

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown Constitution and By-Laws

(Revised 2006)

PREAMBLE

Recognizing our responsibility to fulfill the requirements of a New Testament Church and desiring that things be done “decently and in order,” we, the members of this Church, do voluntarily agree to abide by the following Constitution and By-Laws, which we believe will enable us to follow the Biblical pattern of a New Testament Church, thus becoming a body of believers who give glory to God.

ARTICLE 1 – NAME AND AFFILIATION

- a. The name of this Pennsylvania religious, nonprofit organization shall be The First Baptist Church of Doylestown. The First Baptist Church of Doylestown is organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- b. The location of the base ministry is Doylestown, PA or its vicinity. The registered office of the Church shall be located at 311 W. State Street, Doylestown Borough, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The Board of Elders may change the registered address from time to time, upon filing the appropriate statement with the Secretary of State.
- c. This Church is independent and autonomous but is associated with the Conservative Baptist Association of America and Mid-Atlantic Conservative Baptist Association. The Church may decide to affiliate with other organizations as long as such affiliation does not conflict with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Church.

ARTICLE 2 – MISSION

First Baptist Church exists to help fulfill the commission that Jesus Christ left to His followers before ascending to Heaven. **(Matthew 28:18-20)** Our mission is to glorify God through worshipping Him, equipping Christian believers, and reaching out to unbelievers.

ARTICLE 3 – PURPOSE AND LIMITATIONS

In addition to the primary Mission and purpose set forth in ARTICLE 2, the Church shall be authorized:

To function exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the classification of legal charities Section 501 ©© (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law. The Church’s ministries and activities may include, but are not limited to, the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, and the equipping and reaching ministries of the

Church. No part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the personal benefit of any private individual; and no substantial part of the activities of the organization, or any receipt of funds, shall be utilized for any other purpose except those purposes mentioned above.

- a. To handle affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by the civil authorities.
- b. The Church shall not have or issue shares of stock, and no dividends shall be paid. No part of the income or assets of the Church shall be distributed to any member or officer without full consideration. No member or officer of the Church has any vested right, interest or privilege in or to the assets, property, functions, or activities of the Church. The Church may contract in due course, for reasonable consideration, with its members or officers without violating this provision.

ARTICLE 4 – STATEMENT OF BELIEF

THE WORD OF GOD – We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original writings. **(2 Timothy 3:16-17)** We believe the Bible is complete as the revelation of God’s will for salvation, and is the supreme and final authority in all matters pertaining to life and godliness. **(2 Peter 1:3)** God has miraculously preserved the text we now have so that what we have is authoritative. We believe in a historical, grammatical interpretation of God’s Word.

THE TRINITY – We believe in one sovereign God, who created and sustains all things. He eternally exists in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **(Ephesians 1, Matthew 28:19-20)**

JESUS CHRIST – We believe that Jesus Christ is God’s eternal Son, and has precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections as God the Father. **(John 1:1-3)** We believe He is not only fully God, but also fully man. **(Philippians 2:5-8)** We believe He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. **(Matthew 1:18-25)** We also believe in His sinless life, His death for our sins, His bodily resurrection from the dead and His ascension into Heaven. **(1 Corinthians 15:3-4)** Today, we have access to the Father through Him.

HOLY SPIRIT – We believe the Holy Spirit is fully God. **(Matthew 28:19-20)** He implements Christ’s work of redeeming the lost and He empowers the believer for godly living and service. **(Ephesians 1:13-14; Acts 1:8)**

MAN – We believe God created man, male and female, in the image of God. **(Genesis 1:26-27)** We further believe that man, as a result of the fall is a sinner by nature and choice and is therefore spiritually dead. **(Genesis 2:15-17)**

SALVATION – We believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. **(Ephesians 2:8-9)** We believe man needs to trust in Christ only, for the forgiveness of sins. He died in our place on the cross and rose from the dead for our justification. **(John 3:16)** This

results in a salvation received apart from human effort. We do believe salvation results in righteous living, good works, social concern and action. (**James 2:14-18**)

