

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MANSFIELD

Adopted January 26, 2014

Amended

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THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MANSFIELD

Accepted at the October, 27, 2013 Regular Business Meeting
For the presentation and ratification vote at
the January 26, 2014 Annual Business Meeting.

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Amended

ARTICLE I.

Name

The name of this corporate body shall be First Baptist Church of Mansfield.

ARTICLE II.

Purpose

Its object is the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in this community by preaching the Gospel, as presented in the Bible, teaching God's Word in the church school, and helping to sustain mission work throughout the world.

ARTICLE III.

Polity

The membership of this church shall be the governing body. It shall maintain affiliation and cooperation with the American Baptist Churches U.S.A., the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut and the Northeast Association of the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut.

ARTICLE IV.

Membership

Section 1. **Admission of members.**

Persons may be received into membership by any one of the following ways, subject in each case to the recommendation of the Board of Deacons and the vote of two-thirds of the members present and qualified to vote at a regular or special meeting.

- a. **By Baptism.** Any person who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord may be received into the fellowship of the church, following believer's baptism.

b. **By Letter.**

- 1) From another Baptist church.
- 2) From Christian churches other than Baptist. Such persons may be received into full membership, except for their not being allowed to vote on matters that determine the church's membership in the American Baptist Churches U.S.A., the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut or the Northeast Association of the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut.
- 3) For students only - from any Christian church. An exchange of letters between the home church and this church will not necessarily constitute a withdrawal of membership from the home church. Such persons may be received into full membership, except for their not being allowed to vote on matters that determine the church's membership in the American Baptist Churches U.S.A., the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut or the Northeast Association of the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut.

c. **By Experience.**

- 1) Upon statement of Christian experience if previously baptized by immersion.
- 2) Upon statement of Christian experience by those who are members of other Christian churches, but have not been baptized by immersion. Such persons may be received into full membership except for their not being allowed to vote on matters that determine the church's membership in the American Baptist Churches U.S.A., the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut or the Northeast Association of the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut.

Section 2. **Dismissal of members.**

Any member may ask for a letter of dismissal or transfer from this church to join any other church. Such letters of dismissal or transfer may be granted by the church at any regular or special meeting.

ARTICLE V.

Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees

The officers of the church shall consist of Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Assistant Treasurer, Assistant Financial Secretary, and the Financial Officer for Missions.

The boards of the church shall consist of the Executive Board, the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Christian Education.

The standing committees of the church shall consist of a Financial Examining Committee, a Nominating Committee, a Music Committee, an Ushering Committee, a Communications Committee, a Missions Committee, a Memorial Gifts Committee, a Pastoral Relations Committee, a Flower Committee, a Stewardship Committee, a Church Heritage Committee, a Social Committee, and a Safe Church Committee.

ARTICLE VI.

Duties of the Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees

Section 1. **Officers.**

- a. **The Moderator.** This Church member shall preside at the business meetings of the church and at the business meetings of the Executive Board. In the absence of the Moderator, the Executive Board shall appoint an Acting Moderator. In the absence of the Clerk, the Moderator shall issue the call for any business meeting of the church. It shall be the responsibility of the Moderator to see that each board and standing committee except the Financial Examining Committee has a chair and to report the names of the chair of each board and committee in writing at the Spring Business Meeting.
- b. **The Clerk.** This Church member shall keep a complete record of the transactions of all business at the meeting of the church. This person shall keep a record of the names and addresses of members, with dates and manner of admission and dismissal; also a record of baptisms and deaths. This person shall issue all letters of dismissal or transfer voted by the church, write for all letters of admission voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written reports, and give legal notice of all church meetings where such is required by this constitution. In the absence of the Clerk, the Moderator shall give legal notice of church meetings. The Clerk shall assist in preparing denominational reports.
- c. **The Treasurer.** This Church member shall take charge of funds and money belonging to the church, and shall maintain and keep in a safe or fireproof vault the financial records, titles, and securities of the church. The treasurer shall pay out no money except as directed by the church or its trustees, and shall render an account as required by either the church or its trustees, of the financial standing to date. All invested funds, unless otherwise provided for, shall be in charge of the treasurer, but shall not be invested by the treasurer without the approval of the trustees. The Treasurer shall be empowered to sign in behalf of the church concerning financial agreements voted by the church. The treasurer shall make a complete report at the annual meeting of the church of all financial transactions of the church during the year previous, and shall give reports as may be called for at any business meeting of the church, and of the trustees. The chairman of the Board of Trustees may serve as Treasurer in the absence of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer at the direction of the Executive Board.
- d. **The Assistant Treasurer.** This Church member shall perform the duties of the Treasurer in the absence of the Treasurer.
- e. **The Financial Secretary.** This Church member shall receive and record all offerings, deposit same in the bank selected by the trustees, render a statement thereof to the treasurer, and issue periodic statements to those who pledge to the work of the church. This person shall present a written report at all regular meeting of the church.

