

CHURCH CONSTITUTION

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
PERU, INDIANA

Enacted December 1, 2016
Last Amended August 7th, 2022

ARTICLE I – NAME AND AFFILIATION

The name of this organization is the First Baptist Church of Peru, Indiana, being duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Indiana, with the Finance Team (FT) acting as its agent in legal matters and in relation to the state. Its governance is vested wholly within the body comprising its membership. This congregation has chosen to participate in world-wide missions and social work by affiliating with the Logansport Baptist Association, the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky, and the American Baptist Churches-USA.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of First Baptist Church is to advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by upholding the truths and doctrines of Scripture, by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ near and far, by worshiping God regularly and publically, by encouraging and aiding believers to grow in discipleship to Jesus Christ, and by taking opportunities to love each other and our neighbors in practical ways. Summarized, our purpose is “to glorify God, by helping people find and follow Jesus through worshiping together, growing together, and serving together.” (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 2:41-47)

The First Baptist Church, Peru, IN, 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 it now exists or as it may be amended. The fiscal year for this congregation shall be from January 1 to December 31.

ARTICLE III – STATEMENT OF FAITH

This congregation believes the Christian Scripture is the sufficient and final authority for what we believe and how we live. Although we are “non-creedal,” Baptists recognize the value of concise statements reflecting and condensing the teaching of Scripture. Thus, we affirm the validity of the Apostle’s Creed, the London Confession of Faith (1689), and the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1853). In like fashion, the essential biblical beliefs and Baptist tradition of this congregation are catalogued in our Foundational Documents.

ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

Coming to faith in Jesus Christ is a personal matter. Discipleship, however, is never an individualistic endeavor. Repeatedly in the NT, from Jesus’ teaching, to the birthing of the Church, to the Epistle’s greetings, to the many “one another” or “each other” admonishments, disciples express their faith by identifying with, assimilating into, embracing, and engaging in local congregations. We believe there is a direct connection between discipleship and membership in a local congregation. (Mt. 5:13,14, Acts 2:41-47, Rom. 1:6-8, Eph. 1:1-2,15-18, 2:1-10, 1Pet. 1:1-2, Mk. 9:50, Jn. 13:34-35, 15:12,13,17, Rom. 12:10,16, 13:8, 14:13,19, 15:7,14, 16:20, Gal. 5:13, 6:2, 1Thes. 3:12, 4:9,18, 5:11,13,15, Heb. 3:13, 10:24, 1Pet. 2:9-10, 4:8, 1Jn. 1:7, 3:11)

Membership is a covenant, a shared commitment to live our faith together. We believe, therefore, discipleship entails the commitment of membership. Persons committing wholeheartedly to fulfill the Covenant of Membership (see Foundational Documents) shall be joyfully received as members of this congregation.

The Covenant of Membership shall be used regularly in worship and meetings as determined by the Pastoral Staff and/or LT.

Section 1. Membership Process. Regularly worshipping, participating in discipleship, and lovingly serving others are always encouraged. However, attending and participating do not constitute membership. The following progression reflects the path to membership in this congregation.

A membership candidate must:

- have a personal faith in Jesus Christ;
- have made a public profession of faith through baptism by immersion;
- participate in a New Member's Class where the beliefs, practices and Covenant of Membership are outlined;
- be interviewed by the Senior Pastor, staff and/or LT regarding his/her Christian experience and understanding of membership;
- upon recommendation of those conducting the interview, be presented to the congregation in a public meeting to receive the affirmation of membership.

Section 2. Candidates.

A. By Baptism.

- Persons baptized by this congregation shall become members;
- Candidates shall be interviewed regarding their faith in Jesus Christ and the meaning of membership in this congregation prior to baptism.
- The Pastoral Staff and/or LT shall interview and recommend candidates for baptism.
- After baptism, the new member shall participate in the New Member's Class.
- In cases where medical conditions preclude baptism by immersion, the Pastor and LT shall determine alternative means.