THE CHURCH – We believe the Church is the spiritual body, formed and gifted by Christ. (**Matthew 16:18** and **Ephesians 4:7-13**) We believe the true Church is composed of all persons who are trusting in Christ for salvation. (**1 Corinthians 12:13**) Our local assembly is made up of members who have been baptized by immersion upon a credible confession of faith and have associated themselves for worship, instruction, evangelism and service. We believe in two ordinances of the local Church. They are: 1) believer's baptism by immersion (**Matthew 28:19-20**) and 2) the Lord's Supper. (**1 Corinthians 11:23-29**) We also believe the local Church should be self-governing.

LAST THINGS – We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and lost, (**Matthew 12:36** and **Romans 14:10**) and the eternal existence of all believers in heaven and all unbelievers in hell. (**Matthew 25:46**) We believe someday Jesus Christ will return for His Church and will reign eternally. (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** and **Revelation 20:4**) This statement of belief does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe that the foregoing statement accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and therefore is binding upon all members. All literature used in the Church shall be in complete agreement with this statement of belief.

ARTICLE 5 – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – Responsibilities and Privileges

- a. We understand the membership responsibilities to include at least:
 - Respect for the leadership of the Church
 - Regular attendance at services and a godly lifestyle
 - Acceptance of responsibility for the work and the financial support of the Church
 - Agreement with the mission of the Church and its Constitution and By-Laws

- b. We understand the membership privileges to include at least:
 - 1. The privilege of publicly identifying with the Church
 - 2. The privilege of voting in congregational business meeting of the Church
 - 3. The privilege of holding an elected office (in accordance with the guidelines of these By-Laws and Constitution)

Section 2 – Kinds of Membership

a. Active Members – Those members who attend consistently enough to fulfill their responsibilities (as stated in Article Five, Section One). Exceptions are made for sick and shut-ins, as well as for full-time Christian workers ministering outside the geographical area of the Church.

b. Inactive Members – Inactive members are those who do not attend consistently enough to fulfill their responsibilities of membership (as stated above – Article Five, Section One). After six months of inactivity these members will be moved to an inactive membership list. They will lose voting privileges, eligibility for elected office and will also be removed from any office currently held.

1. Inactive members can once again become active members after one month of assuming all membership responsibilities and making written request to the Board of Elders for reinstatement.

Section 3 – The Process of Membership

Individuals joining this Church shall be recommended Interviewed by the Board of Elders after there has been a profession of faith in Christ, baptism by immersion, expression of agreement with the Church By-Laws, and successful completion of a church membership application. The Board of Elders will vote to accept each candidate into membership and report each member added at the annual congregational meeting. There are no age requirements for membership. Only members eighteen years old and older shall have voting privileges. There is no provision for proxy vote.

Section 4 – Voting Privileges

Active members shall have the right to vote on the following:

1. Annual budget
2. Election of nominated officers
3. Amendments to the By-Laws
4. Calling of the Senior, Senior Associates and Associate Pastors
5. Church indebtedness
6. Acquisition or liquidation of property
7. Merger or dissolution of the Church
8. Other items as determined necessary by the Board of Elders

Section 5 – Church Discipline

a. In matters of discipline we shall be guided by the Word of God as set forth in **Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:4-13; 6:1-8; and Galatians 6:1**. If any member of this Church falls into grievous sin or shall actively promote heretical doctrine and fails to repent after reasonable attempts at loving restoration, they will be removed from Church membership by majority vote of the Board of Elders. The individual shall be notified in writing of that action. Membership may be restored by evidence of genuine repentance and the majority vote of the Board of Elders. The congregation shall be notified of dismissals and restorations.

b. A detailed statement of the Church discipline policy and procedures is available through the Church office.
(See Dispute Resolution, Discipline and Restoration Policy)

