

Constitution and By-Laws of the
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF DAWSON, INC.
Dawson, Georgia

[Adopted February 2009]

A New Testament Church is a fellowship of baptized believers in Christ who are united by their common relation to the Holy Spirit.

A church constitution and by-laws document helps a church preserve democratic procedures. This instrument serves as the guide for members to follow in carrying out the work of the church.

Basic theology, organizational structure, and church policies are contained in a constitution. By-laws, on the other hand, state the methods for carrying out these principles and policies. By-laws will usually be changed more often than the constitution. It should be emphasized, however, that both the constitution and by-laws should be reviewed as the need arises by a special committee, the church council, and/or deacons. As the program of the church changes, so must its rules of governmental procedure be brought up to date.

The basic advantages of a constitution and by-laws are that they:

1. Furnish members a written statement of their church organization, fundamental guidelines and theological beliefs.
2. Aid in preserving democracy and harmony since predetermined guidelines have already been established by the members.
3. Provide orderly procedures for guiding the transaction of church business.
4. Serve as a basis for solving problems before problems arise.

I – Purpose and Vision

Purpose: To worship God, love others, and share Jesus.

Vision: First Baptist Church of Dawson, Georgia, strives to be a committed fellowship of believers *worshiping God* through prayer and creative ministry, displaying the fruit of the Spirit by *loving others*, and developing outreach by boldly *sharing Jesus* through spreading the gospel.

II – Articles of Faith

The doctrinal statement known as the Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963, represents the doctrinal beliefs of the members of the church.

III - Church Covenant

Since we have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and have been baptized, we now before God and His church covenant to:

Walk together in Christian love,
Worship and pray together,
Faithfully attend worship services,
Be willing to help in all church work,
Give cheerfully our tithes and offerings for the work of the church and the spread of the Gospel,
Help those in need in our church and in our community,
Have family devotions,
Teach our children about Jesus Christ,
Witness to members of our family, friends, and to strangers,
Be honest and faithful in all our dealings,
Keep from all types of immorality in our thoughts, our speech, and our actions,
Speak only that which is true and helpful,
Be slow in anger and quick to forgive,
Be ready to serve in another Christian church after leaving this one.

Oh God, help us by Your power to keep these covenant promises. Amen.

2 John 1:6, Matthew 19:19b, John 15:12, Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:24-25, Acts 2:46, Acts 11:26, Titus 2:7-8, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Malachi 3:10, Acts 2:45, Luke 10:25-37, Acts 4:36-37, Romans 12:13, Acts 6:4, Romans 12:12, Deuteronomy 6:7-9, Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 8:15, Romans 12:17, 2 Corinthians 13:7, Colossians 3:8, Ephesians 5:3-5, James 3:1-12, Ephesians 4:25, Romans 14:19, Ephesians 4:29, James 1:19, Colossians 3:13

IV - Character

Section 1 - Policy: The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and co-operation which are common among Southern Baptist Churches.

Section 2 - Doctrine: This church receives the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in essential accord with the belief of the Southern Baptist Churches as indicated in the Articles of Faith herewith.

BY-LAWS

Article I - Membership

Section 1 - Qualifications: The membership of this church shall consist of such persons as confess Christ as their Savior and Lord, who have been accepted by vote of the Church (1) after

due examination by the Pastor (Church) as to their Christian experience, followed by baptism by immersion, or (2) after submission of letters of dismissal and recommendation of a Church of like faith and order or satisfactory substitutes therefore. All prospective members are likewise required to complete the new member orientation and sign the church covenant before being presented to the church.

Section 2 - Duties: Members are expected to be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian life; to attend regularly the services of this church (unless providentially hindered); to provide financial support for the Church and its causes, and to share in its spiritual undertakings.

Section 3 - Rights: Such members as are in full and regular standing, and do not hold letters of dismissal, and such only, may act and vote in the meetings of the Church.

Section 4 - Termination: The continuance of membership shall be subject to the general principles and usages of Southern Baptist churches, and especially as follows:

- a. Any member in full and regular standing who desires a letter of dismissal and recommendation to any other Baptist church is entitled to receive it upon request. In case of removal to another community, the member should promptly cause such request to be made.
- b. Should a member become an offense to Christ or to the Church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, the Church may terminate said person's membership, but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and reformation, in accordance with the eighteenth chapter of Matthew.
- c. All action looking to 4b shall be considered by the Active Deacons and the Pastor, who shall first make recommendations to the Church.
- d. No church membership shall be terminated (except by request for a letter of dismissal) at the meeting when the recommendation for such action is first made in writing.