B. By Experience. Persons actively engaged in the life of this congregation having a personal faith in Jesus Christ and having been previously baptized by immersion, shall enter the membership process in the appropriate phase as outlined above.

Section 3. Non Members. All persons participating in the life of this congregation shall be encouraged to enter into the commitment of membership. However, we will endeavor to love and minister to all God places under our spiritual care.

Section 4. Withdrawal of Membership. A person shall be considered to have withdrawn from this congregation's membership when:

A. Changing Residence. Persons who change residences making it impossible to fulfill the Covenant of Membership, shall be removed from the membership roll. We encourage persons who have moved to quickly find a new church home.

B. Withdrawal. A person may withdraw from membership for personal reasons. However, before such action is taken, a discussion with the Senior Pastor, Staff, or LT is warranted, as well as, close adherence to the instructions in Matthew 18.

C. Inactivity. A member who has not fulfilled the Covenant of Membership for a period of one year shall be removed from the membership roll. However, before such action is taken, representatives from the congregation shall reach out to said member to minister to him/her, understand his/her concerns, and, if possible, remediate the situation.

D. Discipline. A member who has regularly or notoriously violated the Covenant of Membership may be removed from the membership roll upon unanimous vote of the LT. However, this action

shall be considered a last resort after exhausting the process found in Article IX.

Section 5. Restoration. A previous member may be restored to membership after being interviewed and approved by the Senior Pastor and the Leadership Team.

Section 6. Exceptions. Members who slip into inactivity due to health, age, unalterable work situations, and other unforeseen circumstances shall retain their membership status as approved by the Leadership Team.

Section 7. Keeping the Roll. The LT shall be responsible to keep an accurate record of the current membership of this congregation.

ARTICLE V – MEETINGS

Regular Meetings. This congregation shall meet for public worship each Sunday and on other days as scheduled by worship leaders or by the Leadership Team (LT).

Annual Business Meeting. An annual business meeting shall be held in December at a time chosen by the Leadership Team (LT), the Finance Team (FT) and the Senior Pastor. Regular transactions at this meeting will include 1) the presentation of a budget and slate of officers for the upcoming year, 2) annual reports from the LT, FT, and staff, and 3) other business needing action.

Special or Called Meetings. The LT may call special meetings to transact important or timely business. Such meetings and their purpose shall be announced from the pulpit for two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting. An individual or group may write a petition to the LT requesting a special or called meeting. The LT will determine whether or not the request warrants such a meeting.

Quorum. A quorum at the annual business meeting and all called meetings shall be 35 members present. A quorum may not be broken by the subsequent withdrawal of a member(s).

Moderation. The LT Chairperson, or a person selected by the LT, shall moderate the annual meeting and all called meetings.

Order. All meetings shall be conducted in a spirit of goodwill and in an orderly fashion befitting the Body of Christ. If necessary, Roberts Rules of Order may be consulted for guidance.

Recording Meetings. The LT shall select a clerk to record the transactions at the annual business meeting and all called meetings.

Absentee Ballot. An absentee ballot may be requested by any member unable to attend a meeting due to advanced age, physical/medical impairment, or unavoidable absence. Ballots will be provided by the office and made available to all requesting one. The ballots must be signed and will remain sealed until the day of the vote. All ballots will be counted at the same time. Any amendment to the original motion will render the absentee ballots void.

Voting Age. Members at least 15 years of age shall have voting privileges on all matters, except those of buying, mortgaging, leasing, selling, transferring funds, or amending the constitution. In such matters, members must be at least 18 years of age.

ARTICLE VI – ORGANIZATION

This congregation shall fulfill its purpose through the active ministry, service and support of its members, trusting that Christ has given “each one the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” and given some to be leaders who “equip the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:7, Eph. 4:11-13). The congregation’s ministry shall be accomplished through 1) the Leadership Team (LT) providing general oversight to the work of the congregation and 2) Ministry Teams (MT) carrying out the bulk of the hands-on ministry.