Section 6 – Removal of Members

Names may be removed from the membership roll by the Board of Elders for the following reasons:

1. Personal, written request. Members may be removed from membership at their own request by informing the Board of Elders of their intention to withdraw and the reasons therefore.
1. Inactive members may be removed from membership in accordance with Section 2.b of this Article.
3. Active members joining another Church
4. If it appears to the Board of Elders that a member has requested removal merely to avoid Church discipline, that request will not be given effect until the disciplinary process has been completed (see **Matthew 18:12-20**, and the First Baptist Church Dispute Resolution, Discipline and Restoration Policy).
5. Prior to removing any member from the roll, the Board of Elders shall cause a letter to be sent to such individuals advising him/her of the Church's intended action. If the member objects to his/her removal from the membership roll, he/she shall so notify the Board of Elders within thirty (30) days of receiving such notice. Such individual shall have the right to appear before the Board of Elders (either in person or in writing) and set forth the reasons as to why he/she does not want to be removed from the membership roll. Thereafter, the Board of Elders, by majority vote, will decide whether or not the individual will remain a member of the Church. If the member does not advise the Board of Elders, within thirty (30) days after being notified of the Church's intention, then the member's name shall be removed from the roll.
6. Death

ARTICLE 6 – Officers

Officers are elected or appointed individuals who are legally responsible for the legal, fiscal and spiritual affairs of the Church. Elected Officers shall be members of the Church with an elected term starting October 1st (unless otherwise stated below). Officers are elected by the membership and must receive a majority vote to be installed. Terms of Elected Officers are defined in the following Sections of this Article. All Elected Offices are ultimately responsible to the Board of Elders except for the Board of Elders who are responsible to the congregational membership.

Section 1 – Elected Officers

a. The Board of Elders - Following the New Testament pattern, those who are chiefly responsible for the spiritual oversight and shepherding of the Church are the Elders. All staff, volunteers, and ministry teams are subject to the authority of the Board of Elders. As the spiritual leaders of the Church, they are to govern in such a way as to help the Church fulfill its scriptural purpose.

1. The Board of Elders as the governing body of the Church consists of the Senior Pastor and six or more men elected from the membership for a three year term, each of whom models the scriptural requirements of *1 Timothy 3* and *Titus 1*. A majority of voting members must be present at a board meeting to conduct official business. The Board of Elders is accountable to the membership, and ultimately to the Lord.
2. In the interest of doing things “decently and in order” the Board of Elders shall oversee and coordinate, with the Pastoral Staff, all areas of Church life including shepherding, equipping, outreach, staff, finances, property, policies and all ministries of the Church with the objective of accomplishing the mission of the Church. The Board of Elders shall work closely with the Senior Pastor to set the vision and pace of the Church.
3. The Board of Elders as the overseers of the entire ministry of the Church (*1 Peter 5:1-3*) are responsible to supervise, with the help of the Pastoral Staff, all matters concerning the conduct of public worship, providing adequate care, discipleship and the evangelistic witness of the Church. The Elders are responsible to oversee the establishment of strategies and objectives to fulfill the Church’s mission and to review progress towards these objectives at least annually. Individual Elders may be assigned responsibility over a particular area of ministry. As such they shall act as liaison to the Board of Elders in their supervisory capacity, always being responsible to the total Board. These areas may include, but are not limited to, the master plan, benevolence, nominations, staff, buildings, finances, prayer, missions and Church discipline. Members of the Board of Elders are to care for the spiritual and physical well-being of members, regularly pray for the sick and guard the Church body against harmful influences.
4. Members of the Board of Elders shall serve a term of three years. After two consecutive terms of service on the Board of Elders an Elder shall take at least a one year leave from the Board before he shall be eligible to serve for another term. The Board of Elders shall annually elect their own chairman, vice chairman, secretary and treasurer for the Benevolence Fund. For corporate purposes, the Chairman of the Board of Elders shall be the President of the Corporation, the Vice Chairman shall be the Vice President of the Corporation and the Secretary of the Board of Elders shall be the Secretary of the Corporation.
5. In the event of an extended absence of the Senior Pastor the Board of Elders may appoint another Pastoral Staff member as a voting member of the Board of Elders.
6. The Board of Elders may dismiss an Elder for violating any biblical requirement of an Elder or for the violation of any of biblical position held by the Church.
7. If a vacancy occurs on the Board of Elders due to the early resignation, illness, dismissal or death of an Elder prior to the completion of his term, the Board of Elders may appoint his replacement to fill the unexpired term. Service on an

