



First Baptist Church of DeSoto
Governing Documents

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Preamble

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed, in an orderly manner, consistent with the accepted tenets of the Southern Baptist Convention, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual church member and the freedom of action, we the members of First Baptist Church of DeSoto do declare and establish these Governing Documents.

Article I

What We Believe

Section 1. Introduction

The Holy Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God and is the basis of our statement of faith. This church subscribes to the doctrinal statements contained in the Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000, these statements constitute subsections A through R. It is a testimony of our faith as a witness to the world that unifies us around a common foundation in the Word of God. The remaining subsections S and T constitute doctrinal statements that further clarify the beliefs held by First Baptist Church of DeSoto.

In summary, this church adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, and to the additional subsections that further clarify our beliefs. Henceforth the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and these additional subsections shall be referred to as our Statement of Faith.

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs and is not intended to carry ultimate authority. The Bible itself is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth and morality and is sufficient for the proper conduct of mankind and is the sole and final source of all that we believe. The elders shall provide leadership to assist with issues related to the Bible's meaning and application. If a dispute arises over doctrinal interpretation, the elders shall inform the congregation, providing scriptural evidence of their interpretation for the consideration and affirmation of the church membership in a Special-Called Members' Meeting. All matters of church doctrine shall be subject to approval by a three-fourths majority vote of the members present in a Members' Meeting.

The following beliefs represent the core orthodox beliefs from a biblical and historical perspective. While church members are not required to fully understand or articulate all aspects of these beliefs, the explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs may disqualify someone from initial membership of First Baptist Church of DeSoto and may bring current members under restorative church discipline (Article II, Section 5).

Section 2. Statement of Faith

A. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

B. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

1. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men. Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

2. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly

revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord. Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

3. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy

1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

C. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

D. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

1. Regeneration

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

2. Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

3. Sanctification

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

4. Glorification

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed. Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

E. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11;

Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39–12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

F. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

G. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

H. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the

Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

I. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come, and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age. Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

J. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

K. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal

witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

L. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists. Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

M. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth. Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47;

5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

N. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament. Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

O. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21;

10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12–14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

P. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

Q. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power. Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

R. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His

church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents. Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

S. Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality

God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. "Marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. Any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. In order to preserve the function and integrity of First Baptist Church of DeSoto as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical witness to our community, it is imperative that all members, employees, and volunteers agree to and abide by these beliefs on marriage, gender, and sexuality. God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake

their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church. Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18-25; Matthew 5:16; 15:18-20; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 18; 7:2-5; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Hebrews 13:4.

T. Sanctity of Life

All human life is sacred and created by God in His image, and there is no racial or ethnic superiority. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We therefore are called to defend, protect, and value all human life. Even as we oppose euthanasia and abortion, we know that God in His grace will forgive those who turn to Him for forgiveness. Genesis 2:7; Deuteronomy 30:19; Psalm 139:13-16; Job 30:23; Ecclesiastes 7:14; 8:8; 1 Corinthians 15:26, 54-56; Hebrews 2:9, 14-15; Revelation 21:4.

Article II Membership

Section 1. General

A. Self-government

As an autonomous and local congregation under the lordship of Jesus Christ (Article I, Section 2.F), the membership of First Baptist Church of DeSoto retains unto itself the right of self-government through democratic processes, inclusive of the appointment and ongoing affirmation of church leadership.

B. Membership Requirements

In all cases and without exception, members shall possess a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, shall give evidence of a desire to live a consistent godly and Christian life, shall have been baptized by immersion in water, are in agreement with the faith and practices of this church as outlined in this church's Statement of Faith (Article I, Section 2), have completed a membership class, have been counseled by an elder or his designate, and have affirmed the membership covenant (Appendix 1).

C. Application for Membership

A person may apply for membership through the following actions or documentation:

1. Making a profession of faith in Christ and presenting oneself as a candidate for baptism;
2. Letter of recommendation from another church of like faith and order;
3. Statement of having made a profession of faith in Christ followed by baptism;
4. Restoration (that person's name having been previously excluded from the membership) upon making a satisfactory explanation to the church.

Section 2. Acceptance for Membership

A. Membership Class

All persons who apply for membership shall go through a membership class that outlines this church's beliefs and mission.

