, in which a member is not living in accordance with the church covenant, living in open, unrepentant sin, causing disunity in the church, or is becoming a liability to the general welfare of the church, every reasonable measure should be taken by the pastor and leadership to care for the members involved and resolve the situation. These measures shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment and the goal shall always be restoration. While under church discipline, the member may be asked to step down from serving in ministry.

Should it be determined after multiple attempts that resolution is not possible, the Senior Pastor, with the agreement of the staff and deacons, may terminate membership in order to protect the general welfare of the church. While termination of membership is to protect the church, it is also meant to care for the individual that they might repent of the sin or error in which they are committing. If at any point in the church discipline process, the member states that they are leaving the church, the membership shall be terminated, effective immediately.

Any person whose membership has been terminated due to church discipline, may seek to have their membership restored, provided they have given sufficient evidence of their

repentance and reformation pertaining to the issue at hand. Restoration of membership is at the discretion of the Senior Pastor with the agreement of the staff and deacons.

## SECTION 5

## REGULAR ATTENDERS

Those who wish to enter into the love and fellowship of the church and will support the objectives of the church but cannot qualify, or choose not to qualify, for membership will be designated as “regular attenders”. Regular attenders are welcome to experience and take part in the life and love of the church through worship services, Small Groups, and church ministries. Regular attenders have no voting rights and are not permitted to serve in certain ministries of the church, as defined by each ministry’s policy. While not a member, a regular attender can be subject to a form of church discipline if the general welfare of the church is at jeopardy.

## SECTION 6

## DISCLOSURE OF ALLEGATIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS

If an allegation towards a church member or regular attender concerning sexual abuse/assault or physical abuse is made, the proper authorities will be notified. At the discretion of the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the staff and Deacon Body, the Senior Pastor or a member of the Deacon Body shall read a statement of disclosure to the church at a worship service concerning the allegation and investigation for the sake of transparency. This statement is not one declaring guilt, but one disclosing that an allegation has been made and a criminal investigation is being conducted. At the discretion of the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the staff and Deacon Body, the church member or regular attender may be asked to not attend services or ministries until the investigation is complete. Should the investigation verify that the allegation is true, the process for church discipline may be conducted as necessary.

# ARTICLE II: CHURCH OFFICERS AND STAFF

## SECTION 1

## GENERAL

All church officers and staff must be members of the church and therefore affirm the church covenant. The officers of this church shall be the Senior Pastor, the deacons, a moderator, a clerk, a treasurer, and the trustees. The staff of this church shall be viewed in three categories: Pastoral Staff, Ministry Staff, and Support Staff. Those currently serving in the positions of church officers and staff at the time these Constitution and Bylaws are adopted shall be considered as elected by the church pursuant to the appropriate provisions of these Bylaws.

## SECTION 2

## SENIOR PASTOR

A. Role of the Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament Church. The Senior Pastor will lead the church, the church officers, staff, and ministries to accomplish the mission of the church.

The Senior Pastor is the leader of the pastoral ministries of the church. As such, the Senior Pastor will work with the deacons and staff to:

1. Lead the church to engage in fellowship of worship, witness, education, ministry, and application.

2. Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.

3. Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

The Senior Pastor must be an ordained minister. Should the church call someone to serve as Senior Pastor who is not ordained, the Pastoral Staff and Deacon Body shall ordain them within an appropriate timeframe. The church’s vote to hire a person to be the Senior Pastor comes with it the vote to ordain them, if they are not already ordained. The Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs.

B. Senior Pastor Selection Process

Upon the office of Senior Pastor becoming vacant, the Deacon Body shall nominate church members to serve on the Senior Pastor selection committee. This committee should be representative of the demographic make up of the church. Pastoral and Ministry Staff may aid the deacons in the selection of the committee.

To ensure the best candidate for the Senior Pastor position is found, the Senior Pastor selection committee may seek a third party hiring firm that partners with churches searching for pastors. This third party is not to select the candidate on their own, but to partner with the committee to aid and assist in the search of a new Senior Pastor.