unexpired term of two years or longer shall constitute a full term for purposes of the two-term limit.

8. The Board of Elders shall propose to the membership annually a Church budget that implements the objectives of the master plan. The Board of Elders shall review and approve the monthly financial statements. The Board of Elders has the authority to increase total budgeted expenses during the fiscal year by no more than five percent without congregational approval. They may do so as long as the Church income is projected to exceed the expenses of the increase.
9. The Board of Elders shall arrange for an annual independent audit of the Church financial records within ninety days of the end of the Church year. The audit shall include financial statements, banks accounts and investments as well as all other official financial records of the Church.
10. Loan agreements and other binding legal contracts that exceed \$100,000 shall be signed by the Chairman or the Vice Chairman of the Board of Elders or those so delegated by the Board of Elders but only with prior approval of the congregation.
11. An Elder shall not be personally liable for monetary damages for action taken, or any failure to take action, unless said individual has breached or failed to perform the duties of his office under section 5712 of the Non-Profit Corporation Acts (relating to standard of care and justifiable reliance), and the breach or failure to perform constitutes self-dealing, willful misconduct or recklessness. The provisions of this Article shall not apply to the responsibility or liability of an Elder pursuant to any criminal statute, or the liability of an Elder for the payment of taxes pursuant to Federal, State or local law.
12. For Corporate purposes, the Board of Elders shall be the Board of Directors of the Church.

b. Moderator and Vice Moderator

1. Moderator and Vice Moderator shall be elected by the membership and serve for a one year term with no re-election limitations. The Vice Moderator shall serve when the Moderator is absent. They shall be responsible to the Board of Elders.
2. The Moderator shall preside and keep order at all congregational business meetings. The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall serve as a guide, but shall not be controlling.
2. In the event the Moderator is served with a petition containing sufficient member signatures to constitute a quorum (50), the Moderator shall call a congregational business meeting even without the consent of the Board of Elders.

c. Church Clerk

1. The Clerk shall be elected by the membership to serve for one year with no re-election limitations.
The Clerk shall be responsible to the Moderator and shall fulfill such duties

as delegated by the Moderator. The Clerk shall keep an up-to-date register of Church membership. The Clerk also shall keep minutes for every congregational business meeting. The Clerk will surrender all records to the successor or to the Moderator within thirty days of leaving office.

d. Pastoral Staff

The Pastoral Staff and the Board of Elders shall be responsible for the ministry of the Church. The Pastoral Staff and the Board of Elders shall work closely together in seeking to assure that the vision of the Church is fulfilled. The Pastoral Staff shall meet the biblical qualifications of Christian Leadership.

Any members of the Pastoral Staff may resign from the staff of the Church by giving a two-week written notice. The Board of Elders on behalf of the Church may give any member of the Pastoral Staff a two-week notice in writing terminating the employment of the Pastoral Staff member. If deemed advisable and necessary, the Board of Elders may opt to pay the Pastoral Staff member in lieu of working the two weeks.