Section 5 - Restoration: Any person whose membership has been terminated pursuant to Section 4b above, may be restored upon evidence of repentance and reformation presented to the Active Deacons and upon their recommendation to the Church.

Article II - Church Officers

The officers of this church shall be as follows:

Pastor

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's notice

shall be given to the membership. A pulpit committee of seven shall be nominated by the church council and elected by the church to seek out a suitable pastor, and their recommendation will constitute a nomination. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one man at a time. Election shall be by ballot, and affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present being necessary to a choice. The pastor thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by death, resignation, or by a three-fourths vote of those present. In any event of the church's action to terminate the services of the pastor, two week's notice shall be given to the membership before a vote by ballot can be held.

In the event the pastor terminates for any reason he shall give the church thirty days notice and in the event the church should terminate the services of the pastor, thirty days notice shall be given. By mutual consent this thirty day period may be disposed of. If the church votes to dispose of the thirty-day period, the pastor would be paid thirty days salary.

The pastor shall have in charge the welfare and oversight of the church. He shall preside at all meetings of the church, except as hereinafter provided.

Deacons

Section 1 - Number, Election and Terms of Service:

There shall be a minimum of Fifteen active Deacons.

Deacons shall be elected by the church annually on the first Sunday of September. The terms shall be three years, with five deacons rotating annually. The New Testament records the election of the first deacons. That record shows us that the office of deacon is a sacred office and the selection of men who will fill that office should be made with great care and under the specific guidance of the Holy Spirit. The apostles instructed the members of the church to "look ye out among you...men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom, whom we may appoint..." This was a careful and thoughtful selection of men who would properly represent the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing that this Scriptural directive points the way for the proper election of our deacons:

- 1) A letter will be sent to every family that will inform them of the men who cannot be nominated. . There will be enclosed, a prepared form to list your nominations. Each member may nominate one man for each vacancy to be filled.
- 2) The nominations will be received by the nominating committee for the church. They will compile from the list of those nominated a working list to be given to the pastor. This list will include every name that is submitted by the membership in the order of the number of the nominations each individual receives. The nominating committee will not act to delete or add any name.
- 3) 3) The pastor will be furnished the list of the nominations and will begin to visit each candidate, starting with the first name of the list and following the order of the list. The purpose of this visit will be to share with each man the Scriptural requirements of the office, the importance of the deacon subscribing wholeheartedly to the church covenant and by-laws, and to afford each man the opportunity to seek any counsel he feels necessary in regard to the office he is being asked to consider.
- 4) Each candidate will then be asked to decide for himself whether or not he is qualified scripturally and if he can commit himself to the church covenant.

- 5) When a sufficient number of candidates have qualified themselves to afford two names for each vacancy to be filled, these will be presented to the church and deacons will be elected. In the event of a tie, all names will be included on the ballot.
- 6) When a vacancy occurs during the course of his term, the vacancy shall be filled at the next annual election of deacons.

Using a secret ballot, the active Deacons shall nominate, by majority vote, the following officers in October: Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. Deacon officers shall be elected for a one-year term and shall not serve a consecutive term.

Section 2 - Duties:

- 1) They are to guard the unity of the church.
- 2) With the pastor they are to consider and formulate plans for the progress of the church in all things pertaining to the saving of souls, the development of Christians, and the extension of the growth of the Kingdom of God.
- 3) By proper organization among themselves, they are to maintain inspiring oversight over all the membership of the church. They are to seek to know the moral, spiritual, and physical needs of all the membership and to serve the whole church in relieving, encouraging and developing all who are in need.
- 4) In counsel with the pastor, and by such methods as the Holy Spirit may direct in accordance with New Testament teachings, they are to have oversight in all matters of church discipline. They are to be guided always by Matt. 18:15-17, I Cor. 5:9-13; I Thess. 5:12-14.
- 5) Deacons are to aid in the observance of the Lord's Supper.
- 6) Deacons are expected to serve on committees.
- 7) Deacons are expected to faithfully attend all worship services.