Once the Senior Pastor selection committee has processed resumes, conducted preliminary interviews, and have chosen potential candidate(s), not to exceed three (3), an interview with church staff and deacons shall be conducted for advisement. During this process, the salary and benefits for the Senior Pastor position shall be approved by the Budget and Finance Committee. After this process has been fulfilled, the committee shall select one candidate for the nomination of Senior Pastor. The election shall take place at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting. The Senior Pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request.

C. Succession Plan

If a succession plan is in place for the role of Senior Pastor and the Deacon Body is in agreement with it, they may bypass the Senior Pastor selection process and present the candidate for recommendation at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting for election.

D. Recall of Senior Pastor

Should it be determined by the Deacon Body that the recall of the Senior Pastor be necessary due to, but not limited to, moral failure, failure to live in accordance to the church covenant, non-support of the church, causing dis-unity in the church, or incapability to complete job requirements, they may call a special-called business meeting for the recall of the Senior Pastor. The Deacon Body must follow voting procedure as outlined in Article II, Section 7.G in order to call the special-called business meeting. Before a recall meeting is called, the Deacon Body, or a representative from the Deacon Body, must approach the Senior Pastor in attempts to either resolve the issues at hand or to allow him to resign from the position.

Should a special-called business meeting be called for the recall of the Senior Pastor, at least one (1) week's notice to the church must be given. The moderator for this meeting shall be a representative from the Deacon Body. For the Senior Pastor to be recalled, there must be a two-thirds (2/3) vote in the affirmative by the active members present.

In the event that the Senior Pastor is recalled or asked to resign, the Deacon Body, with the advisement of the Budget and Finance Committee, may determine whether severance is appropriate. Severance is not guaranteed and may be offered at their discretion based on tenure,

circumstances, and the financial condition of the church. Any severance provided shall not exceed six (6) months of regular compensation (salary and/or housing allowance). If severance is granted, it will be paid in a lump sum within thirty (30) days of termination. Severance is a voluntary benefit and shall not be construed as an entitlement or contractual obligation.

If an allegation towards the Senior Pastor concerning sexual abuse/assault or physical abuse is made, the proper authorities will be notified. Should a criminal investigation be conducted and the Deacon Body deem it necessary, a member of the Deacon Body shall read a statement of disclosure to the church at a worship service for the sake of transparency. This statement is not one declaring guilt, but one disclosing that an allegation has been made and a criminal investigation is being conducted. At the discretion of the Deacon Body, the Senior Pastor may be put on a temporarily leave of absence until the investigation is complete. Should the investigation verify that the allegation is true, a special-called business meeting shall be called and a vote for the recall of the Senior Pastor shall be conducted.

E. Pastor Resignation

If the Senior Pastor wishes to resign from his position at First Baptist Church, it is requested he give at least two weeks' notice.

F. Interim Process

During such time as the church is without an elected Senior Pastor, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The Deacon Body shall designate a Pastoral or Ministry Staff member to assume the responsibilities of the Senior Pastor until an interim pastor or new Senior Pastor is called to the church.

2. The Deacon Body shall be responsible for obtaining pulpit supply (person to fulfill the preaching ministry of the church), if needed.

3. The Deacon Body may offer in nomination to the church a person to be named to the position of interim pastor.

## SECTION 3

## CHURCH STAFF

This church shall call or employ only such staff members as the church shall need. Each staff position should have a job description approved by the Senior Pastor before hiring. The staff shall be designated as Pastoral Staff, Ministry Staff, and Support Staff.

The salary, benefits, and raises of each staff position shall be determined by the Budget and Finance Committee and presented as part of the annual church budget. If the staff position is being created during the year and no budget for the salary and benefits are available, the Budget and Finance Committee shall present an amendment to the church budget with the salary and benefits of the position at a special-called business meeting.

Should the church be without a Senior Pastor, the hiring of new staff should cease, if possible, until the church calls a new Senior Pastor.

A. Pastoral Staff Positions

1) Role

Pastoral Staff will oversee the ministry department(s) that is assigned to them. Pastoral Staff also carries an authority that spans beyond their immediate department across other ministries of the church. This authority does not supersede the Senior Pastor, but rather is meant to be an aid to him. Pastoral Staff reports to the Senior Pastor.

