

First Baptist Church of Paris, Illinois Constitution – 2018 revision – final draft

First Baptist Church of Paris believes the New Testament is an all-sufficient basis for doctrine and practice. As a summary of Biblical principles guiding growing Christians, the following Church Covenant has been adopted.

Church Covenant

Having received and professed the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we do now most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with members of this body of Christ.

We will, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, work together in Christian love, strive for the advancement of this church in Biblical knowledge and holiness, promote her spirituality, sustain her worship and ordinances, contribute cheerfully and regularly to support the ministry to spread the gospel through all nations.

We testify to the importance of family and personal devotion, educating children in matters of faith and the Bible and seeking the salvation of our kindred acquaintances. We will be just in our dealings, faithful in our word, and exemplary in our lifestyle. We choose to live by the fruits of the Spirit as the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 5:22. Conscious that our bodies are the temples of God, we will be mindful of what we eat, drink and the need for regular exercise. We also recognize the importance of being good stewards of God's creation.

Our covenant relationship in the church means we watch for ways to pray for and to help others. We recognize that when the time to move comes, there will be another church that deserves our energies, gifts and spirituality.

Preamble

That all things may be done decently and in order and that we may more effectively and efficiently serve God's cause, we, the members to the First Baptist Church of Paris, Illinois, do propose the following constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

Article I – Name

The name of this church shall be First Baptist Church of Paris, Illinois, Inc., in association with Area IV Great Rivers Region and the American Baptist Churches in the USA.

Article II – Purpose

Section 1: Empowered by God's Spirit, as a family of believers in Christ, we are united by God's Word and guided by Christ's example. We prayerfully dedicate ourselves to blend our God-given gifts and talents to teach in wisdom, to witness in love, to grow in faith, and to reach out in loving concern.

Section 2: What We Believe

- A. The Trinity - We believe that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all One. We believe that though they may work separately from each other, they none the less are still one in power and love. They were together in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22). Jesus was God in the flesh on earth and the Holy Spirit is the

presence of God on the earth today. We use the phrase Three in One to describe our faith in the principle of the Trinity.

- B. The Inspired Word of God - We believe that the Bible is actually the words of God given to mankind through the writers of each book. We believe that this book is the standard by which we should live and govern our lives. We believe that the Holy Spirit gave these words to men who wrote them down and eventually they were divinely brought together in what we now call the Bible.
- C. The Virgin Birth - We believe that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary by the miracle of God. The Bible teaches us that Mary was a virgin when she conceived and was a virgin when she gave birth. This miracle presents Christ to us as the perfect Son of God.
- D. The Unconditional Love of God - We believe that God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to open the door to God and show mankind the way to eternal life. We believe that God wants to have a relationship with us. His love for us is demonstrated by sending His Son to die for our sins.
- E. The Power of Sin - We believe in the power of sin - the acts and thoughts that are displeasing to God - and we believe in the eternal consequences of unforgiven sin in our lives. We teach that mankind is trapped by sin and only Jesus can set us free.
- F. The Forgiveness of Sin - We believe that the blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary is the covering for our sins in the sight of God. We teach that when we ask Jesus to forgive us - He does - not on the basis of our good but on the fact that only He can forgive because only He died and rose again.
- G. The Saving Power Through Jesus Christ - We believe that since Jesus died, rose again, and ascended back into Heaven, He is the only One who has the power to save souls. To save means to save us for Heaven and to save us from an eternity away from God in a place called Hell. This saving process is accomplished only by Jesus who now has the power over death, sin, and Satan - who is our spiritual enemy.
- H. The Work of the Holy Spirit Today - We believe that when Jesus ascended into Heaven, He sent back to earth the spiritual presence of God through the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the One who comforts and guides the believers today. We teach that the Holy Spirit speaks to hearts and helps those who are seeking God to find Him. We teach that the Holy Spirit anoints believers with certain gifts and abilities by which others will be benefited and God will receive the glory and the praise.
- I. The Return of Jesus Christ - We believe that the scriptures teach that someday Jesus will remove all believers from this earth and take them to Heaven with Him. We believe that this world will go through a terrible time of pain and sorrow and death. We also believe that after this time of sorrow on the earth is over, Jesus will return and establish the Kingdom of God here on the earth.
- J. The Righteous Will Live By Faith - We believe that when a person has asked Jesus into their heart, they now choose to live a life that is Bible centered and pleasing to the Lord. We teach that the things of this world are temporary. We believe that there is a future home for us in Heaven and our faith directs us to believe this even though

we have never seen Heaven with our own eyes. Faith is believing in something that you have not or cannot see.

