

CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HENDERSON, NORTH CAROLINA

(As Amended May 2007)

PREAMBLE

We affirm our belief in the one eternal God, revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We further affirm the following basic Baptist beliefs: Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, authority of the Bible, priesthood of the believer, soul competency, local church autonomy, foreign and domestic missions, and separation of church and state. In order that we may preserve and secure the principles of our faith, be governed in an orderly manner, make clear the responsibilities, and preserve the liberties of each member, assure the freedom of action of this church and its true relationship to other church bodies, we declare and establish this Constitution.

ARTICLE I. Name

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Henderson, North Carolina. (sometimes hereinafter referred to as “First Baptist Church.”)

ARTICLE II. Purpose

The purpose of the First Baptist Church of Henderson, North Carolina, composed of individuals who share a personal commitment to Jesus as Savior and Lord is to be, through the power of the Holy Spirit, a redemptive body in Christ in the world. Believing that the work of the church is serious and demanding, we therefore seek to lead our members toward Christian maturity through worship, fellowship and education, bearing witness to the gospel and ministering to the total needs of individuals in order to bring them into harmony with God’s purpose.

ARTICLE III. Membership

Section A. Eligibility for membership includes a sincere profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, a dedication to the principles of faith and conduct in which He taught, and a willingness to assume responsibility for church membership.

Section B. General Responsibilities of Members.

Item 1. It is the responsibility of members to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (I Peter 3:18), and to support the church and its ministry by their prayers, interest, attendance, and financial aid, and to cultivate and cherish Christian love (“agape” – unfailing good will) within the fellowship of the church.

Item 2. Those non-resident members who do not attend the services of the church, make financial contributions to the church, or respond to correspondence from the church shall, after a reasonable length of time, be placed on an inactive roll. They may be reinstated to the active roll by renewed attendance, contributions, or correspondence. When an inactive member requests a letter of recommendation to join another church, this will be regarded as evidence of new interest in the church and will automatically restore the inactive member to the active roll prior to the granting of the letter. Only active members shall be included in the church’s statistical reports to the denomination.

Section C. Rights of Members.

Item 1. Members only shall be entitled to vote in the transactions of the church. Church members shall be entitled to cast votes for constitutional amendments and/or other matters requiring congregational vote by absentee ballot on forms furnished by a designated staff member of the church during regular office hours during the ten business days prior to any constitutional amendment and/or congregational vote on transactions of the church. Quorum requirements on the day of the congregational vote shall be set forth in Article XI, Section B, Item 3.

Item 2. Members shall be entitled to hold church offices and present any matter of church business at a regularly scheduled business meeting.

Section D. Reception of Members.

Item 1. We affirm our belief in Believer’s Baptism, meaning a Christian Baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by immersion as the normative practice at First Baptist Church, Henderson.

Item 2. All persons requesting membership shall present themselves at a public service of worship unless prevented from doing so due to disability as defined below. They shall be introduced to the congregation by the minister in charge, who shall state the manner in which they are presenting themselves.

Item 3. People may present themselves for membership in one of the following ways:

- (1) By transfer of membership or statement of membership from another Baptist church, or
- (2) A person who has been raised and nurtured in the First Baptist Church Henderson, or who, for the first time has professed their faith in Jesus Christ, and has professed their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, shall be baptized by immersion following the normative practice of the Church, or
- (3) A person who has received baptism by a different mode than immersion and/or a person who has received infant baptism and has completed a confirmation process in another denomination session shall attend an orientation program for new members. While baptism by immersion is not mandatory in these circumstances, such persons are encouraged to explore, through orientation, the significance of baptism by immersion as it would impact on their spiritual growth and development. At the request of such person, a renewal of baptism will be conducted, or a public affirmation of faith after new member orientation will be offered, or
- (4) A person who is disabled to the extent that they are either unable to attend church or enter the baptismal pool will receive a believer's baptism by an appropriate method other than immersion, or
- (5) A person who has received infant baptism and has not been confirmed shall attend an orientation program for new members. Upon completion of that program, such person shall receive a Believer's Baptism by immersion.

The candidate shall be regarded as under the watch-care of the church until all requirements for church membership are met.