2) Qualifications

Pastoral Staff must meet the qualifications of overseer as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Because this position carries an over-arching authority in the church, Pastoral Staff positions must be held by men, as we believe God expects men to be responsible for the leading of His church (see Article IV: Statement of Faith in Constitution). Pastoral Staff must be ordained. Should the church call someone to serve on the Pastoral Staff who is not ordained, the Senior Pastor and Deacon Body will ordain them within an appropriate timeframe. The church's vote to hire a person to the Pastoral Staff comes with it the vote to ordain them, if they are not already ordained.

3) Hiring and Termination

The Senior Pastor shall seek out qualified candidates, process and review resumes, and conduct preliminary interviews. Once the Senior Pastor has selected a recommendation for a candidate, there shall be an interview with the Pastoral and Ministry Staff and an interview with the Deacon Body for advisement. Following this process, the Senior Pastor shall present the candidate for recommendation at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting where active members

present may present questions about/to the candidate. A vote shall then be conducted for the hiring of the candidate.

Should it be determined by the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the deacons that termination of Pastoral Staff be necessary, a vote by the active members present at a special-called business meeting may be conducted. Should the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the deacons deem it necessary, the Senior Pastor holds the right to put the staff member on temporary leave until the special-called business meeting can be conducted. Reasons for termination can be, but are not limited to, moral failure, failure to live in accordance to the church covenant, non-support of the church, causing dis-unity in the church, or incapability to complete job requirements.

In the event that someone on the Pastoral Staff is terminated or asked to resign, the Senior Pastor, with the advisement of the Deacon Body and the Budget and Finance Committee, may determine whether severance is appropriate. Severance is not guaranteed and may be offered at their discretion based on tenure, circumstances, and the financial condition of the church. Any severance provided shall not exceed six (6) months of regular compensation (salary and/or housing allowance). If severance is granted, it will be paid in a lump sum within thirty (30) days of termination. Severance is a voluntary benefit and shall not be construed as an entitlement or contractual obligation.

B. Ministry Staff Positions

1) Role

Ministry Staff will oversee the larger ministry department(s) that is assigned to them. Ministry Staff reports to the Senior Pastor, unless delegated to another member of the Pastoral Staff. The larger ministry departments that qualify for Ministry Staff include, but are not limited to: Kids, Students, Adult Small Groups, Connections, Outreach, and Worship.

2) Qualifications

Ministry Staff must meet the qualifications of overseer as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Because this position does not carry an over-arching authority over the church, Ministry Staff positions can be held by both men and women (see Article IV: Statement of Faith in Constitution).

3) Hiring and Termination

The Senior Pastor shall seek out qualified candidates, process and review resumes, and conduct preliminary interviews. Once the Senior Pastor has selected a recommendation for a candidate, there shall be an interview with the Pastoral and Ministry Staff and an interview with the Deacon Body for advisement. Following this process, the Senior Pastor shall present the candidate for recommendation at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting where active members present may present questions about/to the candidate. A vote shall then be conducted for the hiring of the candidate.

Should it be determined by the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the deacons that termination of Ministry Staff be necessary, a vote by the active members present at a special-called business meeting may be conducted. Should the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the deacons deem it necessary, the Senior Pastor holds the right to put the staff member on temporary leave until the special-called business meeting can be conducted. Reasons for termination can be, but are not limited to, moral failure, failure to live in accordance to the church covenant, non-support of the church, causing dis-unity in the church, or incapability to complete job requirements.

In the event that someone on the Ministry Staff is terminated or asked to resign, the Senior Pastor, with the advisement of the Deacon Body and the Budget and Finance Committee, may determine whether severance is appropriate. Severance is not guaranteed and may be offered at their discretion based on tenure, circumstances, and the financial condition of the church. Any severance provided shall not exceed six (6) months of regular compensation (salary and/or housing allowance). If severance is granted, it will be paid in a lump sum within thirty (30) days of termination. Severance is a voluntary benefit and shall not be construed as an entitlement or contractual obligation.

