

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS FOR FIRST BAPTIST RIVERVIEW

## CONSTITUTION

### Preamble

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

### I. Name

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Riverview FL. It was established in 1893 and incorporated in (year) according to the laws of the State of Florida.

### II. Objectives

To be a dynamic spiritual organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world; To be a worshiping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership; To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers; To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man; To be a church that ministers unselfishly to people in the community and the world in Jesus' name; To be a church with the purpose of being Christ like in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the lordship of Christ.

### III. Purpose

Our purpose at First Riverview is to Love God and Love Others. We do that by "Influencing Others to Become **Thriving** Followers Christ." As we bring people to Jesus and into His fellowship, we nurture and equip them for the glory of God.

### IV. Statement of Basic Beliefs

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired word of God and the basis for our beliefs. We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind. In matters of doctrine and belief, the church strives for three things: in the essential matters, unity; in nonessential matters, liberty; in all things, love.

**(a) About the Bible: The Bible is God's Word to man.** The Bible is God's inerrant Word to us, as originally given by God through human authors under the supernatural guide of the Holy Spirit, and is absolutely true and trustworthy. It is our only standard of faith and practice (II Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12; II Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:18; Psalm 119).

**(b) About God: There is only one true and living God.** God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and is revealed to us as the Godhead existent in the co-equal, co-eternal, and co-substantial persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:3-6, 13-14; Ephesians 4:6; Matthew 28:19; Genesis 1:1,3,14,18; Isaiah 9:6). There is only one way to God and eternal life in heaven, which is through Jesus Christ. (John 14:6)

**(i) The Father.** The first person of the Trinity who orders and disposes of all things according to His own purpose and grace, and who continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events for His own glory. Fatherhood denotes spiritual relationship; first within the Trinity; second, within mankind, creatively in relation to all men, but spiritually only in relation to those who have been saved by His grace for their sin and come to Him through Jesus Christ (James 1:17).

**(ii) The Son.** Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of all people by dying on the cross, rose from the dead to provide justification for every believer, ascended to the right hand of God where He presently intercedes for all believers, and will again, in the fullness of the Father's time, return in visible, triumphant, personal form to overthrow sin, judge the world, and establish His kingdom on earth (John 1:14).

**(iii) The Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is sent from God to convict the world of sin, unrighteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, cleanse, and secure from sin. He lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer a spiritual gift when they are saved. As Christians, we seek to live under His control daily (John 14:16-17; John 16:8, 13).

**(c) About Man, Sin, and Satan: Man's condition is one of sin and separation from God.** Man was created by innocence directly and immediately by God, in His spiritual image, for the purpose of fellowship with God and glory for God. Man was tempted by Satan and sinned, and because of this all men have been born in sin since that time. Every person has a tremendous potential for good, but all are marred by a nature of rebellion and disobedience toward God, others, and all good things ultimately and eternally in hell. All persons need to be saved from their sin.

**(d) About Salvation: God has acted in Jesus Christ to deliver us from sin.** Jesus Christ is the only Savior from sin. He provided forgiveness and atonement for our sins by shedding his blood on the cross and rose again to provide life and justification. Apart from Christ, there is no salvation. All men are under condemnation through personal sin, and deliverance from personal sin comes only through righteousness of Christ and not human merit. This righteousness is credited to the believer by grace through faith. The Holy Spirit regenerates or gives new life to one who commits his life to Jesus, and he is kept by God's power forever, never to be lost.

**(e) About the Church: Jesus established the church to continue His mission and ministry on earth.** A New Testament church is a voluntary association of baptized believers in Christ who have covenanted together to follow the teachings of the New Testament in doctrine, worship, and practice. We believe

that the church is a self-governed organization served by pastoral and non-pastoral staff and lay volunteers, all of whom are called by God to fill their ministry roles.

