

BY-LAWS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

709 Independence, Pella, Iowa 50219

May 24, 2023

The Purpose of the First Baptist Church is to honor God by making more disciples of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE I. DOCTRINE

Statements of Doctrine

1. Principles

The key to our doctrine is the deep conviction that every person has both the ability and the necessity to enter into direct saving relationship to God through Christ.

We believe the Bible is the all-sufficient basis of our doctrine.

We believe in baptism by immersion rather than infant baptism. This form of baptism clearly marks the entry into the Christian community. It is an outward witness to an inward reality. It does not create that reality but confesses it.

We believe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is an open congregational act encompassing the recall, reminder, and renewal of our Christian beliefs.

Being an ABC USA Baptist church means that we are a totally autonomous congregation. We are independent whether we belong to a national convention, state convention, or other regional affiliation. Ultimately, our church decides its own affairs.

We believe we are missionary people who respond to the constant appeal to bring people to Christ, provide support for medical and educational assistance, and attempt to change unjust conditions.

2. Position

We believe that this church, using the Bible as sufficient authority from God, clearly enables the believer to be drawn to the one true church, the body of Christ, as its only foundation.

The organization of this church is such as to encourage growth as a maturing Christian. It then is the goal of this body of believers that their true faith is the witness of Christ's work shown through them.

For this reason, this church desires to maintain a structure which motivates, instructs, nurtures, and brings into being that moment when each may truly say from their hearts and minds that they have experienced Jesus Christ, have the blessed assurance of salvation, and have the peace of God which passes all understanding.

3. Covenant

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized into 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.

Therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we pledge 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, ordinance, discipline, and doctrines;

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;

To maintain family and private devotions;

To teach our children the Christian truths;

To seek the salvation of our family and acquaintances;

To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our actions;

To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger;

To live temperately and soberly;

And to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further pledge to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness, and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling, and 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 pledge that, when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible, unite with another church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Baptism by immersion is required for a Full Member. Membership refers to Full Members, Associate Members, and Active Attenders.

Section I. Admission to Membership

Full Member

Full Member is received in one of the following ways:

By Baptism. A believer who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and adopts the Statements of Doctrine of this church and is baptized by immersion may be received into the fellowship of the church.

By Letter. A believer who adopts the Statements of Doctrine of this church and who has been immersed may be received by correspondence from any other Christian church.

By Experience. A believer who has formerly been a member of a Christian church but who, for a sufficient reason cannot present a letter from that church, but who adopts the Statements of Doctrine of this church and who has been immersed, may be received upon statement of experience.

By Restoration. A believer who has lost their Full Member status may be restored upon recommendation of the Diaconate.

Associate Member

Associate Member is received in one of the following ways:

By Letter. A believer who professes faith in Christ and understands the Statements of Doctrine of this church may be received by correspondence from any other Christian church.

By Experience. A believer who professes faith in Christ, but for a sufficient reason cannot present a letter from a church and understands the Statements of Doctrine of this church, may be received upon statement of experience.

By Restoration. A believer who has lost their Associate Member status may be restored upon recommendation of the Diaconate.

Active Attender

A believer who has faith in Christ, attends services regularly, contributes financially and/or through service, and understands the Statements of Doctrine of this church.

Rights and Privileges of Membership

The Full Member is entitled to all rights and privileges of the church.

The Associate Member and Active Attender is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church except:

1. Voting upon matters that determine the church's relation to the Mid-American Baptist Churches of the American Baptist Churches, USA.
2. Voting upon matters of doctrine.
3. Being a member of the Diaconate.

Section II. Dismissal from Membership

This church shall dismiss from membership in any of the following ways:

By Letter. Anyone in membership who desires a letter of dismissal may receive it upon their request.

By Suspension. Upon recommendation of the Diaconate anyone in membership may be suspended by a three-fourths vote of the membership in attendance at a regular or special meeting of the membership.

By Death.

ARTICLE III. THE PASTOR AND OFFICERS

All the officers of the church shall be elected from the membership of the church at an annual meeting to serve for one year.

Section I. Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor shall lead the church with oversight and support of the Diaconate and Pastoral Relations committee. The Senior Pastor job description will be crafted by the Pastoral Search Committee with input from the Diaconate. It will need to be approved by a majority of the membership present at any regular or special meeting of the membership. The Senior Pastor may attend any of the board and committee meetings of the church. The Senior Pastor shall attend the Council of Chairs and Diaconate board meetings.

Section II. Associate Pastor

The Associate Pastor shall minister under the direction of the Senior Pastor. The Associate Pastor job description will be crafted by the Senior Pastor and Pastoral Search committee with input from the Diaconate. It will need to be approved by a majority of the membership present at any regular or special meeting of the membership. The Associate Pastor may attend the board and committee meetings of the church.