C. Support Staff Positions

1) Role

Support Staff will serve as support to larger ministry departments (as defined in Article II, Section 3.B.1), oversee smaller ministry departments, or oversee or support non-ministry related departments. This includes, but is not limited to, office administrators and assistants, ministry associates, interns, and maintenance and custodial positions. Support Staff reports to the pastoral or Ministry Staff they serve under. If no pastoral or Ministry Staff is over their department, they shall report to the Senior Pastor, unless delegated to a member of the Pastoral Staff.

2) Qualifications

Support Staff must meet the qualifications of overseer as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Because this position does not carry an over-arching authority over the church, Ministry Staff positions can be held by both men and women (see Article IV: Statement of Faith in Constitution).

3) Hiring and Termination

The Senior Pastor with the aid of the Pastoral or Ministry Staff, if the Support Staff position is under their department, shall seek out qualified candidates, process and review resumes, and conduct preliminary interviews. Once a candidate has been selected for recommendation, there shall be an interview with the Pastoral and Ministry Staff and an interview with the Deacon Body for advisement, if deemed necessary for the position. Following this process, the Senior Pastor holds the right to hire the candidate for the position.

Should it be determined by the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the deacons that termination of Support Staff be necessary, the Senior Pastor holds the right to terminate the position. Reasons for termination can be, but are not limited to, moral failure, failure to live in accordance to the church covenant, non-support of the church, causing dis-unity in the church, or incapability to complete job requirements.

In the event that someone on the Support Staff is terminated or asked to resign, the Senior Pastor, with the advisement of the Deacon Body and the Budget and Finance Committee, may determine whether severance is appropriate. Severance is not guaranteed and may be offered at their discretion based on tenure, circumstances, and the financial condition of the church. Any severance provided shall not exceed six (6) months of regular compensation (salary and/or housing allowance). If severance is granted, it will be paid in a lump sum within thirty (30) days of termination. Severance is a voluntary benefit and shall not be construed as an entitlement or contractual obligation.

D. Allegation of Staff Members

If an allegation towards any staff member concerning sexual abuse/assault or physical abuse is made, the proper authorities will be notified. Should a criminal investigation be conducted and the Senior Pastor, with the advisement of the Deacon Body, deem it necessary, the Senior Pastor or a member of the Deacon Body shall read a statement of disclosure to the church at a worship service for the sake of transparency. This statement is not one declaring guilt, but one disclosing that an allegation has been made and a criminal investigation is being conducted. At the discretion of the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the Deacon Body, the staff member may be put on a temporarily leave of absence until the investigation is complete. Should the investigation verify that the allegation is true, the process for termination of that position, as defined by the Bylaws, shall be conducted.

## SECTION 4

## MODERATOR

The moderator shall be the Senior Pastor except when otherwise specified in these Bylaws. In the absence of the Senior Pastor, a member of the Pastoral Staff shall serve as the moderator. In the absence of Pastoral Staff, the chairman of the Deacon Body shall serve as the moderator. In the absence of all three, the Church Clerk shall call the church to order and preside over the election of an acting moderator. The moderator is to date and sign the minutes of each business meeting after they have been read and approved by the church.

## SECTION 5

## CHURCH CLERK

The church shall elect a clerk as its clerical officer. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of each business meeting of the church; shall give required notice of all meetings where notice is necessary as prescribed in these Bylaws; shall prepare the annual church letter to the association; shall keep a register of the names of members with dates of admission, baptism, membership termination, and death; shall preserve on file all official written communications and reports; shall perform any other duties assigned by the church. All records of the church are considered church property and shall be filed in the church office. The Senior Pastor, upon recommendation by the church clerk, may assign certain clerical duties of the Church Clerk to church staff members.

## SECTION 6

## CHURCH TREASURER

The church shall elect a Church Treasurer. The treasurer shall be elected for a three (3) year term and then can be re-elected at the end of that term. The treasurer must be a member of the church in good standing for at least one (1) consecutive year, have a Christ-like character, and be proficient in the financial duties required by the treasurer. The election or removal of the treasurer may be at any normal scheduled or special-called business meeting. Should the growth of the church deem it necessary, the church may hire a financial secretary to fulfill these responsibilities instead of electing a church treasurer.