B. Counseling

All persons who apply for membership and have gone through the

membership class shall be counseled by an elder or someone designated by the elders as soon as practical. This counseling shall be done prior to the individual affirming the covenant and being voted into membership for the purpose of discerning whether the individual applying for membership has given evidence of satisfying the requirements outlined in Article II, Section 1.B.

C. Covenant Affirmation and Acceptance

Upon the counselor's satisfaction that the applicant meets this church's membership requirements (Article II, Section 1.B), the applicant may be presented to the church at a subsequent Lord's Day service or Members' Meeting, and the applicant would then become a member of First Baptist Church of DeSoto upon affirmation of the membership covenant and a two-thirds majority vote by the members present. When the applicant is also a candidate for baptism, membership shall be effective upon their baptism and subsequent affirmation of the membership covenant.

Section 3. Removal of Membership

A. Reasons for Removal

Membership may be removed for one of the following reasons:

1. Letter of recommendation from another church with similar beliefs or confirmation of regular attendance or membership at another church with similar beliefs;
2. Confirmation that a person has joined a church of different faith and order;
3. Voluntary withdrawal;
4. Lack of attendance for one year as determined by the elders (unless medically hindered, homebound, service in military or missions);
5. Death; or
6. Exclusion in accordance with Article II, Section 5.

B. Procedure for Removal

If it is determined that an individual's membership needs to be terminated due to a reason outlined in Article II, Section 3.A, the church shall vote to terminate the membership at any regular or Special-Called Member's Meeting with a two-thirds majority vote in accordance with Article II, Section 8.B. Upon termination the individual's name shall be removed from the church membership roll.

Section 4. Objection to Membership or Letter of Recommendation

If a formal objection is raised on the granting of membership or a letter of recommendation to another church, the case shall be referred to the elders for prompt investigation, and, as appropriate, the findings shall be reported to the congregation.

Section 5. Restorative Church Discipline

The spirit of First Baptist Church of DeSoto must always be redemptive. Should the unrepentant sin of a member disgrace the name of Christ and His Church, its welfare, or the best interests of all the members, the elders shall lead the church to make every reasonable effort to resolve the problem, keeping in mind the following:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:15-17).

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

Should there be no resolution, and the offender is not restored to repentance, the church may remove the offender's membership with a two-thirds majority vote at any regular or Special-Called Members' Meeting after giving consideration to the recommendations of the elders.

"But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one." (1 Corinthians 5:11)

Any person whose membership has been terminated by discipline may, upon evidence of repentance and the recommendation of the elders, be restored to full

membership by the church. Restoration shall be communicated to the church through the typical notification of new church members described in Article II.

Section 6. Formal Dispute Resolution

Members shall refrain from filing lawsuits against the church and submit to Christian Alternative Dispute Resolution. In keeping with 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, all formal disputes, other than those which are subject to the jurisdiction of the elders in Article II, Section 5 of these Governing Documents, which may arise between any member of the church and the church itself, or between any member of the church and any elder, employee, volunteer, agent, or other member of this church, shall be resolved by mediation, and if not resolved by mediation, then by binding arbitration under the procedures and supervision of the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation, Institute for Christian Conciliation, or similar faith-based mediation and arbitration group. In the event that the Institute for Christian Conciliation ceases to exist during the course of this Agreement, arbitration under this section shall be conducted according to the rules of the American Arbitration Association. Judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. The parties each agree to bear their own costs related to any mediation or arbitration proceeding including payment of their own attorneys' fees. Either party may file a motion seeking temporary injunctive relief from a court of competent jurisdiction in order to maintain the status quo until the underlying dispute or claim can be submitted for mediation or arbitration. If a dispute may result in an award of monetary damages that could be paid under a church insurance policy, then use of the conciliation, mediation, and arbitration procedure is conditioned on acceptance of the procedure by the liability insurer of the church and the insurer's agreement to honor any mediation, conciliation or arbitration award up to any applicable policy limits. The mediation, conciliation, and arbitration process is not a substitute for any disciplinary process set forth in these Governing Documents and shall in no way affect the authority of the church to investigate reports of misconduct, to conduct hearings, or to administer discipline of members. These expectations in no way negate the necessity for the mandated reporting of abuse and other like offenses.