Section 1. The Leadership Team (LT).

A. Purpose. The LT will serve this congregation by providing executive and oversight leadership. The LT shall be considered the policy-making body; any policy it makes must be in accord with the Foundational Documents and Constitution. The LT shall serve as advisor to all staff members. The LT shall meet at least once a month.

B. Composition. The LT shall be comprised of five persons from the membership. The group shall name one member as the Chairperson. The Senior Pastor is an ex officio (active, but non-voting) member.

Members of the LT shall fit the general descriptions of biblical leaders. (see 1Cor. 12:7,26,28; 2Cor. 4:7; Eph. 4:11-13; 1Tim. 3:1-7, 4:6-16, 5:21; 2Tim. 1:8-2:3, 2:14-15,22, 3:14-4:2; Titus 1:5-9)

C. Duties. The LT shall:

- Guard and promote the congregation's biblical beliefs and mission;
- Seek the unity, spiritual health, and welfare of the congregation;
- Guide and direct our congregation's ministry;
- Assist the Senior Pastor in his/her work;
- Affirm or choose the leader of each MT;
- Encourage and direct the formation of MTs;
- Advise and review each MT as needed;
- Advise and review all the staff as needed;
- Develop and approve policies and procedures for effective church operations;
- Initiate the formation of search committees when staff vacancies occur;
- Oversee the Benevolence Fund, including deposits, disbursements and record keeping;
- Be subject to the Lordship of Christ and our Foundational Documents, mission, and constitution.

D. Term. A LT member's term shall be three (3) years. In the third year of his/her term, the congregation may nominate a member to serve an additional two (2) year term. Therefore, a member's term shall be a minimum of three (3) years, but no more than five (5) years. At the end of his/her tenure, a member shall not be eligible for nomination to the LT for one (1) year.

Section 2. Ministry Teams (MT).

A. Purpose. MTs are ad hoc groups or committees established to accomplish a specific task or fulfill a certain role in our congregation's larger purpose and ministry. The majority of our congregation's ministry will happen through MTs. MTs shall meet as needed.

B. Composition. MTs are groupings of individuals who share similar gifts and interests and cooperate to accomplish a specific task or ministry. MTs shall be comprised of persons who are actively engaged in the life of the congregation. MT leaders shall be members and be affirmed or chosen by the LT.

C. Duties. MTs shall:

- Be created by a called person or by the instigation of the LT;
- Be led by designated leaders affirmed by the LT;
- Cooperate with the LT to determine their purpose and scope of ministry;
- Focus their ministries so they contribute to the mission of the congregation;
- Determine their own membership seeking those with like minds and gifts to serve;
- Petition the FT for funding during the annual budgeting cycle.

- D. Term.** Each MT is considered to be ad hoc and will persist as long as 1) it fits the congregation's purpose and current call to ministry; 2) it has adequate leadership; 3) there is an ongoing need for its services; and 4) there are resources to fund its activity. The LT, after dialogue with the MT leader, shall make these determinations.

Section 3. Finance Team (FT).

- A. Purpose.** The FT is the legal "trustee" of the congregation's assets and properties. The FT shall oversee the execution of the annual budget, expedite legal matters, and address matters pertaining to the congregation's 501(c)(3) status. The fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31. The FT shall meet at least monthly.
- B. Composition.** The FT shall be comprised of five persons from the membership: an elected Treasurer and Asst. Treasurer and three at large members. A Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary shall be designated by the group each term. The Financial Secretary shall serve as an ex officio member of the FC.
- C. Duties.** The FT shall:
- Propose a budget for each fiscal year after gaining input from the LT and MTs;
 - Present the proposed budget to the congregation two (2) weeks before the Annual Meeting;
 - Oversee the execution of the budget and the resources necessary for the same;
 - Select a Financial Secretary with the affirmation of the LT;
 - Approve all bills and instruct the Financial Secretary in paying said bills from the funds appropriated in the annual budget;
 - Supervise investments and all legal instruments pertaining thereto, also the profits and earnings thereof, instructing the Treasurer as to the disbursement;
 - Buy real estate, sell, mortgage, or encumber the real estate of the church, only as directed by a vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at a duly called meeting;
 - Receive tangible or monetary gifts exceeding \$10,000 on behalf of the congregation only as directed by a vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at a duly called meeting;
 - Make informal and formal audits of the congregation's financial records;
 - Cooperate with the LT in recommending compensation for all ministerial and church staff;
 - Be authorized to make additional emergency appropriations.
- D. Term.** A FT member's term shall be one year, but renewable for up to three (3) consecutive terms. At the end of his/her tenure, a member shall not be eligible for nomination to the FT for one (1) year.