Section III. Moderator

The Moderator will be the chairperson of the Council of Chairs and preside at all business meetings of the church. The Moderator will oversee all the responsibilities of the Council of Chairs. The Moderator will be responsible to give legal notice for all meetings and decide on voting procedure (verbal, show of hands, written). The Moderator is responsible for providing the Church Administrative Assistant with board members elected terms and changes to those terms.

Section IV. Clerk

The Clerk shall keep the meeting minutes of all Council of Chairs and business meetings of the church. The Clerk shall keep a record of the names and addresses of membership, with dates and manner of admission, dismissal, and baptisms. The Church Administrative Assistant will file these records.

Section V. Church Treasurer

The Church Treasurer shall have custody of church funds and deposits. All church funds and transactions shall be in the name of the church. There shall be separate accounting of all funds raised or contributed for particular purposes. The funds shall be disbursed for the purpose for which they were raised or contributed.

The Church Treasurer and Board of Trustees shall have oversight of the securities, investments, title papers and other valuable documents of the church.

Funds received for the church and for the reduction of the church indebtedness shall be disbursed by the order of the Board of Trustees.

The Church Treasurer shall pay monthly expenses and funds designated for benevolent purposes according to the schedule adopted in the annual budget.

The Church Treasurer shall keep a record of all pledges made, collect all moneys contributed, and keep a correct record amount thereof between the church and its membership. The Church Treasurer shall make deposits of such collections weekly in the bank selected by the Board of Trustees.

The Church Treasurer is an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.

The Church Treasurer shall present to the church at each annual meeting an itemized report of all receipts and disbursements. Other financial reports shall be made available if desired.

Section VI. The Superintendent of the Church School

The Superintendent of the Church School shall be the executive head of the church school, exercising the authority and performing the duties usually pertaining to that office, following the general directives and policies of the Board of Christian Education.

The Superintendent of the Church School is an ex-officio member of the Board of Christian Education.

Section VII. Additional Employees

The church may employ other persons as necessary who shall function according to a job description approved by a majority of the membership present and voting at any regular or special meeting of the membership.

ARTICLE IV. COUNCIL OF CHAIRS

The Council of Chairs shall consist of the Pastor/s, Moderator, Clerk, and chairperson of each board. This council shall serve the church by meeting or communicating monthly to maintain effective communication between all boards and Pastor as well as filling committee vacancies. It shall select the dates and prepare the agenda for all business meetings of the membership. This council shall perform an annual review of the church's by-laws to ensure compliance and/or make recommended changes as needed to be put before the congregation for approval. It shall appoint the standing and special committees required to fill the needs of the church, including but not limited to, Music, and Beautification Committees, as well as nominating the Pastoral Search Committee when required. This council is also responsible for the annual agreed upon procedures of the church financial records by an outside source. The results of the procedure shall be filed by the Church Administrative Assistant and be available to the membership.

Council of Chairs will prepare and maintain a list of qualified candidates to fill the various board and officer vacancies. All board chairs shall submit names of potential candidates for consideration. Candidates shall be

interviewed to ascertain their willingness to serve if elected. They shall put on the ballot one or more persons for each office and board vacancies to be filled at least one month prior to the annual meeting.

The Council of Chairs may fill all officers and board vacancies occurring during the year.

All Council of Chairs meetings are open to the membership unless a closed session is necessary.

ARTICLE V. BOARDS

Persons serving on the Diaconate Board shall be Full Members of the church. Persons serving on the Trustees, Christian Education, Missions, and Fellowship boards may be Full, Associate, or Active Attender members. Board members are elected up to a three-year term, serving no more than six consecutive years on the same board. Board members shall not be eligible for reelection to the same board for a period of one year following the expiration of that term. If the Council of Chairs has exhausted all resources to fill board openings, an existing board member may serve one additional year for a maximum of seven consecutive years. No person shall serve on two boards simultaneously. No two people from an immediate household may serve on the same board simultaneously. All board meetings are open to the membership unless a closed session is necessary.

Each board will provide a written report for each annual meeting regarding matters in its charge.

A majority of board members shall constitute a quorum.

Section I. Diaconate

The board of Deacons and Deaconesses shall jointly constitute a Diaconate which will meet with equal voting powers to consider and act upon all spiritual matters relating to the church. It shall consist of a maximum of twelve members, striving to equally balance the number of Deacons and Deaconesses.

The Diaconate shall annually choose a chairperson, a chairperson elect, secretary, treasurer, and shall regularly meet or communicate each month. The chairperson may call special meetings.