Section 3 - Method of Procedure:

- 1) Deacons are to meet at a time known to the membership. The meetings shall be on the first Monday after the second Sunday of each month.
 - a. A called meeting may be held at any time when called by the Chairman or, in his absence, by the Vice-Chairman on any matter he feels may not wait for the next regular meeting.
 - b. In all meetings, "Thus said the Lord" shall be central in all decisions. Matters shall be presented and discussed in a Christian like manner for each deacon to see and understand the matter as it is, and make such decision as in his judgment would be pleasing to the Lord.
 - c. Minutes of meetings shall be kept in a loose leaf book in the church office.
 - d. All recommendations shall be submitted to the church assembled in regular conference for approval, amendment and/or disapproval.
- 2) They are to apportion the membership among themselves, or make plans whereby the entire membership of the church shall have the benefit of the oversight in Christ of their brethren.
- 3) Each deacon shall freely confer with the pastor about all matters and cases of discipline which in his judgment would be most wisely handled in private.

- 4) The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary shall be nominated by the deacons and elected by the church annually.

Moderator

The moderator shall be the Active Deacon Chairman. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman of the deacons shall preside; or in the absence of both, the clerk shall call the church to order and a moderator pro-tem shall be elected.

Clerk

It shall be the duty of the Clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special business meetings of the church; prepare the annual letter and table of statistics concerning the work of the church for the local Baptist Association; and perform such other duties that may be prescribed in the Constitution or By-Laws.

The Assistant Clerk shall perform the duties of the Clerk in the absence of the Clerk. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk shall be elected each year.

Treasurer

The treasurer shall be elected annually to serve for the church year. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive all monies from whatever source derived, unless otherwise directed by the church, deacons, or Finance Committee. The treasurer shall distribute by check (with promptness), upon proper authority, all money or things of value that are given to or through disbursements; rendering monthly reports to the deacons and quarterly summaries to the church. The treasurer shall keep accurate records of gifts of all church members and shall render to each member annually a record of contributions. The treasurer's books shall be audited annually as arranged by the church, and all books, records, and accounts kept by him/her shall be available to any church member on request with exception to membership contributions. The treasurer shall be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee. An assistant treasurer may be elected by the church to assist in the above-mentioned duties.

Minister of Music

The Minister of Music shall be nominated by the personnel committee and shall serve for an indefinite period of time, the election of whom and the termination of whom shall be the same as that of the pastor.

Duties shall be directed by job descriptions agreed upon by the Personnel Committee and the Minister of Music as reflected in the Employment Policies and Procedures manual.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors shall consist of three members and shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee. They shall have no authority other than what is given by the church. Each member shall serve until their successor is chosen. They shall perform such duties as are required by law, subject to the approval of the church. They shall provide necessary insurance

on church property and personnel. They shall have actual care of the place of worship, but shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action.

Officers of Church Organizations

All organizations of the church shall be under church control, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church. It is understood that the pastor is ex-officio head of all the organizations named, and his leadership is to be recognized in them all. Job descriptions of all church officers are provided in the Personnel Handbook on file in the church office.

Section 1 – Corporate Officers

The Chairman of the Deacons shall be designated as the Chief Executive Officer. The Treasurer shall be designated as the Chief Financial Officer. The Church Clerk shall be designated as the Secretary.

Section 2 – Other Officers

The following officers shall be selected by the nominating committee and elected by the church:

- Chairman of Ushers
- Sunday School Director
- Woman’s Missionary Union Director
- Missions Committee Director
- Baptist Men’s Director

Article III – Committees

Committees may be formed in order to conduct church business efficiently. Job descriptions for all committees, including those not specifically mentioned in this document, are provided in Committees of First Baptist Church Dawson, GA on file in the church office. This document may be modified by the Nominating Committee as needed. All committees shall report to the church for approval or disapproval of its recommendations unless otherwise stated herewith.

Finance Committee

The purpose of this committee is to consider all matters of finance and make recommendations as appropriate to the church for approval or disapproval. This committee shall be composed of three active deacons, chosen by the Chairman of the Deacons and the Pastor, and four members from the church at large nominated by the nominating committee. The new Finance Committee shall choose a chairman from the three appointed active deacons who shall have the responsibility of reporting monthly to the active deacon body.