Section 7. Church Meetings

A. Regular Worship

The church shall meet regularly each Lord's Day, and other days of the week as needed or desired for preaching, instruction, evangelism, prayer, praise, and the public worship of God. These meetings shall be open to all individuals.

B. Regular Members' Meetings

Regular Members' Meetings shall be held at minimum quarterly unless otherwise determined by the elders to conduct the business of the church and shall be announced prior to the meeting.

C. Special-Called Members' Meetings

The church may conduct Special-Called Members' Meetings with the members of the church to consider matters of special nature and significance. A fourteen-day notice shall be given for the Special-Called Members' Meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. It shall be given in such a manner that all members have opportunity to know of the meeting. Business conducted shall be limited to the subject announced in the calling of the meeting.

Section 8. Church Business

A. Moderator

The elders shall designate a moderator to preside at each Members' Meeting. The moderator may only vote on matters where a written or secret ballot is required. No person shall serve as moderator of or preside over any meeting at which the person is a subject for consideration or discussion.

B. Quorum and Voting

Decisions that affect the church's entire membership in a significant way are to be taken to the church for approval. Such decisions include the following:

1. Affirm and remove the Lead Elder, an Associate Elder, or a Lay Elder;
2. Affirm, and remove members of the deacons, Trustee Committee, Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, and the Church Clerk;
3. Affirm, remove, and grant transfer of membership;
4. Changes to First Baptist Church of DeSoto's Governing Documents and policies;
5. Purchase or sale of land, buildings, and major assets, those being over \$2,000.00;
6. Church plants, mergers, and dissolution;
7. Annual budget.

A quorum is understood to be met by those members present at any regular or Special-Called Members' Meeting and a simple majority vote shall be required for all matters unless stated elsewhere in these Governing Documents. In case of a tie vote, the motion does not pass.

Only First Baptist Church of DeSoto members may vote.

C. Method of Voting

Voting may be by a show of hands or voice vote on all matters except when the elders determine that a written ballot is warranted. Any vote to affirm or remove an elder or affirm or remove a deacon shall be conducted by secret, written ballot. Members must be physically present to vote.

D. Parliamentary Procedures

All Members' Meetings shall be conducted, first and foremost, according to Scripture. It is our belief and hope that our Members' Meetings should honor and glorify God.

"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:36)

Under the Lordship of Christ is how each of us should participate, conducting ourselves with the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Then, wherever applicable and not inconsistent with the Governing Documents or with any special order established by the church, all business shall be conducted according to the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Revised or some similar rule book for conducting business (parliamentary, legislative, et al).

Section 9. Ordinances

A. Baptism

See Article I, Section 2.G. Baptism may be administered to the approved candidates as an act of worship during any worship meeting. Baptism shall be administered by the Lead Elder or whomever he or the elders shall authorize. Only individuals seeking membership may be baptized.

B. The Lord's Supper

See Article I, Section 2.G. First Baptist Church of DeSoto interprets the Baptist Faith & Message to be speaking to membership in the church universal, meaning, we allow for all baptized believers to partake of the Lord's Supper, even when they are not members of First Baptist Church of DeSoto. In this spirit, the elders shall be mindful to communicate the scriptural requirements for partaking of the Lord's Supper, lest anyone's understanding be incomplete.

The Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly as scheduled by the elders. The Lead Elder or his designates shall administer the Lord's Supper.

Section 10. Duties of Members

The duties of church members are listed in the Membership Covenant located in Appendix 1.

Article III Governance

Section 1. Structure

A. General

Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of this church and He rules primarily through the Scriptures. The governance of this church is based upon the biblical principles of an elder-led, deacon-served, and congregation-affirming church. The government of this church is vested solely in the body of the members who compose it. It shall be subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body. The church is incorporated under the provisions of RSMO 352.010, for the purpose of benevolent, religious, scientific, fraternal-beneficial, or educational purposes, may be consolidated and united into a corporation. The church shall have the power to own, lease, rent, buy, and sell real estate and personal property for corporate purposes only.

This church shall be supported, only, by the tithes, offerings, love offerings, and inheritances of the congregation and other concerned persons; also, by fees paid to the church for the use of its property.