**(f) About Last Things: Jesus Christ will return and God's plan for eternity will be carried out.** We believe in the imminent and bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth. The dead will be raised and Christ will judge all men according to their works. Unbelievers will be cast into eternal punishment and outer darkness prepared for the devil and his angels who preceded them, and the saved will enter into the eternal state of glory with God and will in their resurrected and glorified bodies spend eternity.

**(g) Death and Resurrection: Everyone will face judgment before God; some to eternal life, others to eternal condemnation.** Death involves no loss of consciousness but the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ and there is separation of soul and body until the first resurrection when the spirit, soul and resurrected body will be reunited in glorified form in heaven forever. All men will be bodily resurrected, the saved to everlasting life, but the lost into eternal condemnation.

**(h) Marriage: The family is a God ordained institution that serves as the foundational unit of society.** According to the scripture marriage is designed by God to be a relationship between one man and one woman. The Christian marriage is between one man and one woman who are followers of Christ.

The ordinances of the church are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. (See Article V of the Bylaws.)

## **V. Church Covenant**

Having been led as we believe by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations. We also engage to maintain family and individual devotions; to educate our children using Deuteronomy 6 as a model; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. We moreover engage

that when we move from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## **VI. Polity and Relationships**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership. (See Article I of the Bylaws.) All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action. This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation common among Southern Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the Baptist Association, the Florida Baptist State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

## **BYLAWS**

### **I. Church Membership**

#### **Section 1. General**

This is a sovereign and democratic Southern Baptist church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

#### **Section 2. Candidacy**

Any person may offer himself or herself as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates shall be presented to the church at any regular church service for membership in any of the following ways:

- (1) By profession of faith and for baptism according to the policies of this church.
- (2) By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Southern Baptist church.
- (3) By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and baptism (immersion) in a Southern Baptist church when no letter is obtainable. Should there be any dissent as to any candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the Pastor and Elders for investigation and the making of a recommendation to the church within thirty (30) days. A 75 percent vote of those church members present and voting shall be required to elect such candidates to membership.

#### **Section 3. New Member Orientation**

New members of this church are expected to participate in the church's new member orientation.

#### **Section 4. Rights of Members**

(1) Every member of the church, (16 years and older) is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present or provision has been made for absentee balloting.

(2) Every member (18 and older) of the church is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the church.

(3) Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.

#### **Section 5. Termination of Membership**

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

(1) Death of the member.

(2) Transfer to another Southern Baptist church.

(3) Erasure upon request or proof of membership in a church of another denomination.

(4) Failure to comply with the Membership Covenant; or

(5) Termination of membership by the Senior Ministry Staff.

The Senior Ministry Staff may terminate a person's membership when, in their opinion the member's life and conduct is not in accordance with scripture, the membership covenant or is conducted in such a way that their lifestyle hinders the name of Christ and the influence of the Church in the community. Termination for this reason shall only be enforced after extensive effort has been made to accomplish spiritual restoration in the life the member. The goal of the church is always restoration whenever possible, and not termination.

#### **Section 6. Discipline**

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastor, other members of the church staff, elders and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment. Should some serious condition exist that would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the pastor, the elders and the deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accordance with Matthew 18. The 3 step rule will be used. **Step 1** - Bring all parties in to meet with staff, or elders. If then is not resolved then move to **Step 2** - Offending parties will not be allow to lead or serve in their ministries. If still no resolution then **Step 3** - The matter will be brought before the church to take action to exclude a member, a 75 percent vote of the members present is required; and the church may proceed to declare the person to be no longer in the membership of the church. All such proceedings

shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. The church may restore to membership any person previously excluded, upon request of the excluded person, and by vote of the church upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation.

### **Section 7. Restoration**

If a member has been disciplined to the point where they have been removed from the membership and would like to be restored back into fellowship. They must repent from the offense then they can ask to meet with the pastor and or elders to decide the process of restoration.

## **II. Church Officers and Committees**

All who serve as officers of the church and those who serve on church committees shall be members of this church at least for one year (excluding the Pastor and Church Staff).