Section E. Letters of recommendation for membership to other churches may be granted by a majority vote of the church or Deacons in a stated business meeting, upon the request of another church.

ARTICLE IV. Meetings

Section A. This church shall hold regular meetings for worship, teaching, training, fellowship, and observance of the ordinances. Other meetings of the church as a whole, or of authorized groups within the church, may be held according to the needs of the congregation.

Section B. This church shall hold regular business meetings, at which time reports shall be made and consideration shall be given to matters concerning the spiritual and material welfare of the church. Special business meetings may be called by the Senior Minister or

the chairman of the Diaconate to consider matters of a significant or urgent nature; however, one week's notice must be given, stating the nature of the business. Those members who attend a regular or called business meeting shall constitute a quorum. Parliamentary procedure in business meetings shall be governed by the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE V. Ordinances

The ordinances of this church, understood as symbols, shall be (1) Baptism, the mode of which is immersion, and (2) the Lord's Supper, which shall be open to all Christians.

ARTICLE VI. Officers

Section A. Ministers.

Item 1. The ministers shall be responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. They shall give general leadership to the congregation, the organizations, the councils, the committees, and the church staff in their appropriate tasks of worship, proclamation, education, administration, and pastoral ministry. They shall give personal attention to the preaching of the Gospel, to the leadership of worship, and to pastoral visitation and counseling. The ordained ministers shall customarily administer the ordinances of the church in behalf of the congregation, but any Christian believer may be authorized to do this on specific occasions by vote of the Diaconate. The Chairman of the Diaconate shall customarily serve as moderator at church business meetings, but in the Chairman's absence, the Vice-Chairman of the Diaconate shall serve, and if both are absent, the Chairman of the Diaconate shall appoint a moderator pro-tem.

Item 2. When a vacancy occurs in the office of Senior Minister, the church shall elect a search committee in the following manner. .

Each of the following organizations shall submit two nominees: a) Sunday School b) Youth Council, c) Women's Missionary Union, d) Diaconate, (e) Baptist Men. Eight members at large shall be nominated by the congregation, four women and four men. From these nominations, the church in conference shall vote by ballot to select four members from the congregation at large, two men and two women, and one member from each of the other categories. All persons serving on this committee shall be members in good standing at the First Baptist Church. Such election shall be supervised by the church nominating committee. Only one member from the same immediate family shall be installed. The committee shall select its own officers. The chairman of the Diaconate shall serve as an ex-officio member of the search committee. It shall be the duty of this committee to seek out and recommend to the church a minister, with both the committee

and the church praying for God's leadership. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one candidate at a time, with notice of the election being given to the congregation by mail at least fourteen (14) day sin advance. The election shall be by ballot of those members present and voting for the extending of the call, and such call shall be made upon the affirmative vote of 80% of those members voting. The election shall be held at a called business meeting to be held at a regularly scheduled Sunday morning worship service after an opportunity to discuss same has been allowed the membership. The term of office shall be indefinite, and may be terminated by the minister or the church. If terminated by the minister, the minister shall give at least a month's notice at the time resignation is announced, and if terminated by a majority vote of the church, the Diaconate shall then make recommendations to the church concerning the details of the termination.

Item 3. Other ministers and workers dealing with individuals and organizations, such as the minister of music, minister of education, associate minister, organist, and director of children's ministries/outreach coordinator shall be called or employed by the church as it deems advisable. Such positions shall be created, their duties defined, and persons recommended to fill them, in keeping with the duties of the Personnel Committee. The term of office for these positions shall be indefinite unless otherwise mutually agreed upon at the time of election. Election shall be by an affirmative vote of eighty percent (80%) of the members present and voting, with notice given at least five days in advance of the election. The relationship may be terminated by the individual or by the church. If terminated by the individual, that individual shall give at least one month's notice at the time resignation is announced, and if terminated by a majority vote of the church, the Personnel Committee shall make recommendations to the church concerning the details.

Section B. Church Staff.

Item 1. Additional staff members may be employed or discharged by the Senior Minister at the discretion of the Personnel Committee and the Diaconate, under financial conditions defined by the church. Their duties, as defined in job descriptions prepared by appropriate committees, shall be carried out under the supervision of the Senior Minister or someone designated by the Senior Minister.