The Diaconate's duties shall include membership care and all responsibilities surrounding church worship. The Diaconate shall consider all applicants for church membership, send letters of dismissal when necessary, and provide funds to congregants with financial needs using the Deacon's fund as appropriate. The Deacon Fund Treasurer will make deposits of the Deacon's Fund offerings.

The Diaconate shall fill the pulpit in the absence of the Senior Pastor. This includes the procurement of an interim pastor as needed.

The Diaconate shall provide and administer the elements of The Lord's Supper.

The Diaconate shall monitor records concerning membership as described in Article II from lists supplied by the church Clerk.

Section II. Trustees

The Board of Trustees will meet with equal voting powers to consider and act upon all financial, physical plant, and hourly personnel matters relating to the church. It shall consist of a maximum of six members.

The Trustees will annually choose a chairperson, a chairperson elect, a secretary, and shall regularly meet or communicate each month. The chairperson may call special meetings. The Church Treasurer shall be present for all meetings.

This board will have fiduciary responsibility for all church financial matters as well as facility maintenance, protection, and improvements. It shall determine the use of church facilities for all purposes, but have no power to buy, mortgage, lease, or transfer real estate without the specific vote of the church membership. It shall perform other duties as imposed by the church or law.

The Trustees shall supervise ways and means for raising and investing funds to support the church and its missions. It shall prepare an annual budget, including Missions allocation, of all church income and expense which the Treasurer will present to the membership for approval at the annual meeting.

The filing of all Church documents is the responsibility of the Trustees.

Section III. Christian Education

The Board of Christian Education will meet with equal voting powers to provide for the organization and administration of the educational program of the church. It shall consist of a maximum of six members.

The board shall annually choose a chairperson, a chairperson elects, a secretary, and shall regularly meet or communicate each month. The chairperson may call special meetings. The Sunday School Superintendent shall be present for all meetings. The board shall prepare a budget, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, for each annual meeting.

The board shall be responsible for interpreting and developing the educational objectives of the church. It shall be responsible for providing for the educational needs of the church, for making decisions concerning time schedule, and educational use of facilities and equipment. It shall be responsible for recruiting, training, and appointing educational staff. It shall be responsible for evaluating curriculum and supervising the educational program and youth ministries.

The board shall be responsible for staffing the nursery and play shop and maintaining/updating the toys and books. Other responsibilities could include, but not limited to, Vacation Bible School, Camps, and Christmas Program. The board will perform background checks on educational staff as required by law.

Section IV. Missions

The Board of Missions shall meet with equal voting powers to increase missionary interest and giving for the total work of the American Baptist Church and local community. It shall consist of a maximum of six members.

The board shall annually choose a chairperson, a chairperson elect, a secretary, and shall regularly meet or communicate each month. The chairperson may call special meetings.

The Board of Missions shall develop a mission budget after consultation with the Board of Trustees and shall allocate these funds as determined by this board. The board shall designate any excess funds available beyond the budget.

The board shall arrange for special events, missionary speakers and videos, and projects to personalize missions. The board shall promote cooperation with other churches in the area and region in the furthering of missionary enterprises.

Section V. Fellowship

The Board of Fellowship will meet with equal voting powers to provide fellowship activities for the church family. It shall consist of a maximum of six members.

The board shall annually choose a chairperson, a chairperson elect, a secretary, and meet as needed. The chairperson may call special meetings.

The Board of Fellowship may consider, but is not limited to, coffee times, picnics, potlucks, and other social events.

ARTICLE VI. COMMITTEES

Annually the Council of Chairs shall appoint the following committees from the membership except for the Pastoral Relations Committee. Married couples may jointly serve on committees except for the Pastoral Relations Committee.

Section I. Music Committee

This committee shall be comprised of at least two members. They will collaborate with the Senior Pastor and Diaconate in the selection of music leaders and the selection and arrangement of music for the church services.

Section II. Beautification Committee

This committee shall be comprised of at least two members. They are to provide weekly sanctuary decorations and facilitate decorating for special events such as Easter and Christmas. This committee will maintain flower beds and plantings on the church property. They are encouraged to look for any beautification projects in or around the church and work in cooperation with the Trustees on those projects.

Section III. Pastoral Relations Committee

The Pastoral Relations Committee shall consist of three members and the pastor. These members shall include a member appointed by and from the Diaconate board, (approved by the Council of Chairs), and two church members selected by the pastor. The Diaconate and Pastor shall strive to appoint members who possess qualities defined in the Pastoral Relations Committee Handbook published by the Minister's Council of the American Baptist Church.

Members appointed by the Pastor will serve a term of three years. The Diaconate appointee may serve the length of their board term. Consecutive terms may be renewed upon mutual agreement between committee member and Pastor.