- f. **The Assistant Financial Secretary.** This Church member shall perform the duties of the financial secretary in the absence of the Financial Secretary.
- g. **The Financial Officer for Missions.** This Church member shall be responsible for record-keeping and disbursement of funds related to the mission commitments of the Church, as agreed upon in the annual budget and any special commitment directed by a vote of the Church. The Financial Officer for Missions shall present a written report at each regular meeting of the Church and shall provide regular written statements of the missions accounts to the Treasurer. The Financial Officer for Missions shall be an *ex officio* member of the Missions Committee.

Section 2. **Boards.**

- a. **The Executive Board.** The Executive Board shall consist of the Moderator, the Pastor, and the chairmen of the following boards: Deacons, Trustees, and Christian Education. The Moderator shall serve as chairman. The Executive Board shall coordinate the work of the church, and consider and recommend policies to the church. It shall delegate responsibility for actions of the church which do not fall clearly into defined areas of responsibility of church boards and standing committees and, if necessary, create special committees for specific assignments. It shall counsel the church staff in all matters not under the jurisdiction of a duly authorized board or standing committee of the church. It shall appoint convention or council delegates when the elected and alternate delegates are unwilling or unable to serve. Upon recommendation of a majority of the members of any board or committee of the church, it may declare vacant any membership on any committee or board wherein an elected member is unable or unwilling to serve or has left the community without tendering their resignation. It may declare vacant by majority vote any church office held by an elected member when, in the judgment of the Executive Board, the said office holder is physically or mentally unable to perform the duties of the office or when the office holder has left the community without tendering their resignation.
- b. **The Board of Deacons.** The board shall consist of nine (9) members of this Church, and shall in every way assist in the Pastor's work. The Pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the board. Together with the Pastor, it shall exercise chief responsibility for the services of worship. It shall provide for pulpit supplies. It shall prepare and assist at the observance of the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and the Ordinance of Believer's Baptism. It shall assist the Pastor in visitation and counseling. It shall keep a watchful eye over the needy, the sick, and the afflicted in the church and the community, and be ready to render aid. It shall direct the expenditures of monies from the Fellowship Fund, and a written report of such expenditures will be presented at each regular meeting of the church. The board shall recommend persons for membership in the church. It shall periodically review the list of church members considering how the church could best support the Christian growth of both the congregation and of individual members. For the purpose of reporting active membership, it shall estimate the number of current members who have been active in the life of the church during the previous two years. Each year the board shall elect a chairman, secretary and treasurer of the Fellowship fund from its own membership, and shall meet a minimum of four (4) times a year. A majority of its members shall constitute a quorum.

- c. **The Board of Trustees.** The board shall consist of the Treasurer, and six (6) other members of this Church. It will include the Sexton as ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees with full voting rights unless either the Sexton or Board of Trustees object to such participation. They will be excused from voting on matters that involve their own position. The Pastor shall be an ex officio member of the board. The board shall take charge of all church property, supervise the financial investments of the church, and shall decide for what purpose the church building(s) shall be used, other than for the various activities of the church. It shall advise with and assist the Treasurer in collecting and disbursing the money of the church. It shall keep the church property in repair, and adjust any claims against it. Its duties shall include the employment of the sextons, secretaries, and other employees as may be designated by vote of the church. It shall be the duty of this board to supervise ways and means of raising necessary funds for the support of the church and for the benevolences and for the disbursement of these funds as appropriated. At the annual meeting of the church, it shall submit a proposed budget for the ensuing year. The board shall give a full report of its activities to the church at the annual meeting, and at such other times as the church may direct. The board shall elect a chairman and a secretary yearly from its own membership, and shall meet regularly. A majority of members shall constitute a quorum.
- d. **The Board of Christian Education.** The board shall consist of seven (7) members of this Church. The position of Sunday School Superintendent shall be elected annually from the board from within its own membership. The Pastor shall be an ex officio member. The board is responsible for the organization, administration, and supervision of the entire educational program of the church. It is responsible for developing and interpreting to the constituency of the church the educational objectives; for studying the educational needs of the church and for making decisions concerning (a) time schedule, (b) educational use of housing and equipment, and (c) the addition or elimination of classes or organizations: for discovering, enlisting, training, and appointing all church educational workers, including the Superintendent of the church school; for evaluating, determining, and supervising the educational curriculum; for preparing and administering the education budget of the church. Each year the board shall elect a chairman and a secretary from its own membership, and shall meet regularly. A majority of members shall constitute a quorum.