### **Section 1. Church Officers**

The officers of this church shall be:

- (1) The pastor
- (2) The church staff
- (3) The elders
- (4) The Senior Ministry Staff
- (5) The deacons
- (6) A moderator
- (7) A clerk
- (8) A treasurer
- (9) The trustees

(See Church Policies and Procedures Manual and Personnel Manual and Job Descriptions, for job descriptions and duties.)

#### **Securing a Pastor and Electing Elders and Deacons**

The Pastor:

The Pastor is the shepherd of the flock. He must be a person called of God. He must be loyal to the Southern Baptist Doctrine, policy, and program concepts. The pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations,

and the church staff to perform their tasks. The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such he works with the elders, deacons and church staff to:

- (1) Lead the church in the achievement of its mission.
- (2) Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
- (3) Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

He shall have a general oversight of the work of the Church, conduct the worship services, and administer the ordinances. He shall serve as an elder and be an ex-officio member of the Deacons, Trustees.

The Pastor shall supervise the work of the staff and work with the **Staff Implementation Team** to establish policies, job descriptions, and staff evaluation. A Pastor shall be chosen and called by the Church when vacancy occurs. The election shall be by secret ballot and take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given to the resident Church Membership. The Pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the Church's request.

In the event of a vacancy of the pulpit, the elders and deacons shall nominate a Pastor Search Team to be elected by the Church. This team shall make recommendations for a Pastor to the Church and its recommendation will constitute a nomination. The name of one prospective Pastor at a time shall be considered by the Church. The calling of a Pastor shall be by a 85 percent majority vote of the members of the Church present at any regular meeting called for that purpose and after the members have been given no less than a week's notice of said meeting.

The Pastor may relinquish the office of Pastor by giving at least two weeks' notice to the Church at the time of resignation.

The Church may declare the office of Pastor to be vacant. Such action may take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's notice has been given to the resident Church Membership. This meeting may be called by a recommendation of a 75 percent majority of the Elders and Deacons, or by a written petition signed by not less than 75 percent of the resident Church Membership. The moderator of this meeting shall be the Chairman of the Elders. The vote to declare the office of Pastor vacant shall be a secret ballot and an affirmative majority vote of the members present shall be necessary to declare the office vacant.

Except in instances of gross misconduct by the Pastor so excluded from the office, the Church will compensate him with not less than three months of his total annual compensation. The termination shall be immediate, and compensation shall be rendered in not more than thirty (30) days.

### **Elders**

**The elders are selected from the deacon body and must have served as a deacon for at least one year.**

The qualification for Elder are lined out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 as it pertains to an overseer.

Elders are to be ready in season and out, to preach, teach and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The body of elders shall assist the pastor in caring for the administrative needs of the church's various ministries as requested by the pastor. They shall provide the pulpit supply and choose a moderator for church meetings if the pastor is unavailable or the office of pastor is vacant. Upon the death, resignation, or dismissal of the pastor, elders may appoint a pulpit supply.

The body of elders shall constitute the board of trustees of the corporation. The board of trustees shall exercise only the following specific powers, upon authorization by a majority vote of the members present at a duly called church administration meeting:

To purchase, hold, lease, or otherwise acquire real and personal property on behalf of the church, and to take real and personal property by will, gift, or bequest on behalf of the church;

To sell, convey, alienate, transfer, lease, assign, exchange, or otherwise dispose of, and to mortgage, pledge, or otherwise encumber the real and personal property of the church, to borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purpose and the use of the church; to cause to be executed, issued, and delivered for the indebtedness, in the name of the church, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, or other evidence of indebtedness; and to secure repayment by deeds of trust, mortgages, or pledges; and

The elders will act on behalf of the church on matters of finance when the church is not in conference.

(See paragraph above)

To exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the church corporation.

The body of elders will oversee Doctrine, Direction, and Discipline of the church.