The committee will meet a minimum of four times each year and perform the Pastor's annual review during one of the meetings. The Church Administrative Assistant will confidentially file the evaluation.

The committee will be tasked with the following responsibilities, using the Pastoral Relations Committee Handbook, published by the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Church, as a guide.

- A. Managing or resolving conflict
- B. Promoting communication between pastor, boards, and congregation
- C. Facilitating fair and just compensation
- D. Encouraging pastoral development
- E. Assist with facilitating change

In the event of a new pastorate, two Pastoral Search Committee members shall serve as the Pastor's designees for a period of six months, after which the pastor will select their own Pastoral Relations Committee representatives.

Section IV. Special Committees

The Council of Chairs shall appoint special committees as needed.

ARTICLE VII. Pastorate Procedures

Notice of any Congregational meeting and its purpose shall be read from the pulpit on two successive Sundays prior to called meeting date.

Section I. Pastoral Search Committee

When the pastorate is vacant, a representative committee composed of five (or more) members from the membership of the church shall be nominated by the Council of Chairs and elected by the church membership. Nominations may be made at the meeting called for this purpose, provided the nominee is willing to accept the nomination. This committee shall take the necessary steps to secure a pastor in full consultation with the Region Minister of the American Baptist Churches. It shall investigate the merits of each candidate under consideration in regard to personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability in determining fitness for this pastorate. When a suitable person is found, the committee shall make recommendation to the church for consideration.

The Pastoral Search Committee shall draft the Pastor's job description with input from Diaconate. Any changes to the Pastor's job description will need to be approved by a majority of the membership present at a regular or special meeting.

The Pastoral Search Committee shall draft the Pastor-Church agreement in cooperation with the Diaconate and Trustees.

The Church Administrative Assistant will file the Pastor's job description and Pastor-Church agreement.

Two Pastoral Search Committee members shall serve as the Pastor's designees for the Pastoral Relations Committee for a period of six months, after which the pastor will select their own Pastoral Relations Committee representatives as defined in the Pastoral Relations Committee section of these by-laws.

Section II. Calling a Pastor

The call of a pastor shall come before the church at a congregational meeting. Only a person who is sympathetically cooperative with the purposes and program of the American Baptist Churches shall be considered. A vote of three-fourths of the membership present (provided there be present and voting one-third of the resident membership) shall be necessary to extend a call.

Only one candidate shall be presented to the church at one time. The vote shall be by written ballot.

Section III. Termination of Pastorate

The Pastorate may be ended upon at least sixty days notice on the part of the pastor or by the membership.

Termination of the Pastor shall be voted on at a congregational meeting. A vote of a majority of the membership (provided there be present and voting one-third of the resident membership) shall make termination valid.

ARTICLE VIII. ELECTIONS

Section I. Time

The election of board members and officers shall be held during the annual business meeting.

Section II. Procedure

At least two Sundays before election, the Council of Chairs shall present in writing to the church the names of one or more persons for each office to be filled. At the time of the annual meeting, it shall be the privilege of the membership to nominate any eligible person for any office, provided the nominee is willing to accept the nomination. A majority of the ballots cast are necessary for the election of any office.

ARTICLE IX. MEETINGS

Section I. Worship Service

Public worship shall be held each Sunday. The youth fellowships and the church school shall meet regularly. The Lord's Supper shall be observed monthly and additional times as scheduled by the Diaconate.

Additional services may be scheduled by the Diaconate or by membership vote.

Section II. Business Meetings

The date of the annual business meeting shall be determined by the Council of Chairs for the purpose of receiving the annual reports, the election of officers and board members, and the transaction of such other business as is appropriate for this meeting. A quorum for the transaction of business shall be twenty-five persons of the membership except as limited elsewhere in the by-laws.

Special meetings may be called at any time by the pastor, Council of Chairs, or a quorum (25 persons) of the membership.

Notice of any Congregational meeting and its purpose shall be read from the pulpit on two successive Sundays prior to called meeting date.

Section III. Absentee Ballots

Absentee Ballots must be requested for the election of officers and board members from the Church Administrative Assistant two weeks prior to the annual meeting and must be returned on or before the meeting.

ARTICLE X. CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE XI. PURCHASE, SALE, OR MORTGAGE OF REAL ESTATE

All matters pertaining to the purchase, sale or mortgage of real estate must be approved at a regularly called business meeting of the church by two-thirds majority vote of the membership present. Notice of such purchase, sale or mortgage of real estate shall be given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS

These by-laws may be amended at any regular or called business meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of those membership present, and that notice of such amendment, stating the proposed change, shall be given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting.

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