- K. Baptism - As Baptists, we believe in the act of baptism by immersion. Although not a requirement of salvation, the pastor performs baptisms.
- L. Baby Dedication - We dedicate children to the Lord, understanding that salvation is a personal decision to have a relationship with a living Lord. Parents of newborns may wish to discuss a dedication service with the pastor.
- M. Marriage – We believe that marriage sanctioned by God joins one man and one woman in an exclusive union delineated in the Scripture. As such, only marriages meeting this definition shall be performed by our pastors or in our church. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. We do not condone hateful or harassing behaviors and attitudes toward any individual whose beliefs differ from ours.

Article III – Relationship

Section 1: This church is answerable to no ecclesiastical body, except by its own consent. It controls the admission, discipline, and the removal of its members according to its own understanding of the Word of God.

Section 2: Recognizing the necessity for united denominational action, our church cooperates with regional and national American Baptist work.

Article IV – Membership

Section 1: Persons may be received into membership at any regular meeting of the church by baptism, letter, Christian experience, or restoration.

Section 2: Regular members shall be admitted upon fulfillment of one of the following qualifications:

- A. Confession of Faith and baptism by immersion
- B. Experience or promise of a letter from another church practicing baptism by immersion.

Section 3: New members of First Baptist will be assigned a Deacon who will have other families as a way to connect and help nurture and fellowship. This will also aid in building relationships both inside and outside the church. They shall be entitled to a Pastor/Deacon to care for their individual spiritual needs and be there in case of a need that can be met through the ministries of First Baptist Church.

Section 4: Members may transfer by letter to some other church. Members deciding to unite with another Church shall be entitled to letters of recommendation. All membership correspondence shall be sent by the Church Clerk to the Pastor or clerk of the designated church.

Section 5: Should a member become an offense to the church and to its good name by reason of inappropriate or immoral conduct, or by persistent breach of the church covenant,

the church may terminate his/her membership, but only after faithful efforts have been made to bring such members to repentance and reconciliation. In all cases of discipline, Matthew 18:15-20 shall be followed. Any unresolved matters should come before the Pastor/Deacons and then to the church Advisory Board, if needed.

Article V – Duties of Members

Section 1: The general duties of the members of this church to their church, their Pastor, and their fellow-members are clearly expressed in the Church Covenant.

Section 2: A member remains active through ongoing attendance, support, or communication. Membership rolls shall be reviewed annually by the Pastor, the Deacons, and the Advisory Board.

Article VI - Officers

Section 1: The officers of the church shall consist of:

- A. Pastor, who shall serve as Moderator. (In absence of the Pastor, the Vice-Moderator shall assume this role. In the Vice-Moderator's absence, a Deacon appointed by the Deacon Board.)
- B. A minimum of four members each on the following boards:
 - 1. Deacons
 - 2. Deaconesses
 - 3. Trustees
 - 4. Finance
- C. Church Clerk
- D. Financial Secretary
- E. Church Treasurer
- F. Other officers as the church may elect

Section 2: The Pastor

The Pastor shall be an ordained Minister in good standing. He shall be a man complying with the scriptures as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4, and Ephesians 4:11-13. He shall be called to serve by vote of the church with church being duly notified of such action as in accordance with the Constitution under Special Business Meetings. He shall be called for an unspecified term, with a contract that spells out details of salary and benefits, including time off, vacation, revival, etc. Such contract shall be negotiated by the Pulpit Committee, subject to approval of the Advisory Board, and signed by both he and the Chair of that Committee upon his arrival as Pastor.

- A. The duties of the Pastor shall be to:
 - 1. Serve as Moderator for the Congregation in Business Meetings, as Moderator of the Advisory Board, and as the Spiritual Leader of the Congregation.
 - 2. Have general oversight of the Worship Services.
 - 3. Preach and teach God's word faithfully and meet with the Deacons for Spiritual Counsel and prayer regularly.
 - 4. Be the designee for the Deacon Benevolent Fund giving help to those in need and making reports to the Deacons as to who has been assisted at their monthly meeting
 - 5. Administer the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper with the aid of both the Deacons/Deaconesses

6. Visit the sick and needy in homes and hospitals, etc. with the Deacons to promote the spiritual and physical health of the Church.
7. Serve as Ex-Officio Member of all boards, Committees and Teams
8. Have authority and oversight to supervise all Church Ministry Staff

- B. The services of the Pastor may be terminated by notice given at least one month in advance by the Pastor or by action of the Church at any Special Meeting upon the recommendation of the Deacons with proper vote of the congregation as specified in this Constitution under Special Called Business Meetings. Resignation of the Pastor shall be accepted as final and require no vote.