The treasurer and Senior Pastor jointly may assign clerical duties of the treasurer to staff members or approved members of the church to help ensure maximum safeguards of the church finances. The Budget and Finance Committee should review the procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure such procedures are at all times adequate for the church size and growth.

The following finance functions are the overall responsibility of the treasurer:

1. Deposit of all church receipts.
2. Payment of all authorized church expenses.
3. Maintenance of accounting records to support all receipts and disbursements.
4. Preparation of all financial reports.
5. Presentation of financial reports at business meetings.
6. Preservation of all financial reports and records as a part of the permanent church records.
7. Making all records available for audit, if deemed necessary.

## SECTION 7

## DEACON BODY

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Deacon Body shall be to discharge faithfully the duties of deacons of a New Testament Church as set forth in Acts 6:1-7, and I Timothy 3:8-13. In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice in the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. Their task is to serve with the Senior Pastor and staff in performing the pastoral ministries tasks of (1) leading the church in the achievement of its mission, (2) proclaiming the gospel to believers and unbelievers, and (3) caring for the church's members and other persons in the community.

B. Qualifications

A candidate for deacon should meet the scriptural qualifications of a deacon, be sufficiently grounded in the doctrines of the Bible as stated in the statement of faith, be a member of this church for at least one (1) consecutive year, and agree to fulfill the responsibilities of a deacon as outlined by these Bylaws.

C. Nomination and Election of Deacons

The Senior Pastor and Deacon Body shall seek out, interview, and vet potential deacon candidates. Once the Senior Pastor and Deacon Body has selected a recommendation for the position of deacon, the candidate shall be presented for nomination at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting. At this meeting, the members present may present questions about/to the candidate. A vote by the active members present on the electing of the candidate shall be conducted.

D. Ordination of Deacons

All those elected to the Deacon Body who have not been previously ordained shall be ordained by the church. The Deacon Body and Senior Pastor shall plan and conduct the ordination service.

E. Service Length

Each member of the Deacon Body shall serve indefinitely unless one of the following occurs:

- Death
- Is no longer a member of First Baptist Church

- Is classified as inactive deacon
- Is classified as deacon emeritus
- Is terminated by vote of the Deacon Body or the church

F. Special Status

(i) Inactive Deacon

This group consists of those deacons who have stepped down from the Deacon Body due to, but not limited to, personal complications, work obligations, or health considerations. Inactive deacons may, by invitation, attend a deacon meeting and participate in discussions but shall have no vote, where applicable. They may continue to assist in serving the ordinances and other deacon ministries whenever invited to do so.

(ii) Deacon Emeritus

Those deacons who have attained the age of seventy (70), having served on the Deacon Body for at least three (3) years, and having honored their office may be classified as deacon emeritus, at their request and upon approval of the Senior Pastor and the Deacon Body. Their status in relation to meeting attendance, discussion, quorum, and vote is the same as for inactive deacon.

(iii) Reinstatement of Deacons

An inactive deacon or deacon emeritus may be reinstated to the Deacon Body upon their request and the discretion of the Senior Pastor and the Deacon Body.

E. Responsibilities of the Deacon Body

The responsibilities of the Deacon Body includes, but is not limited to: attending monthly deacon meetings; participating in any pastoral ministry assigned to the Deacon Body; supporting the mission, vision, and ministries of the church; maintaining the unity of the church by discouraging any forms of gossip and slander; acting as a leader of the church by taking responsibility for urgent issues that arise, should the Senior Pastor or staff not be available; advising on issues pertaining to the church as presented by the Senior Pastor; preparing and administering the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as scheduled.

F. Chairman of the Deacons

The Deacon Body shall elect a chairman of the deacons. The Deacon Body may elect other officers as they deem necessary.

G. Voting and Advisement

The Deacon Body is to be a servant to the church and in no way constitute a board of authority over the church, its staff, or its members.