B. Legal Name

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of DeSoto, Missouri. This corporation is oft referred to in these Governing Documents as the "church." The church is a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state of Missouri so long as such ruling remains valid and applicable to the church. The exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).

C. Location of Office and Meeting Place

The principal office for business transactions of the church is 400 Boyd St., DeSoto, MO 63020. The principal meeting place for ministry is 2000 Grace Way, DeSoto, MO 63020. The office and meeting place are located in Jefferson County, Missouri.

D. Corporation Officers

The officers shall be Lead Elder as President, the Chairman of the deacons as Vice President, and Church Clerk as Secretary.

E. Dissolution

In the event of a voluntary dissolution of the church, the net assets of the church shall be distributed to the Jefferson Baptist Association. Any merger with another, like-minded, fellowship of believers must be approved by a three-fourths majority vote of the membership present in a Special-Called Members' Meeting.

F. Amendment to the Governing Documents

Members in good standing may submit, in writing, a proposed change or amendment to the Governing Documents. The elders shall review the proposal and consider further actions. If the elders determine further action is necessary or appropriate, action may be taken. The Governing Documents may then be altered, amended, or repealed, and new Governing Documents may be adopted or rejected by the church body.

The elders shall bring a motion regarding the proposed changes before the church at any Members' Meeting. The motion must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any Members' Meeting in order to proceed. The proposed changes to the Governing Documents must then be reviewed for a three-month period. After three months of review, the church shall be notified of the upcoming final vote concerning the proposed changes two Sunday's prior to the regular or Special-Called Members' Meeting where the vote shall occur. Following the three-month review period, the motion to approve the proposed changes shall be voted on and must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at the Special-Called Members' Meeting.

G. Facility Use

The church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. Although the facilities are not generally open to the public, the church makes its facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice. No person, group, or entity shall be allowed to use the facility to hold, advance, or advocate beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in the church's Statement of Faith. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed inconsistent with, the church's Statement of Faith. The elders are the final

decision-makers concerning use of church facilities. More information is available regarding facility use in our Building Use Policy.

H. Purpose and Affiliations

This body shall have as its purpose the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which shall result in the salvation of souls, the training of the saved, and a Christian Ministry to all mankind as a whole, in order that we might carry out the teaching of Jesus Christ as given in: Matthew 25:31-40; 28:19-20; Luke 4:16-19.

The church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of denominational control. However, the church recognizes the value of cooperating with like-minded believers in the partnership of the Gospel. The church shall maintain its historical relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Missouri Baptist Convention, and the Jefferson Baptist Association. These relationships may only be dissolved by a three-fourths majority vote of the members present in a Special-Called Members' Meeting.

Section 2. Elders

A. Biblical Qualifications and Requirements

Elders are the pastors and overseers of the church. Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall provide broad oversight to the ministry, financial management, and resources of the church. 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:6-9 outline the qualifications of an elder. These passages note that the qualifications are focused on matters of character. These qualifications are as follows, an elder must be:

1. Above reproach
2. If married, faithful in marriage
3. Sober-minded
4. Self-controlled
5. Respectable
6. Hospitable
7. Able to teach
8. Not a drunkard
9. Not violent but gentle
10. Not quarrelsome
11. Not a lover of money, or greedy for gain
12. Able to manage his household and children well
13. Not a recent convert
14. Well thought of by outsiders

15. Not arrogant or quick-tempered
16. A lover of good
17. Upright
18. Holy
19. Disciplined
20. Sound in doctrine, upholding the trustworthy word for the sake of sound doctrine, and be able to rebuke those who contradict it.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling. The elders shall be comprised of men who satisfy the above biblical qualifications. Only men may serve as elders in accord with 1 Timothy 2:12, and 3:2. Elders not receiving compensation from the church shall be called "Lay Elders" for the purpose of these governing documents, although biblically and functionally there is no difference among the elders. Lay Elders shall be evaluated and reaffirmed on an annual basis by the Lead Elder. No individual may hold the office of both elder and deacon.