Elders will serve as long as they are members of the church unless removed by the church for conduct not in line with the qualifications lined out in this section.

### **The Senior Ministry Staff**

The Senior Ministry Staff shall be comprised of the Senior Pastor, Executive/Associate Pastor (if there is one currently active on the church ministry staff), the Elders and the Trustees (only when deemed necessary for matters concerning the Senior Pastor). The Senior Pastor and the Elders if deemed necessary may add additional members to the Senior Staff. The Senior Ministry Team may be comprised of paid staff or Members. At no time should the paid staff members compose the majority of the membership of the team.

The Senior Ministry Staff, under the leadership of the Senior Pastor is to lead, guide and protect the church through counsel, discipleship and prayer. In cooperation with the Senior Pastor, they are to give oversight to the total life of the church, both spiritual and corporately. They shall also assist the in the hiring, supervision and discipline of all church staff.

As part of this team, the Elders also serve as spiritual leaders, assisting the Senior Pastor in their work to advise and lead the church as described in these bylaws. If ever necessary, any discipline of the Senior Pastor for reasons as described in these bylaws will be conducted by the Senior Ministry Staff in cooperation with the Trustees, with the exclusion of the participation of the Senior Pastor.

## Deacons

Church adopted qualification for Deacons:

The Deacon, in accordance with the meaning of the work and practice of the New Testament, is the servant of the church. The Deacon should set a commendable example in good church membership. The Deacon should regularly attend the Sunday Morning Service, ~~Sunday evening services~~ **regularly attend a LifeGroup class**, and **attend** the Wednesday evening service, and any other meeting that may be called for the advancement of the fellowship and the Kingdom of God. The Deacon should be of sound doctrine, with high morals, and adhere to the principles of the Church Covenant (see Article IV of the Constitution). Also, those set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13.

The Deacon should be zealous to guard the unity of the Spirit within the church in the bonds of peace.

Method of selection of a Deacon **Selection Committee**: Church members may recommend individuals they think qualified to become deacons to the Elders for consideration. The Elders will make nominations as needed identifying those who are worthy and qualified to serve and be ordained as Deacons. The Elders will be guided by church adopted qualifications for deacons found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 when selecting candidates to become deacons. Nominations shall equal the number of Deacons who will rotate off the Deacon Council each year and other vacancies which may have occurred during the year. The Elders will make their recommendations to fill vacancies to the church. **and the Deacons will be elected by secret ballot**. The election of new deacons will be determined by need.

There shall be a minimum of five deacons serving on the Deacon Body. **Individual families will be assigned to each deacon for ministry and care.**

The Deacons shall serve on a rotation basis. Each year the term of office of one third of the number of Deacons shall expire, and election shall be held to fill the vacancies. An individual must be off at least one year before being eligible for re-election.

The ordination of new Deacons: If any person is elected to the Deacon Body who has not been ordained as a Deacon in a Southern Baptist church, then a committee composed of the Pastor and selected Deacons will sit down with this person and family in an effort to thoroughly acquaint them with the scriptural qualifications demanded of one who hold the high office of deacon. If this person, with his family, feel they can meet these requirements, then an ordination service shall be conducted as soon as possible. If they feel they are not ready to meet these requirements, then the person receiving the next largest number of votes at the election of Deacons shall be considered elected.

The body of deacons will oversee the budget, buildings and benevolence of the church.

## Section 2. Standing Church Teams

The standing committees or teams of this church shall be:

Staff Team

Finance Team

Counting Team

Trustees

And other regular and special teams as the church shall authorize.

### **III. Church Ministry Organizations**

The church shall maintain ministries of Bible teaching; church member training; church leader training; new member orientation; mission education, action, and support; and music education, training, and performance. All organizations related to the church ministries shall be under church control, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church, and all ministries activities subject to church coordination and approval. The church shall provide the human resources, the physical resources, and the financial resources for the appropriate advancement of these programs.