When stated in these Bylaws, the Deacon Body may act as advisement. This does not constitute voting on the issue at hand. Advisement is solely defined as the Senior Pastor discussing the issue at hand with the Deacon Body for counsel and perspective.

The Deacon Body has no voting capabilities on issues, unless specifically stated in these Bylaws. Should one of those occasions arise, the voting issue must be disclosed to the entire Deacon Body at least one (1) week prior to the vote, unless the issue is normal business. Should the issue at hand deem it necessary to vote sooner than one (1) week's notice, the Deacon Body may do so, provided the issue was properly disclosed to the entire Deacon Body. The vote may take place at a normal scheduled or special-called deacons meeting. A quorum for voting meetings of the Deacon Body consists of the active deacons present, provided the meeting was properly scheduled and disclosed, and that at least fifty percent (50%) of the active deacons are in attendance. Unless otherwise stated, a two-thirds (2/3) vote in favor is required for passage.

H. Termination

Should it be deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor and the Deacon Body, a deacon may be removed from the Deacon Body by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Deacon Body present at a normal scheduled or special-called deacons meeting, in which the issue is made known beforehand. A deacon may also be removed by a congregational vote at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting.

## SECTION 8

## TRUSTEES

A. Duties

Three (3) or more trustees, elected by the church, will serve as legal officers of the church. They shall hold in trust the church property and shall serve as directors of First Baptist Church. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action. It shall be the function of the trustees to affix their signatures to legal documents on behalf of First Baptist Church involving the purchase, sale,

mortgage, rental, or transfer of property, or to other legal documents where the signatures of trustees or directors are required.

B. Selection of Trustees

The Deacon Body may present a nomination for the office of trustee at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting. Trustee nominees must be a member of the church in good standing for at least one (1) consecutive year. Duly elected trustees shall serve indefinitely until they step down or the church removes them by a vote at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting.

Upon adoption of this Constitution and By-Laws, the current trustees shall continue to serve in that capacity.

## SECTION 9

## ORDINATION AND LICENSURE

Within the Southern Baptist Convention, there is no set definition of the ordination and licensure of pastors, ministers, and deacons. Each autonomous local church is responsible for defining and establishing the parameters, qualifications, and procedures for granting licensure and ordination.

Considering that licensure and ordination at First Baptist Azle are in regard to an individual's call to serve as a pastor or deacon, and in accordance with our understanding of the biblical qualifications for these offices, only qualified men are to be considered candidates.

A. Process

The Senior Pastor, with the advisement of the Pastoral Staff and the Deacon Body, may identify candidates and oversee the process of licensure or ordination. Upon completion of the process, the candidate shall be presented for ordination or licensure at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting. At this meeting, the members present may present questions about/to the candidate. A vote by the active members present on the licensing or ordaining of the candidate shall shall be conducted. Upon an affirmative vote, the a licensure or ordination service shall be conducted.

B. Licensure

At First Baptist Azle, licensure is the preliminary recognition and affirmation of an individual's call to pursue pastoral ministry. Licensure does not establish the individual as a pastor, nor does it place him on the Pastoral Staff or grant the authority associated with that role.

For clarification in regards to the IRS Tax Code (Publication 517, “Minister Defined”), at First Baptist Azle a licensed individual does not “perform substantially all the religious functions of an ordained minister.” While a licensed individual may occasionally preach or administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as needed, these functions are carried out under the oversight and delegation of the Senior Pastor and/or Pastoral Staff and do not indicate the status of an ordained minister.

C. Ordination

At First Baptist Azle, ordination is the recognition and establishment of an individual’s call to serve as a pastor or deacon. Ordination affirms that the individual meets the biblical qualifications of overseer (pastor) or deacon as presented in 1 Timothy 3 and that he will be actively be serving on the Pastoral Staff or Deacon Body.

For clarification in regards to the IRS Tax Code (Publication 517, “Minister Defined”), at First Baptist Azle, an individual who is ordained to ministry and currently serves on the Pastoral Staff is authorized to “perform substantially all the religious functions of an ordained minister,” including preaching, conducting worship services, administering the ordinances, providing pastoral care, and exercising pastoral authority within the congregation. This ministerial authority at First Baptist Azle is only granted to those actively serving on the Pastoral Staff.