Section 3. **Standing Committees.**

- a. **The Nominating Committee.** The Nominating Committee shall consist of three (3) elected members of this church. Prior to the annual meeting, it shall prepare a list of those qualified to fill the various offices for which elections are to be held. It shall interview each nominee proposed and ascertain his or her willingness to serve if elected. The committee shall nominate a person for each office to be filled and delegates to the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut State Convention and to the Northeast Association of the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut. The committee report shall be posted at the church at least one week before the election is to be held. During the year, it shall present suitable nominations for filling any offices which are vacated. The committee shall elect a chairman from its own membership and shall meet as needed during the year.

- b. **The Music Committee.** The Music Committee shall consist of five (5) or more elected members. It may include all church music directors and designated church organists/pianists as ex-officio members of the Music Committee with full voting rights if they wish to serve in this capacity. They will be recused from voting on matters that involve their own position. It shall be responsible for the engaging of the director(s) and the organist(s) on an annual basis. It shall aid them in choir recruitment and in the planning of music for the church services. It shall also be responsible for any other matters which pertain to the musical part of the church's program. The committee shall elect a chairman from its own membership, and shall meet as needed during the year, and shall present an annual report.
- c. **The Financial Examining Committee.** The Financial Examining Committee shall consist of two (2) elected members. It shall examine the financial records of the church after the annual meeting and report to the church at the next regular business meeting. A written copy of this report will also be submitted for inclusion at the time of the next annual report of the church. The committee shall determine that expenditures and investments made have been authorized. They shall also check the general accuracy and completeness of the records. This committee shall not have access to records which would reveal the identity of individuals making pledges or loans to the church.
- d. **The Ushering Committee.** The Ushering Committee shall consist of six (6) elected members. It shall attend to the seating of the congregation, receiving of the offering, and otherwise aid the Deacons and Pastor. This committee is empowered and encouraged to add additional members as needed. The committee shall elect a chairman from its own membership, and shall meet as needed during the year.
- e. **The Communications Committee.** The Communications Committee shall consist of four (4) or more elected members. It shall provide means by which the purpose and program of the church may be kept before the members and the community, such as bulletins, newsletters, and use of radio, television and newspapers. The Committee shall elect a chairman from its own membership, and shall meet as needed during the year.
- f. **The Flower Committee.** The Flower Committee shall consist of three (3) or more elected members. It shall provide for flowers in the church in keeping with the season and the program. People who wish to contribute flowers for any service of the church, should contact the flower committee. The committee shall meet as needed during the year and elect a chairman.
- g. **The Missions Committee.** The Missions Committee shall consist of two (2) or more elected members, a representative of the Board of Christian Education, and a representative of the Emma Gardiner Missionary Society. This committee is responsible for coordinating the mission emphasis of the church.

- h. **The Memorial Gifts Committee.** The Memorial Gifts Committee shall consist of two (2) or more elected members. This committee shall record all Memorial Gifts and insure that appropriate acknowledgments are given. The necessary information will be supplied by the financial secretary or the assistant financial secretary.

The Memorial Gifts Committee shall determine appropriate uses of Memorial Funds in consultation with the congregation and/or other boards and committees. The Memorial Gifts Committee is authorized to make purchases using Memorial Funds up to a limit to be set by the church at a business meeting. Expenses exceeding this limit must be approved by a vote of the church members.