Item 2. The church secretary and assistants as needed shall perform such secretarial duties as required to fulfill the work of the church.

Item 3. The financial secretary shall keep accurate records of income and expenditures as may be designated by the Finance Committee. The financial secretary shall keep records of receipts and shall be responsible for preparing and mailing regular financial statements to all contributing members as the church directs.

Item 4. The librarian shall perform the duties outlined by the Library Committee.

Item 5. The church custodian shall keep all buildings, furnishings, and grounds clean, and shall perform duties as outlined by the properties committee.

Section C. Lay Officers.

Item 1. The Diaconate shall consist of twenty-four members who have proven themselves to have scriptural qualifications, and who commit themselves to fulfilling the purposes of deaconship as described below. All Deacons shall be at least twenty-one years of age or older and a member of First Baptist for at least two years. Deacons shall be elected for a term of four years, with six being elected each year. After the completion of a four-year term, no deacon shall be eligible for re-election until the lapse of one year. The deacons shall annually elect their own chairman.

The following procedure shall be followed in the election of deacons. At an early date in September, in business session during the hour of worship service, the membership present at the service shall be furnished a ballot form. The ballot form shall show the names of the twenty-four present members of the Diaconate. These persons are not eligible for nomination because of their present membership on the Diaconate or because of operation of the rotation plan. The ballot shall provide space for the members to write in the names of six members of the church who they believe should be elected to the Diaconate. Those twelve names appearing most shall be contacted, given the Scriptural and practical duties of the office, and given an opportunity to accept or reject nomination. The twelve members whose names appear the greatest number of times on the ballots shall be named in alphabetical order on a second ballot, which will be presented to the membership of the church at the morning worship hour on the following Sunday. Each members shall mark the ballot opposite the name of not more than six of the twelve members the church has nominated. The six members receiving the greatest number of votes on the ballot are elected. In the event of a tie vote for the last vacancy or vacancies on the Diaconate, the member(s) clearly having the greatest number of votes are elected, and the remaining names shall be placed on a third ballot, to be voted on the same as the second ballot, at the following Sunday morning worship service. The member or members, as vacancy may require, having the greatest number of votes on the third ballot are elected to the Diaconate. A vacancy occurring on the Diaconate shall immediately be filled from the list of Deacon nominees from the previous Deacon election by the nominee having received the next highest number of votes at the last election of Deacons. The retiring members of the Diaconate shall act as tellers of the balloting for the new members of the Diaconate and shall contact those nominated concerning their willingness to serve.

The purpose of the Diaconate shall be to join with and assist the Pastor in ministry to the congregation and in leading the congregation to become prime examples of the

calling of each Christian to ministry. With the ministers, they have particular responsibility for the life of the church, to safeguard its Christian influence, to care for its fellowship, and promote its welfare. The Deacons do not act as a board of directors, or in place of the church, but as a matter of practical necessity, they oversee the ministry of the church, making recommendations on matters of major concern. Their duties include consideration of the discipline of the church, establishing and maintaining spiritual relationships with all members of the church, assisting the minister in the observance of the ordinances, having regular meetings and committees as necessary to the discharge of their duties. The Senior Minister or the chairman of the Diaconate may call the deacons into special session whenever such need arises.

Item 2. It shall be the duty of the clerk to attend, or be represented at, all church business meetings; to keep an accurate record of all business transactions; to supervise the preparation of the annual associational letter; to issue letters of transfer authorized by the church; to preserve all papers, valuable letters, and records belonging to the church; and to preserve a true history of the church. It shall also be the duty of the clerk to see that accurate rolls of the membership are kept, with dates and methods of admission and separation. The church may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to a church secretary.

Item 3. The treasurer shall receive and disburse monies allocated under the budget and designated as current expense funds. The treasurer shall keep adequate records and exercise proper accounting procedure. The treasurer shall make a monthly financial statement to the Diaconate. The treasurer shall make information available as requested to the various departments, committees, etc., concerning status of any budget item with which they may be concerned. The treasurer shall meet with the Diaconate to explain various reports and to make suggestions or recommendations concerning the financial feasibility of certain proposed projects. The treasurer shall serve as a member of the Finance Committee so that the treasurer might advise in preparing the budget and keep the committee informed of past expense totals for their guidance. The treasurer shall prepare various tax forms and remit taxes. The treasurer's books shall be audited as arranged by the church, and all books, records, and accounts kept by the treasurer shall be considered property of the church.