Section 4. Nominating Committee.

- A. Purpose.** The Nominating Committee shall endeavor to call forth gifted and capable persons from the membership to serve on the various teams, committees, and ministries of our congregation. The Nominating Committee shall carry-out its duties through the annual nominating process, information sharing with the congregation, surveys of the membership, responsibilities delegated to it by the Leadership Team, and in accord with the constitution and bylaws. The Nominating Committee shall be considered a standing committee. See Articles 3 and 11 for more information.
- B. Qualifications.** The Nominating Committee shall be comprised of five (5) persons who are members of the congregation and have been appointed to this committee by the Leadership Team. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Nominating Committee.

C. Responsibilities. The Nominating Committee shall present a slate of leadership candidates to the congregation at the Annual Meeting for a congregational vote. This slate will consist of candidates to fill openings on the Leadership Team, Finance Team, and Property & Grounds Committee. The Nominating Committee should begin the nominating process by October 1st each year. The Nominating Committee shall provide information about the upcoming leadership vacancies to the congregation. The congregation shall submit nominations for said vacancies upon forms provided by the Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee shall prayerfully and thoughtfully consider each written nomination, weighing the nominee's membership status, availability, biblical qualifications, and giftedness. The Nominating Committee shall interview potential candidates, informing them of their nomination, ascertaining their availability and interest, and informing them of the duties and responsibilities of the position for which they have been nominated.

The Nominating Committee shall be permitted to adjust the terms of incoming leaders in order to stagger the terms of members in a particular group. In most cases, the Nominating Committee will seek to limit immediate family members from serving together on the Leadership Team or the Finance Team. The Nominating Committee shall initiate the normal nominating process (see above) should any vacancies on the Leadership Team, Finance Team, or Property & Grounds Committee occur during the year.

The Nominating Committee shall inform, teach, and use the tools deemed necessary to invite and encourage the members of the congregation to serve the church and our community.

The Nominating Committee may be enlisted by the Leadership Team to fill positions in groups and ministries other than the Leadership Team, Finance Team, and Property & Grounds Committee. The Nominating Committee, upon the Leadership Team's request, shall form a Search Committee. See Article 11. Sec. A for more information.

D. Selection and Terms. The term for members of the Nominating Committee shall be one year with the possibility of serving up to three (3) consecutive terms. The members of this committee shall be appointed by the Leadership Team with appointments being made, if any, by October 1st each year. The Leadership team may adjust the tenure of members to achieve a staggered rotation of membership.

Section 5. Property & Grounds Committee (PGC).

- A. Purpose.** The Property & Grounds Committee shall be responsible for the maintenance, repair, and enhancement of the physical properties held by the First Baptist Church.
- B. Qualifications.** The Property & Grounds Committee shall be comprised of five to seven (5-7) persons actively engaged in the life of our congregation. The Property & Grounds Committee shall make a diligent effort to engage gifted individuals to assist in the maintenance, repair, and enhancement of the physical properties of the church.
- C. Responsibilities.** The Property & Grounds Committee shall be responsible for the maintenance, repair, and enhancement of the physical properties held by the First Baptist Church. They shall act as the chief agent in negotiating and procuring contracts with vendors doing maintenance, repairs, or enhancements.