- i. **The Pastoral Relations Committee.** The Pastoral Relations Committee shall provide advice and spiritual support to the pastor and shall nurture mutual Christian support between the congregation and the pastor. It may communicate with appropriate boards and committees or directly with the church, but has no more authority than an individual member of the congregation. The committee shall elect a chairperson from its own membership.
- j. **The Stewardship Committee.** The stewardship Committee shall consist of two or more elected members, a representative of the Board of Deacons, a representative of the Board of Trustees, and a representative of the Board of Christian Education. The committee shall elect a chairperson from its membership. This committee is responsible for coordinating the annual stewardship campaign of the church.
- k. **The Church Heritage Committee.** The Church Heritage Committee shall consist of two (2) or more elected members. The committee shall be responsible for preserving and maintaining the records pertinent to the history of the First Baptist Church of Mansfield, suggest what current documents and artifacts should be preserved and, working with boards and other committees, provide an on-going recognition and celebration of the Church's history.
- l. **The Social Committee.** The Social Committee shall consist of six (6) or more elected members. It shall be responsible to create a pleasant atmosphere for the church functions. Coordinate meals or refreshments for church business meetings and special programs as requested during the year. Coordinate cleanup for these events. Check on kitchen and coffee hour supplies and replenish as needed. Elect a chairperson from its own members. Meet as needed during the year. Present a written annual report.
- m. **The Safe Church Committee.** The Safe Church Committee shall consist of three (3) or more members, plus a representative of the Board of Trustees, and a representative of the Board of Christian Education. The committee shall elect a chairperson from its membership. This committee is responsible for ensuring that the *First Baptist Church of Mansfield Safe and Nurturing Church Environment Policy* is followed including collecting and preserving information as outlined in that document. The committee shall review the Policy as well as physical aspects of the Church facilities related to safety. They should report annually in writing xfto the Board of Trustees and the Board of Christian Education.

ARTICLE VII.

Tenure of Office for Elected Positions

Section 1. **Officers.**

The moderator shall be elected each year for a term of one year. No Moderator may serve longer than three successive terms. This person may be reelected after a year has elapsed following the expiration of their period of service.

The Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and the Assistant Financial Secretary shall each be elected for a term of one year. There shall be no limit on the tenure of their offices.

Section 2. **Members of Boards of Deacons, Trustees, and Christian Education.**

One-third of the members of each board shall be elected at each annual meeting for a term of three years. No person may be elected to more than two consecutive full terms. A board member may be reelected after a year has elapsed following the expiration of their period of service.

No members of the aforementioned boards shall serve on more than the one board to which they are elected. No husband and wife shall serve on the same elected board.

Section 3. **Members of Standing Committees.**

- a. **Pastoral Relations Committee.** The Pastor may, at his or her discretion, create or dismiss a Pastoral Relations Committee and appoint or dismiss individual members. The congregation shall be kept informed of the makeup of the committee through the church's bulletin and newsletter or by presenting changes at a regular business meeting. In addition, the names of the committee shall be presented at the annual meeting and published in the annual report. In the interest of maintaining a variety of perspectives, the pastor is encouraged to consider the change of at least one person per year in the committee's makeup and the limitation of any one individual's service to three consecutive years.
- b. **Other Standing Committees.** Each committee member shall be elected each year for a term of one year. The members of the Nominating Committee shall be elected at the first election for one, two, and three years respectively, and one each year for a term of three years thereafter. A member of the Nominating Committee may be reelected only after one year has elapsed following the expiration of their period of service. There shall be no limit on the tenure of their respective offices for any member of any of the other standing committees.

ARTICLE VIII.

The Pastorate

Section 1. Calling a Pastor.

When the pastorate is vacant the church, in regular or special meeting, shall nominate a representative pastoral search committee of five (5) or more members of the church. All nominations for the pastoral search committee shall be made at the meeting by church members. After the nominations are closed, the church clerk shall confirm that each nominee is willing to serve if elected and notify all church members in writing in a timely manner of the names of those nominated for the pastoral search committee and of the option to vote by absentee ballot.

At a subsequent church meeting, to be held not more than four (4) weeks later, the church shall elect a representative pastoral search committee. Only church members may submit absentee ballots, which will be counted only if they are received by the church clerk by the beginning of the meeting at which the pastoral search committee is to be elected. The Moderator shall consult with all those elected to the committee to determine a date for the first meeting, which shall be held within thirty (30) days after the election. At its first meeting, the committee shall elect a chairperson and a secretary from its membership. The committee shall establish its own rules and procedures.

This committee shall take the necessary steps to secure the names of prospective pastors, working in full consultation with the executive minister of the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut. It shall request information about the record and qualifications of those persons whose names are submitted for their consideration, and the church shall not call a minister until such information has been so secured. When a suitable person is found for the pastorate, the committee shall recommend this person to the church for consideration.

The call of a pastor shall be considered by the church at a regular or special meeting, notice of such meeting and its purpose having been read from the pulpit on two successive Sundays prior to meeting not counting the day of the meeting. Notice shall be given in writing to all members of the church at least two weeks in advance of the date of the meeting by the church clerk. Voting by members shall be by written ballot and absentee ballots shall be allowed. A three-fourths majority vote of all ballots cast shall be required to extend a call. Only one candidate shall be presented to the church at a time.

Section 2. Termination of Pastorate.