Building and Grounds Committee

The purpose of this committee is to have general charge of the administration and upkeep of the grounds and buildings and make recommendations as appropriate to the church for approval or disapproval. The Building and Grounds Committee shall be composed of three active deacons, chosen by the Chairman of the Deacons and the Pastor, and four members of the church at large nominated by the nominating committee. The new Building and Grounds Committee shall choose a chairman from the three appointed active deacons who shall have the responsibility of reporting monthly to the active deacon body.

Personnel Committee

The purpose of this committee is to make recommendations for employment and assist the pastor with staff oversight. The Personnel Committee shall be composed of three active deacons, chosen by the Chairman of the Deacons and the Pastor, and four members from the church at large nominated by the nominating committee. The new Personnel Committee shall choose a chairman from the three appointed active deacons who shall have the responsibility of reporting monthly to the active deacon body.

Nominating Committee

The purpose of this committee is to make every effort to secure workers for all organizations and committees as needed by the church to be recommended to the church. Three members shall be appointed annually by the pastor in June. This committee shall have as its goal the recommendation of the Board of Directors (which shall not be a part of the Nominating Committee), the Sunday School Director, W.M.U. Director, Missions Committee Director, and Baptist Men's Director to be elected at the July Business meeting and these shall become a part of the Nominating Committee.

Article IV - Church Finances

Section 1: All funds, for any and all purposes, shall pass through the hands of the Treasurer and be properly recorded on the books of the church. The expense of all organizations, as approved by the church, shall be paid from the local expense fund as heretofore provided.

Section 2: Special offerings must be approved by the Finance Committee and the Chairman of Deacons. The following are pre-approved annual offerings and require no additional action: Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, Gideon Ministry or other Convention sanctioned offerings. This does not preclude individuals making offerings at any time as the Spirit of God may move them.

Section 3: Fundraisers associated with church activity must be approved by the Finance Committee and the Chairman of Deacons.

Article V - Meetings

Section 1: Worship

- 1) Public services shall be held stately on the Lord's Day and on some regular evening or evenings of each week.
- 2) The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once a quarter on a Sunday.

Section 2: Business

- 1) The regular business meetings of the Church shall be on the third Sunday of each month after the evening worship service.
- 2) At any of the regular meetings for worship, the church may, without special notice, act upon the reception of members or upon the dismissal of members to other churches, and upon the appointment of delegates to councils, but not upon other business.
- 3) The pastor or moderator may, and shall, when requested by the deacons, trustees, or a standing committee, call from the pulpit special business meetings, the particular object of the meeting being clearly stated in the notice. Special meetings of the church may also be called by the clerk upon the written application of any five adult members specifying on the object thereof, which notice shall be read at the public service on the Lord's Day preceding the day fixed for such meeting.

Section 3: Parliamentary Procedures

Church business meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the latest edition of Roberts Rule of Order, unless otherwise stated in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Article VI - The Church Council

Section 1: The Church Council, upon being established by authorization of the church, shall seek to correlate and co-ordinate the activities of the organizations and committees of the church, yet with advisory powers only.

Section 2: The Council, unless otherwise determined by vote of the church shall be composed of the pastor, staff members, Chairman of Deacons, one representative of each of the church organizations and two members of the congregation at large nominated by the Nominating Committee.

Section 3: The Council shall meet at the call of the pastor or chairman at any time deemed necessary.

Section 4: All matters agreed upon by the Council, calling for action not already provided for, shall be referred to the church for approval or disapproval.

Article VII - Indemnification

Section 1: Mandatory Indemnification

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim (a) if there is liability insurance and (b) if the deacons determine that the person acted (1) in good faith, (2) with the care an ordinarily

prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (3) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 2: Permissive Indemnification

At the discretion of the deacons, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

Section 3: Procedure

If a quorum of the deacons is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of deacons seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

Article VIII - Amendments

This Constitution and accompanying By-Laws may be amended by a two-third vote of the members present and voting at a meeting specially called for that purpose, the proposed amendment being inserted in the call. No change shall be made in the Articles of Faith and Covenant except by a two-thirds vote of all the members of the church present entitled to vote, said proposed change having been laid before the church in writing at a business meeting not less than one month before the time of the proposed action, and read from the pulpit on the Lord's Day succeeding such proposal.