The Property & Grounds Committee shall be authorized by the Finance Team to spend funds on maintenance, repairs, or enhancements of First Baptist Church properties up to \$1000. If the cost of a project, repair, or item exceeds this authorized amount, the PGC must make a written request to the Finance Team to procure the needed funds. If a major project, repair, or enhancement is undertaken, the PGC must also seek the consent of the congregation at a special called meeting for that purpose.

The Property & Grounds Committee shall meet as needed, but not less than once per month. The PGC shall select its own chairperson and secretary. Both individuals must be members of First Baptist Church.

D. Selection and Terms. The term for any member of the Property & Grounds Committee shall be one year. A member may serve up to three (3) consecutive terms, as confirmed by the congregation prior to each term. At the end of his/her tenure, a member shall not be eligible to serve on the PGC for a period of one (1) year.

ARTICLE VII – OFFICERS

*All compensated staff shall have a written job description upon employment. Each job description will be written as the candidate and congregational representatives proceed through normal hiring negotiations leading to employment. Each job description will list the employee’s major duties and responsibilities, to whom the employee is responsible, compensation package, and other important information. Changes to the job description will be negotiated between the employee and the LT or other congregational representative.

Section 1. Senior Pastor.

A. Duties. The Senior Pastor shall:

- Shepherd the congregation;
- Guard and promote the beliefs and spiritual vitality of the congregation;
- Prioritize biblical preaching in his/her allocation of time and energy;
- Offer general supervision of the congregation’s larger ministry;
- Be an ex officio member of the LT and all MTs;
- Be permitted to call a special meeting or to gather MTs to transact necessary business;
- Supervise the daily operations of the staff;
- Meet the same general requirements of biblical leadership as the LT.

B. Term. The Senior Pastor’s term shall be continuous but may be terminated by either party giving a thirty (30) day notice of intent. A three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a special meeting shall be required for the call or dismissal of a Senior Pastor.

Section 2. Other Ministerial Staff (MS). (Associate Pastor, Youth Pastor, Worship Director, etc.)

A. Duties. The positions and general duties of other Ministerial Staff shall be determined in dialogue between the Senior Pastor, the LT, the search committee and/or relevant MTs. Changes in expected or traditional staffing designations shall be voted on by the congregation. MS shall be ex officio members of MTs connected to their designated area(s) of ministry and may call those MTs together for the transaction of business. MS shall meet the same general requirements of biblical leadership as the LT.

- B. Terms.** The terms of MS shall be continuous but may be terminated by either party giving a thirty (30) day notice of intent. A three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a special meeting shall be required for the call or dismissal of MS.

Section 3. Financial Secretary (FS)

- A. Duties.** The Financial Secretary shall:

- Be a member of FBC and be bonded as prescribed by the FT;
- Act as agent for the FT performing such duties and keeping such records as the FT determines, including a systematic and separate account of all funds and the disbursements there from;
- Render a monthly balance sheet and make it available to the LT and congregation;
- File with the IRS and Indiana Department of Revenue the required payroll tax and tax exempt documentation;
- Preserve all vouchers, records, and balance sheets and make a financial report at the annual meeting;
- Prepare all disbursements as allotted for in the annual budget or from investment proceeds for the Treasurer to sign;
- Assist the FT and other groups in the congregation in the collection and securing of income, gifts, and contributions;
- Annually, or as prescribed by the FT, give written notice to each member of the congregation regarding his/her personal contributions;
- Act as a secretary to the Senior Pastor, prepare regular publications, and assist other staff, officers and auxiliary organizations as prescribed by the LT and Senior Pastor;
- Keep a current membership list and tend to the procedures necessary to maintain the same.

- B. Term.** The Financial Secretary shall be employed by the congregation and selected by the FT with the approval of the LT. The Financial Secretary's term shall be continuous but may be terminated by either party giving a two (2) week notice of intent.