The term of office may be ended upon ninety days notice on the part of the pastor or of the church. The church may vote to terminate the office at a regular or special meeting not counting the day of the meeting. Notice shall be given in writing to all members of the church at least two weeks in advance of the data of the meeting by the church clerk. Voting by members shall be by written ballot and absentee ballots shall be allowed. A three-fourths majority vote of all ballots cast shall be required to terminate the pastorate.

ARTICLE IX.

Conduct of the Church

Section 1. Elections.

- a. **Time.** The annual election of officers shall be held during the annual meeting of the church.
- b. **Qualifications of Voters.** All matters shall be voted on by members in good standing subject to the laws of the state of Connecticut for corporate bodies. All members are encouraged to attend all church meetings and participate actively.
- c. **Procedure.** At least one week before the annual election the Nominating Committee shall present to the church the name of a person for each office to be filled. At the time of the annual meeting it shall be the privilege of any member present and qualified to vote to place in nomination the name of any eligible person for any office. A two-thirds majority of the ballots cast is necessary for the election of any officer.

Section 2. Meetings.

- a. **Worship Services.** The Sunday service(s) shall be held at such hours as the church may determine. The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed on the first Sunday of each month, at which time the Church Covenant shall be read. The Board of Deacons may vote to change to a different week of the month for a particular communion service.
- b. **Regular Church Meetings.** Regular meetings of the church shall be the annual meeting, and two other business meetings to be held as stated in the By-Laws.
- c. **Emergency Church Meetings.** The Executive Board may call an emergency meeting of the church if circumstances warrant by an attempt to notify all resident members, and by notification of at least two-thirds (2/3) of resident members, stating the purpose, time and meeting place.
- d. **Special Meetings.** Special meetings of the church may at any time be warned by the Clerk of the church, or, in the absence of the Clerk, by the Moderator. When application in writing for that purpose is made by ten members who are qualified to vote. The warning of such meetings shall include notice of the object(s) for which it is called. However, at any of the Sunday worship services, providing that a quorum is present and voting, the church may act without prior warning upon requests for admission of members, or dismissal of members as presented by recommendation of the Board of Deacons, but not upon other business.

- e. **Notice of Meetings.** Warning of all regular and special meetings (except as specified in paragraph c and d above) shall be given as follows:
- 1) notice shall be given from the pulpit at the Sunday service at least one week in advance of the date of the meeting,
 - 2) notice shall be given in writing to all the members of the church at least one week in advance of the date of the meeting by the church clerk,
 - 3) the notice given of such warning shall be returned and kept on file and recorded at length with the warning or doings of such meeting.
- f. **Quorum.** A quorum for the transaction of business shall be 10% (ten per cent) of the members qualified to vote at the current annual business meeting.
- g. **All meetings.** Unless otherwise provided for, Robert's Rules of Order shall be used as a guide for all business meetings of the church, both regular and special.

Section 3. **Church Year.** The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE X.

Dissolution and Incidental Profits

Section 1. **Distribution on Dissolution.**

Upon dissolution of the Church, the Board of Trustees shall, after paying or making provisions for the payment of liabilities of the Church, dispose of all assets of the Church to one or more organizations, organized and operating exclusively for religious, charitable, educational or scientific purposes, and shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c) of the I.R.S. of 1954 (or corresponding provisions of any future U.S. internal Revenue Code).

Section 2. **Disposition of Incidental Profit.**

Any Incidental Profit which the Church might make shall be used in furthering the purpose of the church as stated in Article II.

ARTICLE XI.

Amendments

The constitution may be amended or repealed at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present and qualified to vote, notice of the proposed change having been given at a previous regular meeting.

ARTICLE XII.

By-Laws

By-Laws to this constitution may be adopted or amended at any regular meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of the members present and qualified to vote.

BY-LAWS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MANSFIELD

Amended

1. **Church Meetings:** Regular meetings of the church shall be the annual meeting, to be held in the month of January. Other regular meetings of the church shall be; the spring meeting, to be held in the month of April and the fall meeting to be held in the month of October. Written minutes of the previous meeting shall be made available prior to the start of the next regular meeting. The order of business for a regular meeting of the church shall be as follows:

Opening worship

Reports from the Pastor, Officers, Boards and Committees

Any church business remaining unfinished at a previous meeting.

New business.

Reading and approving of the minutes of this meeting.

Adjournment.

2. **Emergency expenditures:** The Board of Trustees shall be empowered to expend up to \$1,000.00, between regularly scheduled church meetings for needs not covered in the budget.