B. Call, Election, and Removal of an Elder

The elders may, in conjunction with the Personnel Committee, at any Members' Meeting, present to the church a list of nominees for the office of elder. The elders and Personnel Committee must interview the candidate(s) to ensure his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith. The church shall be given the opportunity to question and assess the preaching gifts and ministry vision of any potential elder(s) in order to consider whether such nominee(s) are qualified for the office. For a period of at least one month the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders, who may on the basis of that advice remove names from the list of nominees. No name shall be added to the list of nominees, which was not included on the initial list. Nomination to this position must be given at two Sunday morning services prior to the vote. The elders shall at the next regular Members' Meeting present a final list of nominees to the church. The church shall question and vote on each of the nominees in turn. Any nominee receiving a three-fourths majority vote of the members present shall be an elder and shall be ordained at a subsequent Members' Meeting.

An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed must formally request a hearing at a special-called meeting of the elders and deacons. If a majority of elders and deacons believe that the reasons for dismissal have

merit, the concern shall then be brought to the congregation in either a Special-Called or regular Members' Meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21. Any elder may be dismissed by a three-fourths majority vote of the members present in accordance with Article II Section 8.B.

C. Duties of the Elders

In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:14; and 1 Peter 5:1-4, the elders shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures as they undertake the work of shepherding God's flock. The elders shall preach, teach, and exhort, refute those who contradict the truth, pray for the sick, care for the congregation, and devote themselves to prayer, godliness, and evangelism.

The elders shall lead the church to function as a New Testament church. They shall lead the congregation, the church organizations, and the church staff to perform their tasks of evangelizing, edifying, and equipping one another to reach out to the community and the world. The elders are the leaders of the pastoral ministries in the church, and as such, they shall work to lead the church in performing its tasks, lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, ministry, and application, lead the church in proclaiming the gospel to believers and unbelievers, and care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

The elders shall take particular responsibility to oversee worship services, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage and teach sound doctrine, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, mobilize the church for world missions, counsel and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, and oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church leaders, committees, and teams. The elders shall ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, align with our Statement of Faith (Article I, Section 2). The elders are responsible to implement all church approved policies (e.g., wedding, building use, personnel, and finance).

The elders may establish and oversee ministry positions and teams to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders along with the Personnel Committee (Article IV, Section 2.A) shall have responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members in keeping with the personnel

policies approved by the church. In proposing paid staff positions, the elders shall present a job description for each position to the membership for approval. The elders along with the Personnel Committee may hire and dismiss non-ministerial staff, or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis.

D. Meetings

The elders shall meet regularly to discuss and oversee the work and ministry of the church. The elders may choose to operate among themselves by consensus, but they must have at least two-thirds approval of the elders in order to proceed with any action/recommendation that is presented before the congregation. These are closed meetings only open to the elders. There may be occasions when non-elders are allowed to attend these meetings; on these occasions the non-elders shall simply be attending, not participating, and shall be asked to step out of the room if the elders need to discuss any private or sensitive matters.

E. Lead Elder / Senior Pastor

The Lead Elder / Senior Pastor shall perform the duties of an elder described in Article III. Section 2. C. He shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching and teaching the Word of God (1 Timothy 5:17) and overseeing the flock. In the absence or incapacity of the Lead Elder, the other elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which may be delegated.

The Lead Elder shall act as a first among equals amongst the elders. His role is equal to the roles of the Associate and Lay Elders in authority and oversight, yet he shall be accorded an extra measure of leadership and deference, that is, his is the final say in matters of dispute amongst the elders. The Lead Elder shall also serve as the President of the church corporation. The calling of any man to the office of Lead Elder shall follow the process of calling an elder as outlined in Article III Section 2.B.

F. Associate Elder / Associate Pastor

The church may call additional elders whose relationship to the Lead Elder is that of an associate. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Article III Section 2.C. and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching, and overseeing.

He shall assist the Lead Elder in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties that pertain to the office of elder or duties assigned to

him by the congregation. The calling of any man to the office of Associate Elder shall follow the process of calling an elder as outlined in Article III Section 2.B.

G. Lay Elder / Lay Pastor

The church may call additional elders whose relationship to the Lead Elder and Associate Elder(s) is that of a Lay Elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Article III Section 2.C. and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching, teaching, and overseeing.