Item 4. The church shall elect four of its members to serve as trustees. Their term of office shall be for indefinite periods, and the term of any trustee may be terminated at the will of the church or the individual. A vacancy shall be filled by the church as soon as possible after it occurs. The trustees shall, as provided by law and action of the church, hold in trust the title to all property of the church and shall represent the church in all matters of legal responsibility regarding the purchase, improvement and disposal of church property. They shall execute all legal papers related to the church as the church may direct. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property of the church without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action;

neither shall they have any control over the use of church property except by vote of the church.

Item 5. The chairman of the ushers, with a sufficient number of assistants, shall take care of the seating and comfort of the congregation, the greeting and introduction of visitors, and similar needed services.

Item 6. The Sunday School Director shall be responsible to the church for planning, conducting and evaluating the work of the Sunday School, based on the following tasks: to teach the Biblical revelation, to reach persons for Christ and church membership, and to provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination. The Sunday School Director will look to the Senior Minister and Minister of Education for counsel and leadership in the Sunday School. This officer will be elected every two years by the church.

Item 7. The WMU director shall lead the organization in fulfilling its tasks, which are to teach missions, engage in mission action, support world missions through praying and giving, and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination. This officer shall be elected every two years by the church.

Item 8. The Baptist Men's director shall lead the organization in fulfilling its mission tasks, which are the same as those set forth for the WMU in Item 7.

Item 9. The Youth Council shall be responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating the congregation's ministry to youth in conjunction with the Associate Minister and other adult youth leaders. To fulfill this responsibility, the council will organize into committees as it deems appropriate each year, with each committee being chaired by the member with the most seniority on that committee. The council shall also elect a president and a secretary according to requirements and procedures it adopts, and the president shall have the authority to appoint other officers as necessary. The president, the secretary, all committee chairpersons and officers, along with the Associate Minister and designated adult lay leaders, shall serve as an executive committee, but membership on the Youth Council shall be open to all First Baptist youth who commit to serve.

ARTICLE VII. Organizations

The church may create and maintain organizations as the need may arise, such as the Sunday School, the Music Ministry, the Women's Missionary Union, the Baptist Men, and others, as a means of implementing the purposes of the church through ongoing programs of work. Officers of such organizations shall be elected by the church upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, except that class, union, choir, or group officers within the various smaller units shall be elected by the respective units.

ARTICLE VIII. Committees

Section A. Election

Item 1. The church shall be responsible for electing certain standing committees and may have temporary committees as the need may arise. Additional standing committees may be added, or existing committees eliminated, by the Diaconate or by action of the church in conference.

Item 2. The standing committees that the church shall establish to implement its program and achieve its goals shall be, but not limited to, the following: a) Baptist Relations, b) Building and Grounds, c) Christian Education, d) Finance, e) Membership and Outreach, f) Memorials, g) Missions Coordinating, h) Music, i) Nominating, j) Pastoral Care, k) Personnel, l) Property management, m) Scholarship, n) Stewardship.

Item 3. The service committees which the church shall establish to implement its programs and achieve its goals shall be, but not limited to, the following: a) Audio Visual, b) Baptism, c) Flowers and Decoration, d) History, e) Hospitality and Kitchen, f) Library, g) Lord's Supper, h) Nursery, i) Paraments, j) Recreation, k) Senior Adults, l) Transportation and m) Ushers.

Section B. Requirements and Tenures of Service

Item 1. All members of standing committees shall be members of this church, elected by the church, and shall serve on a three-year rotation system, with approximately one-third to be elected each year. When a vacancy occurs during a three-year term, another member of the church shall be elected at the next annual election to complete the term. The number of persons on each committee shall be determined by the church upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee. After serving a three-year term, a member may be elected to another term on the same committee after a lapse of one year.