D. Evaluation

The Senior Pastor and Deacon Body shall periodically review the role and functions of all licensed and ordained persons to ensure the classification aligns with actual duties and that responsibilities do not exceed the scope of licensure or ordination.

E. Removal

Should the removal of a license or ordination of a minister or pastor be deemed necessary, a vote by the active members present at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting may be conducted.

## ARTICLE V: CHURCH PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONS

The church shall maintain ministry programs of connections, discipleship, worship, outreach, and missions for a variety of ages and demographics. All organizations and ministries of the church shall be under church control, and shall report regularly to the leadership of the church. All major ministries, as defined by the Senior Pastor, shall produce a policy, procedures, and guidelines handbook concerning the ministry, to be approved by the Senior Pastor. The creation of new or termination of existing church programs and ministries shall be made at the discretion of the Senior Pastor with the advisement of the church staff and/or Deacon Body.

# ARTICLE VI: CHURCH ORDINANCES

## SECTION 1

## BAPTISM

This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord. This shall be verified in the attendance of a baptism class to be scheduled with the staff.

A. Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
B. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
C. Baptism shall be administered by the pastor or whomever the church shall authorize.
D. A person who professes Christ shall be baptized as soon as possible.

## SECTION 2

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church and other Christians, through partaking of bread and fruit of the vine, commemorate the death of Jesus Christ who died for our sins.

A. The church shall observe the Lord's Supper at least twice a year.
B. The Senior Pastor, with the aid of the Pastoral Staff and Deacon Body, shall be responsible for the administration of the Lord's Supper.

# ARTICLE VII: CHURCH MEETINGS

## SECTION 1

## WORSHIP SERVICES

The church shall meet regularly on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening for preaching, prayer, instruction, evangelism, and for the worship of Almighty God. The meetings will be open for the entire congregation and membership of the church, and shall be conducted under the direction of the leadership of the church.

## SECTION 2

## SPECIAL SERVICES

Any other meetings which will be essential in the promotion of the objectives of the church shall be placed on the church calendar as desired.

## SECTION 3

## NORMAL SCHEDULED BUSINESS MEETING

The church shall hold an annual business meeting at the end of the year. This meeting shall primarily focus on voting on the upcoming year's budget. Should any unusual business be voted on in this meeting, notice shall be given about the unusual business. One (1) week's notice must be given to church about the annual business meeting's date, time, and location.

## SECTION 4

## SPECIAL-CALLED BUSINESS MEETINGS

Special-called business meetings may be called to vote on or discuss special matters. A special-called business meeting may only address and/or vote on the single issue for which it was called. One (1) week's notice must be given to the church concerning the subject, date, time, and location of the meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical or unless otherwise specified by these Bylaws.

## SECTION 5

## QUORUM

In all business meetings, the quorum shall consist of those active members present, provided it is a properly called normal scheduled or special-called business meeting.

### SECTION 6

### PARLIAMENTARY RULES

All business meetings shall follow Robert's Rules of Order Revised in its meeting and voting procedures, unless specified otherwise in these Bylaws. Only active members in good standing may vote on church issues (Article I).

Should it be determined by the moderator that a business meeting is no longer operating in the spirit of Christian love, the moderator reserves the right to conclude the meeting and schedule to reconvene at another time. One (1) week's notice shall be given concerning the rescheduled meeting.

## ARTICLE VIII: CHURCH FINANCES

### SECTION 1

### Budget and Finance Committee

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Budget and Finance Committee is to oversee and assist in the financial responsibilities of the church.

B. Qualifications

A candidate for the Budget and Finance Committee shall be a member of the church in good standing for at least one (1) consecutive year, exhibit Christ-like character, believe in the vision and direction of the church, and be proficient in finance and budgeting, preferably having professional experience in that area.

C. Nomination and Election of Committee Members

The Senior Pastor and the Budget and Finance Committee shall seek out, interview, and vet potential committee candidates. Once the Senior Pastor and the committee has selected a recommendation, the candidate shall be presented for nomination at a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting. A vote by the active members present on the electing of the candidate shall be conducted.