1. Senior Pastor

- i. The Senior Pastor of the Church shall be chosen by the congregation through the use of a written ballot for an indefinite period of time upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders, after prayerful consideration and investigation. He shall be a minister of the Gospel and shall be called to serve the Church by at least a three-quarter vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational business meeting.
- ii. The Senior Pastor will be presented with a written job description outlining the responsibilities, the details of the compensation package and other conditions of ministry for his acceptance.
- iii. He shall be an under shepherd of Jesus Christ and his main responsibilities shall be to preach the Word, pray for, equip and shepherd God's people. He shall work with the Board of Elders in leading and directing the Church. The staff shall report to the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor shall report to the Board of Elders. The Senior Pastor shall organize the staff in such a way that ministry and administrative management are effectively accomplished. The staff shall direct the day-to-day ministry of the Church and shall be responsible to build, develop and coordinate teams of people so that the ministry can be accomplished.
- iv. The Senior Pastor will serve as a member of the Board of Elders with full voting privileges. He shall be viewed as one among equals.
- v. When the Church is without a Senior Pastor, the Board of Elders shall be responsible to conduct a search for a candidate to fill the position. At least one Pastoral Staff member and at least one member of the congregation at large who meets the deacon qualifications shall be appointed by the Board of Elders to serve in

the search process. Once a candidate for Senior Pastor has been selected, the Board of Elders shall present the candidate to the membership for approval as set forth above.

2. Associate Pastors

- i. The Board of Elders shall determine titles, qualifications and duties as the need arises. They shall be ministers of the Gospel and shall be called to serve the Church by at least a three-fourths vote of the members present at a congregational business meeting.
- ii. They shall be under-shepherds of Jesus Christ.
(1 **Peter 5:1-4**) Their main responsibilities are to lead, equip and shepherd God's people. They shall work with the Board of Elders in leading and directing the Church.
- iii. Associate Pastors shall be responsible to the Senior Pastor. They also may supervise various members of the Church staff.

3. Assistant Pastors

Assistant Pastors are Pastoral Staff members that are appointed by the Board of Elders, who assist the pastoral work of the Senior and Associate Pastors in either part-time or full-time roles. Assistant Pastors can be promoted to Associate Pastor status by vote of the Board of Elders without the approval of the congregation.

ARTICLE 7 – CONFIDENTIALITY

- a. The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect. (see **Matthew 7:12**) It also discourages harmful gossip (**Proverbs 16:28; 26:20**), invites confession (see **Proverbs 11:13; 28:13; James 5:16**), and encourages people to seek needed counseling (see **Proverbs 20:19; Romans 15:14**). Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the Gospel and the work of this Church, all members are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our Pastors and Elders shall carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines.
- b. Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is biblically necessary to reveal certain information to others. In particular, the Pastors and Elders of this Church may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:
 1. When a Pastor or Elder is uncertain how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other Pastors or Elders in this Church or, if the person attends another Church, from the Pastors or Elders of that Church. (see **Proverbs. 11:14; 13:10; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; Matthew 18:15-17**)

2. When the person discloses that he/she or others are in imminent danger of serious harm or when there is a threat of a serious crime. (*see Proverbs. 24:11-12*)
 3. When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to institute disciplinary proceedings. (*see Matthew 18:15-20* and Article 5 Section 5 of the By-Laws, and the Statement on Church Discipline of FBCD)
 4. When required by applicable law.
 5. When seeking legal counsel as to the duties and obligations of Pastoral and Church staff.
- c. Scripture commands that confidential information is to be shared with others only when a problem cannot be resolved through the efforts of a small group of people within the Church. (*Matthew 18:15-17*) Therefore, except as stated above, a Pastor or Elder may not disclose confidential information to anyone outside this Church without the approval of the Board of Elders or the consent of the person who originally disclosed the information. The Board of Elders may approve such disclosure only when it finds that all internal efforts to resolve a problem have been exhausted (*see e.g., 1 Corinthians 6:1-8*) and the problem cannot be satisfactorily resolved without the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this Church (*see e.g., Romans. 13:1-5*). This limitation shall apply to but is not limited to the giving of testimony in a court of law and the reporting of abuse.
- d. The Pastors and Elders may, but need not, provide counselees with written notice of these confidentiality provisions, but these provisions shall be in effect regardless of whether such notice is given.
- e. The rules pertaining to confidentiality apply to all documents deemed confidential by the Board of Elders or any of the Pastors.