He shall assist the Lead Elder and Associate Elder(s) in the performance of their regular duties and shall perform any other duties that pertain to the office of elder or duties assigned to him by the congregation. Lay Elders only differ from the Lead Elder and Associate Elder(s) in that the position of Lay Elder is unpaid. The calling of any man to the office of Lay Elder shall follow the process of calling an elder as outlined in Article III Section 2.B.

Section 3. Deacons

A. Biblical Qualifications and Requirements

The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7.

In these passages we note that the qualifications are focused on matters of character. A deacon must:

1. Be of good repute;
2. Be full of the Spirit and of wisdom;
3. Have dignity;
4. Not be double-tongued;
5. Not be addicted to much wine (self-mastery);
6. Not be greedy for dishonest gain;
7. Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience;
8. Be blameless;
9. If married, be faithful in marriage;
10. Manage children and household well;
11. Passionately care for the weak and those in need.

Deacons give themselves in service to the church, and also possess particular gifts of service.

B. Call and Election of a Deacon

Deacons shall be selected as follows: the elders in conjunction with the deacons shall at any regular Members' Meeting present to the church a list of nominees to the office of deacon. Accordingly, any member present at a Members' Meeting may ask to amend the recommendation for potential deacons. Each individual amendment to the slate of deacons must be made from the floor and must be approved by a simple majority vote. For a period of at least one month the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that member shall express such concern to the elders, who may on the basis of that advice remove names from the list of nominees. After the review period the elders shall bring a final nonamenable list of nominees to the church at any Members' Meeting for individual approval by a two-thirds majority vote, and those approved shall be ordained at a subsequent Members' Meeting.

C. Removal of a Deacon

A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. A deacon is required to attend meetings on a regular basis. If a deacon has become inactive in serving the church and in attending deacons' meetings the Chairman of the deacons shall meet with said deacon to determine cause. Unless satisfactory cause is given, the deacon shall be asked to resign as a deacon of First Baptist Church of DeSoto or shall be brought before the church for dismissal from the diaconate.

If any two church members with reason to believe that a deacon should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, afterwards to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord in Matthew 18:15-17. Any deacon may be dismissed by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any Members' Meeting.

In addition to resignation and dismissal, deacons may also request to be made inactive or deacon emeritus. If a deacon, due to personal reasons, seeks to be declared inactive, that period of inactivity shall be for one calendar year (this request must be approved in a regular deacon's meeting by a simple majority). If approved, the Chairman of the deacons shall assign a deacon to be a care or accountability partner for the inactive deacon during the period of inactivity. If said deacon determines that they cannot continue their duties after one year they shall tender their resignation. If a deacon has served well and desires to retire from the deacon ministry, the deacon may request to be honored with the status

of Deacon Emeritus. If the deacon body approves this request, the matter shall be brought before the congregation in a regular Members' Meeting.

D. Duties of the Deacons

The church may recognize deacons to take responsibility in the following areas:

1. Caring for the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the infirmed to receive spiritual and physical comfort;
2. Leading the hospitality ministries of the church;
3. Attending to the normal care and maintenance of church properties alongside the Trustee Committee;
4. Receiving, holding, and disbursing benevolence funds, and reporting from time to time on the use of such funds to both the elders and the church;
5. Attending worship services, deacon's meetings, and deacon ministry endeavors faithfully;
6. Attending to the accommodations for public worship;
7. Assisting in the distribution of the elements during the Lord's Supper;
8. Praying for the church, and offering prayer and support to the elders and ministerial staff consistently;
9. Seeking out a specific area of ministry to strengthen;
10. Supporting the overall ministry of the church through service and through the giving of tithes and offerings;
11. Serving in other capacities as the church has need.

The deacons shall select a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary at their first meeting in a calendar year. The elected Chairman of the deacons shall serve as Vice President of the church corporation. Each deacon shall have a specific area of ministry.

E. Meetings

The deacons shall meet regularly with no less than two elders present (serving in an ex officio capacity). These meetings shall serve to foster unity in the church and ensure that appropriate resources are available for ministry. The deacons shall also discuss and ensure that the responsibilities of the deacon body are being fulfilled.