Section 4. Support staff.

- A. Duties.** Additional persons may be employed by the congregation and selected by the LT or other responsible party. If there are no provisions for the employee in the annual budget or prior staffing, then the congregation shall vote on the employment recommendation.
- B. Terms.** Terms shall be continuous but may be terminated by either party giving a two (2) week notice of intent.

Section 5. LT Chairperson.

- A. Duties.** The LT Chairperson shall determine the agenda and preside at each LT meeting. The Chairperson shall act as a spokesperson for the LT and moderate the annual meeting and any special meetings, unless the LT has delegated that role to another capable person.
- B. Term.** The LT Chairperson's term shall be one year and be renewable up to the length of his/her tenure on the LT.

Section 6. Treasurer

- A. Duties.** The Treasurer shall be a member of FBC and be bonded as prescribed by the FT. The T and FS shall receive and safely keep all monies of the congregation, except the Benevolence

Fund. On approval of the FT, the T shall sign all disbursements prepared by the FS. The Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Treasurer and, in his/her absence, serve as the Treasurer as provided in this constitution.

- B. Terms.** The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer's terms shall be one year and be renewable up to the length of their tenure on the FT.

ARTICLE VIII - SEARCHES FOR STAFF AND ELECTIONS

Section 1. Senior Pastor. Upon vacancy of the Senior Pastor's position, the LT shall:

- Receive nominations of potential search committee members from the congregation.
- Taking the congregation's nominations under advisement, form a search committee of seven (7) persons from the membership.
- Present the Search Committee to the congregation.

The search Committee shall:

- Consult with the appropriate office at the ABC IN/KY or the ABC-USA as part of the search process.
- Determine our congregation's current strengths, weaknesses, and needs according to our mission before interviewing any candidates.
- Investigate the merits of each candidate regarding to his/her personal faith, character, education, ministerial record, and relevant gifts and abilities in determining his/her fitness for the position.
- Develop appropriate candidate interview events and candidate presentations to the Congregation.
- Recommend a suitable candidate to the congregation for consideration.
- Consider/present one candidate at a time.

Section 2. Other Ministerial Staff. (Associate Pastor, Youth Pastor, Worship Director, etc.)

Once the necessity and duties of an additional Ministerial Staff person have been determined (see Article VII, Section 2), the LT shall form a search committee as described above in Section 1. However, in this instance, the committee shall consist of five (5) persons from the membership with at least two (2) persons being from ministries with which the Ministerial Staff person will be directly connected. The Senior Pastor shall be an ex-officio member.

The search committee for Ministerial Staff shall proceed as described above in Section 1.

Section 3. Support Staff. Once the necessity and duties of additional staff have been determined (see Article VII, Section 4), the LT shall act as a search committee or delegate that role to another responsible group.

Section 4. Elections for the LT and FT.

- A. The LT shall annually appoint a nominating committee by October 1. The committee shall consist of five (5) persons from the membership. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the nominating committee.
- B. Members shall submit written nominations to the nominating committee on forms provided by the nominating committee.
- C. The nominating committee shall prayerfully and carefully consider each written nomination presented to it, weighing the nominee's membership status, availability, biblical qualifications, and giftedness.

- D. The nominating committee shall interview potential candidates, informing them of their nomination, ascertaining their availability and interest, and informing them of the duties and responsibilities of the position for which they were nominated.
- E. The nominating committee shall develop a final slate of candidates for the LT and FT and present the slate at the Annual Meeting for a congregational vote.
- F. The nominating committee shall make reasonable attempts to stagger the terms of the members on the LT and FT.

ARTICLE IX – RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

The Senior Pastor and LT shall constitute a board of discipline to investigate, correct and compromise all complaints and offenses coming to their attention. They shall be authorized to summon members before them for such purposes. Such proceedings shall be private and confidential. The Scripture shall be taken as the guide in all matters of church discipline, especially Matthew 18:15-18.

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a duly called meeting (see Article V).