Should it be deemed by the Senior Pastor and the Budget and Finance Committee that a member needs to be removed from the committee, it shall be presented at a business meeting, in which the active members present shall vote on the matter.

## SECTION 2

## BUDGET

The Budget and Finance Committee shall annually prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget for the church's ministries and needs. The Budget and Finance Committee may receive budget requests from ministry leaders and members of the church stating the amount and the purpose. These requests must be given to the committee by September 30th to be considered for the following year's budget. The committee shall then review each request, make alterations as they deem appropriate, and inform the requester of the committee's decision. After the budget requests have been processed and the final annual budget has been compiled, a copy of that budget shall be made available to the members of the church at least fourteen (14) days prior to the business meeting in which the budget will be voted on. If a member has a concern about the proposed annual budget, they are encouraged to make their concern known to the Budget and Finance Committee within those fourteen (14) days prior to the business meeting. The budget shall be discussed and voted on in the business meeting.

After the budget has been voted on and approved by the church, the spending of that budget shall be at the discretion of the church staff and leadership and will be monitored by the Budget and Finance Committee.

Should it be determined by the Budget and Finance Committee that an amendment to budget is necessary, a special-called business meeting shall be called for that amendment to be voted on.

## SECTION 3

## FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

A. Tithes and Offerings

The handling and/or counting of money from the tithes and offerings shall never be done alone behind closed doors. Deposits of these funds shall be done by a trustee, treasurer, church clerk, or an approved, designated person. Deposits shall only happen after it has been counted and documented.

B. Purchase Receipts

Any and all purchases for the church must be authorized by the appropriate leadership for that ministry area and be within the established annual budget. The receipts must then be properly submitted and filed with the treasurer.

C. Financial Reports

The Budget and Finance Committee shall at least receive quarterly financial reports, in which they can review the state of the church's finances and budget.

An annual financial report shall be provided to the church members at the annual business meeting. If a member would like to receive a financial report during the year, they may request one.

D. Financial Audits

The Budget and Finance Committee shall review all financial reports given to ensure accountability. If it is deemed necessary by the committee, an independent audit shall be conducted on the church finances.

### SECTION 4

### FISCAL YEAR

The church fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and end December 31 of each year.

## ARTICLE IX: FACILITIES AND PROPERTY

### SECTION 1

### FACILITY USAGE

The property and facilities of the church are to be used first and foremost for meetings of the church. This also includes any programs, ministries, and organizations of the church. The property and facilities are allowed to be used for non-church related events, provided the person is a member of the church, they have requested and have been approved to use the facility, and they follow the facility

usage guidelines provided by the staff. The usage of the facilities by members is at the discretion of the Senior Pastor, unless delegated to another member of the staff.

The usage of the property and facilities by someone who is not a member of the church is not allowed. However, the Senior Pastor reserves the right to make an exception to this at his discretion, unless delegated to another member of the staff.

The usage of the property and facilities is not allowed for any event that goes against the churches values and beliefs.

### SECTION 2

### PROPERTY UPGRADES, SELLING, AND PURCHASING

Major structural changes to, selling of, or purchasing of the facilities and/or property of the church are to be voted on by the church in a normal scheduled or special-called business meeting.

## ARTICLE X: DISSOLUTION

Upon discontinuance of this Church by dissolution or otherwise, any assets lawfully available for distribution are to be transferred to one or more organizations qualifying as an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended, by a majority of members attending at a duly called business meeting.

## ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS

The Constitution and these Bylaws may be amended, modified, or repealed only a vote at any normal scheduled or special-called business meeting. The proposed amendment must be printed and made available to the church at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the vote. When an amendment is proposed and has been rejected by the church, that amendment, or any amendment embodying the substance thereof, shall not be proposed again for at least six (6) months from the date of the rejection of such amendment.

Any amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws shall immediately go into full force and effect from and after their adoption.

*This Constitution and Bylaws was updated and adopted on __December 7, 2025__.*