Section 4. Church Clerk

In addition to the elders and the deacons First Baptist Church DeSoto recognizes the administrative position of Church Clerk. It shall be the duty of the Church Clerk to record the minutes of all Members' Meetings, to preserve an accurate

roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the elders, deacons, or the church. The Church Clerk shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation. In the absence or incapacity of the Church Clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the Church Clerk. The Church Clerk shall also serve as the Secretary of the church corporation.

Section 5. Church Staff

A. Hiring Additional Staff

Subject to the approved budget, the elders, in conjunction with the Personnel Committee, may hire full-time and part-time staff members who shall provide specialized services to the church and ministries. All church staff, whether paid or volunteer, shall be under the supervision of the elders. The church shall not hire, appoint, or retain any employee or volunteer who fails to adhere to or expresses disagreement with the Statement of Faith (Article I, Section 2).

B. Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the church. The Financial Secretary shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The Financial Secretary shall render to the elders, at least once a year, or whenever they may require it, an account of all financial transactions. The Financial Secretary shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular Members' Meetings. During the annual budget process, the Financial Secretary shall coordinate with the Finance Committee.

The Financial Secretary shall be a staff position based upon the procedures described in Article III, Section 5.A.

C. Resignation and Removal of Church Staff

Any member of the church staff shall serve until tenure is ended by resignation, is removed by the elders in conjunction with the Personnel Committee or is removed by the elders at the church's request at any regular or Special-Called Members' Meeting. If the church staff member elects to resign, he or she shall give at least two weeks' notice to the elders prior to resigning any responsibility.

Any charges brought against a church staff member with a view toward disciplinary action or removal must be handled in a biblical and upright manner. The guidance of Matthew 18:15-20 shall be followed (also see Article II, Section 5). In light of this biblical command, charges must have first been brought directly to the church staff member by the person or persons raising the concerns, thus giving opportunity for resolution in a biblical and expeditious manner and outside the public eye.

If resolution is not achieved, then the charges must be submitted, in writing and identifying those bringing the charges, to the elders. These charges shall then be considered prayerfully and carefully by the elders in order to discern the accuracy and seriousness of the charges. If, after consultation with the church staff member, it is determined that the charges are serious enough to warrant dismissal, then the elders in conjunction with the Personnel Committee shall make the final decision. However, in matters pertaining to legal issues and serious abuse, the elders reserve the right to dismiss the staff member immediately.

Section 6. Indemnification

A. Mandatory Indemnification

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against the liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

B. Permissive Indemnification

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

C. Procedure

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

Article IV

Ministries

Section 1. General

In accordance with the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 and the wisdom from 1 Peter 4:10, it is our belief that members receive God's blessing through the sharing of each individual's time and talents in service to the Lord and others. As a result, First Baptist Church of DeSoto is committed to accomplishing its mission through the ministry of its members, thereby allowing them to experience the associated blessings.

To accomplish this, First Baptist Church of DeSoto uses committees and teams, comprised of church members, as the basic organizing units to associate church members with ministry needs. These committees and teams carry out the actions needed to implement the ministries of First Baptist Church of DeSoto.

Section 2. Committees and Teams

A. Committees

Committees represent the various expressions of ministry that help fulfill the vision of the church. The committees at First Baptist Church of DeSoto are: Trustee Committee, Finance Committee, and Personnel Committee. Committees work closely with the church staff. Each committee member is nominated by the elders and approved by the church. Each committee shall consist of six members each who shall serve three-year terms, with one third rotating off each year. After one inactive year, members may be nominated and affirmed for subsequent three-year terms. Each committee shall have an elder and/or a staff liaison.

Listed below is each committee and their subsequent duties:

1. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is responsible for preparing the annual budget, approving all unbudgeted or large expenditures, meeting monthly to review all financial documents as prepared by the Financial Secretary, and maintaining oversight of the general financial health of the church. The Financial Secretary shall serve on the Finance Committee in an ex officio capacity. At the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the church shall approve the annual budget in any Members' Meeting. The elders shall have responsibility to oversee and faithfully disburse the budget. Amendments to the budget shall be adopted upon the motion of the

Finance Committee and a subsequent simple majority vote at any Members' Meeting. An outside audit of all financial records shall take place every three years, and the results must be presented at any Members' Meeting. Additionally, in the intervening years the Finance Committee in conjunction with the elders may establish a team to perform an internal audit of all financial records and to review the results of the external audit. A chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary shall be selected by the finance committee at their first meeting in a calendar year. A majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