ARTICLE 8 – COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

Other committees, task forces, or ministry teams may be appointed for specific periods of time by the Moderator under the direction of the Board of Elders or by the Board of Elders to accomplish specifically defined tasks.

Upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Staff Deacons and Deaconesses may be appointed by the Board of Elders to serve in designated ministries for a specific period of time. They will be chosen according to passion and giftedness to serve the fluctuating needs of the ministry. They shall serve the Church as model New Testament individuals (Acts 6:1-7) fulfilling the requirements of 1 Timothy 3. Examples of such assignments may include tracking the master plan, insurance matter, building and grounds maintenance, etc.

ARTICLE 9 – MEETINGS AND SERVICES

Section 1 – Services

There shall be regular services on the Lord's Day, unless otherwise stated. Other services and meetings may be scheduled with the approval of the Board of Elders.

Section 2 – Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall normally be observed on the first Sunday of the month.

Section 3 – Congregational business meetings

- a. All congregational business meetings of the Church shall be announced in the Church bulletin and posted two weeks in advance. Fifty active members (age 18 and older) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any Church congregational business meetings.
- b. An annual Budget and Election meeting shall be held in September. Both the proposed budget and a listing of nominees for Church offices shall be posted at least four weeks prior to the meeting. The congregation shall have two weeks to submit additional names for nomination to the Board of Elders for consideration. The Elders will thereafter post the final list and no nominations will be received from the floor.

ARTICLE 10 – LICENSING, COMMISSIONING AND ORDINATION

Section 1 Licensing

Any male member of this Church who gives ample evidence of a holy life, ability to preach and a desire for ministry may be licensed to preach by the Board of Elders. This licensing must be in writing.

Section 2 – Commissioning

The Church may commission any member of this Church who gives ample evidence of a holy life, and a divine call to some area of Christian service or eldership.

Section 3 – Ordaining

Any male member who is approved by the Board of Elders as to his evidence of a holy life, a divine calling, and willingness to commit himself to a life-time of Gospel ministry may be ordained by the Church. After a minimum of a three-fourths vote of affirmation from the members present and voting at a congregational business meeting, the Board of Elders shall call an Ordination Council to examine the candidate's testimony, call to Gospel ministry and doctrinal beliefs. After successful completion of the examination, the Church shall proceed with a service of ordination.

ARTICLE 11 – AMENDMENTS

All amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws shall be voted upon by the membership. The amendment shall be announced in the Church bulletin and posted four weeks in advance. For approval, a proposed amendment requires a three-fourths majority vote of members present and voting at a duly called congregational business meeting.

ARTICLE 12 – MISCELLANEOUS

Section 1 – Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of First Baptist Church of Doylestown, all assets shall be contributed to another 501 ©© (3) tax-exempt organization(s) that is in agreement with the purpose and doctrine of this Church.

Section 2 – Ratification

These By-Laws shall take effect and be in force on and after October 1, 2005. All sections and articles of any previous constitution, all previous By-Laws, rules or regulations or any record of change or amendment to any of the above mentioned, as recorded in the Church Clerk's records, minutes, or any other records, are hereby repealed.

Section 3 – Interpretation

The Board of Elders shall endeavor to conform all their decisions, to the best of their understanding and knowledge, in such a way that will not contravene the Constitution and By-Laws. However, should a valid question of interpretation of the Constitution and By-Laws arise, or should the Constitution and By-Laws be silent on an issue, or should there be an ambiguity, then the Board of Elders shall render a decision on the issue at hand. The decision of the Board of Elders shall only be overridden by a 2/3rds vote of the congregation at a regularly or specially scheduled congregational business meeting.