Section 3: Board of Deacons: Deacons shall be men complying with scriptural standards set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons shall be called by the church and shall be considered Deacons for life. At any time, a Deacon may be able to request a period of rest and become inactive, returning to service by a vote of the church at an annual or special meeting. It shall be the duty of the Board of Deacons to:

- A. Assist the Pastor in the performance of his duties
- B. Supervise the distribution of the elements of the Lord's Supper
- C. Assist during baptismal services
- D. Visit the sick and assist those in need
- E. Annually elect a representative to the Advisory Board/ Vice-Moderator.
- F. Secure individuals to fill the pulpit in the absence of a pastor.
- G. Follow up with inactive members after annual membership review.

Section 4: Board of Deaconesses: Deaconesses shall be women complying with scriptural standards set forth in 1 Timothy 3: 8-13 and Romans 2. Deaconesses shall be called by the church and shall be considered Deaconesses for life. At any time, a Deaconess may be able to request a period of rest and become inactive, returning to service by a vote of the church in an annual or special business meeting. It shall be the duty of the Board of Deaconesses to:

- A. Assist the Pastor in the performance of his duties
- B. Prepare the elements of the Lord's Supper
- C. Assist candidates being baptized
- D. Visit the sick
- E. Send cards and order funeral flowers to honor deceased members
- F. Annually elect a representative to the Advisory Board.

Section 5: Board of Trustees: The Board of Trustees shall:

- A. Acquaint themselves with the laws of the State and the ordinances of the city that pertain to churches and see that such laws are faithfully obeyed.
- B. Exercise oversight in all matters of church building and improvements to the church property, keeping the same in good repair, and to perform all duties vested in them by the church.
- C. Have custody of the legal papers pertaining to the church property and be responsible for their safekeeping.
- D. Keep an inventory of the safety deposit box and a continuous record of minutes of meetings for the reference of future members of the Board of Trustees.
- E. Keep the church property properly insured.
- F. Employ a custodian and be responsible for his/her work being performed in a satisfactory manner with such contract on file annually.
- G. Hold regular meeting as needed to perform their duties.

- H. Have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, or transfer any real estate without a specific vote of the church authorizing such actions.

Section 6: Board of Finance: The Board of Finance shall be responsible for:

- A. A year round program of stewardship education.
- B. Maintenance of the general budget and proposing an Annual Budget.
- C. The supervision of all monies received and dispersed.

Section 7: Ministry Teams

A. The Discipleship Team shall ensure proper organization, design and implementation of Christian education for all age groups, including Sunday School, Nursery and Children's Church and all other discipleship classes or seminars in order to promote a deeper understanding of the Bible and how to apply its teaching to life.

B. The Fellowship Team shall plan and help implement both church-wide and age specific fellowship activities in order to promote unity, love and strong relationships within the church.

C. The Praise & Worship Team shall plan and carry out God-honoring, Christ-centered worship that is creative, purpose-driven and edifying to Christians as well as attractive to seekers.

D. The Multimedia Team shall support and enhance the ministry of the church with media, including but not limited to website and audiovisual resources, and oversee training for individuals serving in this area of ministry.

E. The Missions Team shall review our missions support and choose recipients of our mission offerings.

F. The Security Team shall provide security during services and respond to emergency situations. Team members must be committed to regular training in the proper and appropriate use of force.

Team members shall be elected at the annual meeting.

Section 8: Financial Secretary: The Financial Secretary shall:

- A. Receive all monies, keep an accurate record and give an itemized accounting of gifts to the Church Treasurer
- B. Maintain a record of all church gifts
- C. Make available a summary of receipts for givers' records
- D. Be bonded or insured, premium to be paid by the church.

The Financial Secretary shall be elected at the annual meeting.

Section 9: Church Treasurer: The Treasurer shall:

- A. Receive an accounting from the Financial Secretary of all monies received
- B. Disperse the monies under supervision of the Board of Finance/Church Advisory Board and Congregation.
- C. Be bonded or insured, premium to be paid by the church.

The Church Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting.

Section 10: Church Clerk: The Clerk shall:

- A. Keep a complete record of all church business meetings
- B. Keep a register of the names of members, with dates of baptisms, admissions, transfers or deaths
- C. Notify all officers, members of committees, and delegates of their election or appointment

- D. Issue letters of transfer and recommendation voted by the church
- E. Reserve on file all communications and written official reports
- F. Give legal notice of all meetings, where such notice is necessary, as indicated in this constitution.
- G. Perform such other duties as directed by the church.

The Church Clerk shall be elected at the annual meeting.