Item 2. All members of service committees shall be elected by the church upon the recommendation of the nominating committee; provided, however, members of the service committees shall not be prohibited or restricted as to the length of their respective terms of service.

ARTICLE IX. Financial Policy

Section A. The system of finance used by the church shall be that known as the modified-unified budget system, whereby one weekly offering is received from the people and applied toward the unified budget for defraying all expenses and for providing needs in

all departments of the church life and program. The offerings of the people may be brought during the Sunday School hour or during the worship service, or they may be mailed or personally delivered to the church office. Special church-wide offerings shall be promoted as designated in the budget. Under unusual circumstances, the finance committee may authorize special offerings for specific purposes.

Section B. Each year the Finance Committee shall recommend to the Diaconate and to the church a proposed budget of income and of expenditures for the year, and the church shall take final action upon the recommendations. A budget of expenditures adopted by the church shall constitute authorization of the church for the treasurer to pay bills and obligations within the bounds of the budget. Any other expenditure shall be made only upon the vote of the Diaconate and/or the church in conference. All designated gifts shall be sent to, or used for, the object designated.

Section C. A memorial and special gifts fund shall be established to receive all such gifts to the church except those sums designated for a specific book for the church library. Anyone desiring to make a specific gift, other than to the library, may confer with the Memorial and Special Gifts Committee.

Section D. All bills and obligations of the church shall be paid by check and recorded in keeping with good accounting practices. A monthly financial report shall be made to the Diaconate, and the Finance Committee may arrange for an audit.

Section E. All offerings, regular and special, shall be placed in the bank depository by the church treasurer or someone designated by the church treasurer. The counting and depositing of the offering shall be under the supervision of the financial secretary, and the counting shall be done in company with at least one other person.

Section F. The church shall send annually to each member, by first-class mail, an official record of the amount contributed during the calendar year. Such records may, at the discretion of the Finance Committee, be sent every three months.

ARTICLE X. Co-operation

The First Baptist Church of Henderson believes in the autonomy of the local church and is therefore self-governing in organization and authority. It shall be free to select and cooperate voluntarily with other Christian bodies in general and with Baptists in particular as it carries out the work of winning the world to Christ.

ARTICLE XI. The Governing Authority

Section A. Definition

The final authority in all affairs of church government shall rest with the church in conference. This body shall possess the inherent power to project plans, elect officers, delegate authority, alter this constitution, and make all other decisions necessary or proper to the fulfillment of its stated aims and purposes.

Section B. Conduct of Church Conferences

Item 1. Church conferences shall be scheduled at regular intervals.

Item 2. The latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern procedural controversies arising in church conference.

Item 3. Those members present and voting shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE XII. Licensing and Ordaining

Section A. A member of this church, called to preach the gospel, may be licensed upon recommendation by the Senior Minister and the Diaconate, and upon a three-fourths majority of the church in conference.

Section B. A member of this church requesting ordination to the gospel ministry may be approved for such ordination by a three-fourths majority vote of the church in conference, after the candidate has been examined by the Ordination Committee of The First Baptist Church, appointed by the Senior Minister and the Diaconate, upon the recommendation of the Senior Minister and the Diaconate.

ARTICLE XIII. Adoption and Amendments

Section A. Adoption

This constitution shall be considered adopted and in immediate effect when two-thirds of the members present and voting at a business meeting vote its approval, provided that copies of the proposed constitution shall have been mailed to all resident members at least two weeks prior to the meeting. After adoption, this constitution shall supersede all previous actions of the church which are contrary to its provisions.

Section B. Amendment

This constitution may be amended at any regular or called business meeting of the church by an affirmative vote of two-third of the members present and voting, provided that copies of the proposed amendment shall have been mailed to all resident members at least two weeks prior to the vote. All votes for amendments to this Constitution shall be at a called business meeting to be held following a regularly scheduled Sunday morning worship service. after an opportunity to discuss same has been allowed the membership.

Section C. Preservation

A copy of this constitution shall be kept at all times by the clerk among the records, and another copy shall be kept in the church office. All amendments shall, after passage by the church, be prepared promptly, typed in proper form by the clerk, and pasted in the two copies of the constitution so kept.