### **IV. Church Ordinances**

#### **Section 1. Baptism**

This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord agreeing with the Church Covenant

- (1) Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
- (2) The pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism. The Baptism Ministry shall assist in the preparation for, and the observance of, baptism.
- (3) Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.
- (4) A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the pastor and/or staff or deacons. If negative interest is ascertained on the part of the candidate, he or she shall be deleted from those awaiting baptism.

#### **Section 2. The Lord's Supper**

The church shall observe the Lord's Supper quarterly, the first Sunday of the quarter, unless otherwise scheduled by the church. The observance shall alternate between the morning and the evening services of worship. The pastor, elders and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper.

### **V. Church Meetings**

#### **Section 1. Worship Services**

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning for the worship of Almighty God. Prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services. The pastor shall direct the services for all the church members and for all others who may choose to attend.

## **Section 2. Special Services**

Revival services and any other church meetings essential to the advancement of the church's objectives shall be placed on the church calendar.

## **Section 3. Annual Church Conference**

~~The regular church conference shall be held quarterly. On matters of major importance such as calling a pastor, a church conference shall be held on a Sunday morning as agreed upon with due notice given.~~

An annual church conference will be scheduled during the final quarter of the calendar year to approve the annual church ministry budget, elect individuals to the deacon ministry as needed, and to act upon other matters needing congregational action or attention.

## **Section 4. Special Called Church Conference:**

~~The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. A one week notice must be given for the specially called business meetings unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The notice shall include the subject, the date, and time and place; and it must be given in such a manner that all resident members have an opportunity to know of the meeting.~~

On matters of major importance such as calling a pastor, a church conference shall be held on a Sunday morning as agreed upon with due notice given.

A Special Called Church Conference of the church may be called exclusively in any one of the following three ways: 1) agreement between the Senior Pastor and the Elders, 2) a majority of Elders, or 3) a majority of the Deacons.

A Special Called Church Conference may only occur on Sunday or Wednesday after at least one week's notice has been given to the church body and due diligence has been given to inform the membership of the Special Called Church Conference. A Special Called Church Conference must be for a stated purpose and only that purpose may be considered at the meeting.

## **Section 5. Quorum**

The quorum consists of those members who attend the church conference, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called.

## **VI. Church Finances**

### **Section 1. Budget**

The Finance Team, in consultation with the deacons, shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for all local and other expenses.

Offering envelopes will be provided for members' use. It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts.

## **Section 2. Accounting Procedures**

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer, or (financial secretary) **Pastor's Administrator**, and be properly recorded on the books of the church.

A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the Finance Team.

## **Section 3. Fiscal Year**

The church fiscal year shall begin January 1 and ends on December 31.

## **VII. Church Policies and Procedures Manual**

**The employee handbook**, church policies and procedures and organization charts depicting lines of responsibility in the administration of the church. ~~The (church secretary)~~ **Pastors' Administrator** shall maintain the manual. The ~~(Personnel Committee)~~ **Staff Team** shall review the manual at least annually, with authority to recommend changes for the church to consider. Any church member or church organization may initiate suggested changes in the manual.

Addition, revision, or deletion of church policies requires:

- (1) Recommendation of the church officer or organization to whose areas of assignment the policy relates.
- (2) Discussion by the elders and deacons.
- (3) Approval by the church.

Procedures may be added, revised, or deleted by:

- (1) Recommendation of the church officer or organization to whose areas of assignment the procedures relate.
- (2) Approval by the church.

## **VIII. Amendments**

Changes in the constitution and bylaws may be made at any ~~regular business meeting of the church~~ **annual church conference** provided **a copy of** each amendment is ~~presented in writing at a previous business meeting~~ **available to the members at least two weeks in advance of annual meeting**. ~~Copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting.~~

Amendments to the constitution shall be by 75 percent vote of church members present. Amendments to the bylaws shall have a concurrence of a majority of the members present and voting.