Section 11: The Advisory Board shall have general oversight and direction over all officers, boards, and committees of the church.

Article VII – Advisory Board

The Advisory Board shall act as the Administrative Board to take care of the business of the Church. The board shall have the authority to take care of personnel matters and financial matters that deal with budgeted items. Items that deal with real estate or hiring such Ministry Staff as an associate pastor or youth minister shall be brought to the Congregation for vote.

Section 1: The Advisory Board shall consist of the following:

- A. The Pastor, who shall serve as Moderator (nonvoting)
- B. One Deacon Representative, who may serve as Vice-Moderator
- C. One Deaconess Representative
- D. One Trustee Representative
- E. The Church Clerk, who shall serve as Secretary of the Board with the Office Manager/Secretary serving as (nonvoting) Assistant Secretary
- F. Treasurer
- G. Financial Secretary
- H. Leaders of the Discipleship, Fellowship, Multimedia, Missions, and Praise & Worship Teams
- I. Paid Ministry Staff such as associate or youth pastors (nonvoting)

Section 2: The Advisory Board will meet six times per year to ensure proper communication between the teams as well as the Pastor and Ministry Staff. A quorum shall be five members. If members of this committee neglect their responsibility to serve, they will be asked to step down.

Section 3: The Advisory Board shall:

- A. Receive recommendations from the various boards and teams and consider all matters pertaining to the welfare of the church.
- B. Call a special congregational meeting when needed to elect a Pulpit Committee of seven members.
- C. Perform such duties as requested by the Church
- D. Plan an annual activity calendar
- E. Serve as Nominating Committee

Article VIII – Meetings

Section 1: The Church fiscal year will begin January 1st and close December 31st each year.

Section 2: The annual business meeting of the church shall be held at the church on the first Wednesday in December. Written reports for the previous year from the Pastor and all boards, committees, and organizations of the church shall be presented at the annual business meeting. Such other business may be transacted as provided for by the constitution or deemed necessary. All boards and committees will meet to choose appropriate officers and report them to the Church Clerk.

Section 3: Congregational business meetings will be held on the second Monday of April and August. Pastors and all teams shall present reports for the period since the previous congregational meeting.

Section 4: Special business meetings of the church may be called by the Pastor, the Vice-Moderator, the Advisory Board, or ten or more members of the church, notice of such meetings to be given from the pulpit on the Sunday preceding the date of meeting. No business shall be transacted at any special business meeting of the church other than that for which the meeting was called.

Section 5: When business concerning the mortgaging, transferring, or materially altering of any part of the church property is to be considered, written notice shall be given to all resident members of the Church at least two weeks prior to the date of such meeting in addition to the regular announcement from the pulpit.

Section 6: Upon the request of one member, any vote shall be by secret ballot. All officer elections and budget votes shall be secret ballot.

Section 7: Only active members of the Church sixteen years of age or older shall be eligible to vote at any business meeting of the church.

Section 8: At all business meetings of the church, a majority shall be defined as members present and voting.

Section 9: Except as otherwise provided in the constitution, the business meetings of the church shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Article IX – Election of Officers

Section 1: The Advisory Board shall serve as nominating Committee and in October nominate officers and teams to be approved and voted on at the annual meeting.

Section 2: Any person holding office in the church or serving as a regular Sunday School teacher shall be an active member of the church.

Section 3: All church officers shall faithfully discharge their duties, keeping in mind that much of the success of the church depends on the efficiency and integrity of the church officers.

Section 4: Any officer of the church failing to function for a reasonable period of time shall be contacted by the Moderator. In case satisfactory reasons for their failure to act are not offered, the Advisory Board shall recommend to the church that such office be declared vacant.

Section 5: If for any reason any church office, except that of the Pastor, becomes vacant the Advisory Board shall present nominations to the church for vote.

Article X – Amendments & Revisions

Section 1: This Constitution may be amended at the annual meeting or any special meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote. The proposed amendment(s) shall have been made available to the membership in writing at worship services for two weeks prior to the meeting in which the amendment shall be submitted for final action.

Section 2: This Constitution shall supersede all former constitutions of this church, making this the true and working copy and all others previous void and null.

Section 3: At least once each five years the constitution shall be reviewed, revised as needed, and voted upon by the church.

Approved by member vote on February 16, 2011.

Amended by member vote on September 11, 2013.
Wording revised in Article II, Section 2, M.
Monthly changed to quarterly in Article VII, Section 2.

Amended by member vote on February 9, 2015
Article VII, Section 2. Quarterly changed to six times per year.
Article VIII, Section 2. Date of annual meeting changed. Section 3 added.

Revision approved by member vote on May 14, 2018.