2. Trustee Committee

The Trustee Committee is responsible for maintaining buildings, the contents of those buildings, and real estate owned by the church. The elders shall nominate all trustee candidates. Trustee candidates must be approved by the congregation in any Members' Meeting. A chairman, vice chairman, and secretary shall be selected by the trustees present at their first meeting in a calendar year. A majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

3. Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee is responsible for participating with the elders to interview elder candidates, present elder candidates to the church, hire and dismiss ministerial and non-ministerial staff, review and recommend salaries and salary changes to the Finance Committee, the yearly evaluation of the church staff, and edit and recommend changes to the personnel policy. Any adjustments or problems shall be clearly understood and carried out by the personnel involved. A chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary shall be selected by the personnel committee at their first meeting in a calendar year. A majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

B. Ad Hoc Committees

Ad Hoc Committees are committees that exist to serve a temporary function. Recommendations for the establishment of an ad hoc committee may come from the elders, the church staff, or an existing committee. A recommendation for a new ad hoc committee must be submitted along with its proposed principal function and duties. The elders shall review any proposed ad hoc committee and present the committee to the church for a vote at any Members' Meeting.

Ad Hoc Committees work closely with the church staff. Each ad hoc committee member is nominated by the elders and approved by the church. Each ad hoc committee shall consist of no less than six members. Where necessary, ad hoc

committees may elect officers to better manage their duties (normally a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and a secretary). Church staff and elders may be assigned as liaisons to assist ad hoc committees in fulfilling their responsibilities as needed. As determined by the elders, ad hoc committees shall be dissolved upon the fulfillment of their purpose.

Ad hoc committees shall meet as they deem necessary in order to fulfill their purpose. If applicable, the ad hoc committee secretary shall maintain minutes of the meetings and shall forward a copy to the elders for central reference and permanent record. A majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

Ad Hoc Committees shall submit all capital equipment needs and expense budget requirements to the elders for approval and in sufficient time to meet budget timelines and requirements.

C. Teams

Through a collaborative effort, teams shall assist with the overall ministry of the church. Teams are an extension of the church. Some examples of teams at First Baptist Church of DeSoto include the Children's Ministry Team, the Student Ministry Team, and the Worship Ministry Team.

While most teams are formed for ongoing ministry, some may be created for short-term purposes or projects.

Recommendations for the establishment of a team may come from the elders, the church staff, or the church membership. The elders may approve or disapprove of the establishment of said team. Teams may be dissolved, and team membership revoked upon a determination of the elders. A list of current teams may be made available by the elders upon request.

APPENDIX 1

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having received Christ as Lord and Savior and having subsequently been baptized by immersion, and being in agreement with the church's Statement of Faith and mission, we join together by the Holy Spirit to commit ourselves to God and to one another to do the following:

We will seek unity through prayer and by walking in brotherly love. We will love one another by being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving as Christ has forgiven us. We will speak truth in love. We will bear the burdens of others and seek to restore those who are struggling in sin. (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:32; Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Peter 4:8)

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor will we neglect to pray for ourselves and others. We will strive to bring up those under our care in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Hebrews 10:24-25; Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 6:4)

We will make disciples by sharing the gospel of Jesus with others. We will pray for and support the mission of this church. We will serve this church body with the gifts and strengths we have received from the Lord. (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

We will contribute cheerfully and sacrificially to support the ministries and expenses of this church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through national and international missions. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Luke 21:1-4; Philippians 4:18-19)

We will grow in our love for Jesus by spending time with the Lord in the Scriptures and in prayer. We will submit ourselves to the Scriptures as the final authority on all matters in life and to the leaders that God has given to serve the church. (1 Timothy 4:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 13:17)

We will live as representatives of Christ in the way that we speak and act in the world. We will flee sin and pursue godliness, not controlled by any substance or sinful behavior, but controlled by the Spirit as we glorify Christ in word and deed. (2 Corinthians 5:20, 6:3; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Timothy 6:11)

We will, when we move from this place, 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. May the Lord Jesus be glorified in our church now and forever. Amen.