

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF VERSAILLES, MISSOURI

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CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF VERSAILLES, MISSOURI

PREAMBLE

In the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. We declare and establish this constitution for the preservation of the security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner, consistent with the Convention. This constitution will preserve the liberties inherent in each member of this church and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other churches of the same faith.

CHURCH COVENANT

As we trust we have been brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the influence of his spirit to give ourselves up to him, so we do now solemnly covenant with each other that God enabling us we will walk together in brotherly love; that we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully warn, rebuke and admonish one another as the case shall require; that we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor omit the great duty of prayer, both for ourselves and for others; that we will participate in each other's joys, and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy, to bear each other's burdens and sorrows; that we will earnestly endeavor to bring up such as may be under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that we will seek divine aid to enable us to walk circumspectly and watchfully in the world; denying ungodliness and every worldly lust; that we will strive together for the support of a faithful evangelical ministry among us; that we will endeavor, by example and effort, to win souls to Christ; and through life amidst evil report and good report seek to live to the Glory of Him who hath called us out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light.

ARTICLE I – NAME

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Versailles, Missouri, the same being a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Missouri.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

Our purpose as a church is:

To acknowledge the Lord Jesus as head of the church and to exalt the standard of Christ-like living.

To interpret, preserve and propagate the principles of our faith with its origin and authority in the Holy Scriptures.

To assemble together regularly for reasons of worship, fellowship, preaching of the gospel, teaching of the Scriptures, training and spiritual development of the Christian, and the administration of the church ordinances, namely the Lord's Supper and Baptism.

To evangelize the non-Christian to receive by faith, Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, committing his life in discipleship to Jesus Christ.

To minister both spiritually and physically to the local and world communities in ways of benevolence, prayer, sympathy and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To cooperate with other churches of like belief and order in carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) by participating with financial support of the Cooperative Program through the Southern Baptist Convention.

To edify the Christian, encouraging his growth in knowledge and grace of our Lord through programs of study and training; affording to the Christian a channel for acts of service to Jesus Christ and total involvement in the ministry of His Church.

ARTICLE III – STATEMENT OF FAITH

WE BELIEVE that the the New Testament Church is an assembly of professing believers; who ban together, in whom Christ dwells, who are under the discipline of Scripture, charged to carry out the Great Commission, to administer the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper), and led by spiritually gifted individuals.

WE BELIEVE that the Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and is the basis for any statement of faith.

Our statement of Faith is codified and summarized in “The Baptist Faith and Message” adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in session at Orlando, Florida on June 4, 2000 (See Appendix A).

ARTICLE IV – RELATIONSHIPS

The government of this church is vested in the body of members who compose it—Jesus Christ being the head of the church. All members have equal voice and privilege in the government of this body. This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body or person(s), but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation among Baptist churches of like faith and order, when guided by God’s Word and His Spirit. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the association and state convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP

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

Section 1. QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP. Any person professing faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and giving evidence of having been born again of the Spirit and having adopted the views of faith and practice held by this church may be received for membership. Therefore, the membership of this church shall consist of persons who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and who have obeyed Him in the scriptural ordinance of Baptism (by immersion, after conversion).

Section 2. CANDIDACY. Any person may offer himself as a candidate for membership in this church. Candidates for membership may present themselves to the church at any regular church service. The requirements for membership into the First Baptist Church of Versailles are as follows:

- A. By profession of faith in Jesus as Lord and for baptism by immersion;
- B. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Southern Baptist Church;
- C. By statement of prior conversion experience and by a scriptural baptism by immersion when no letter is obtainable;
- D. By restoration to the roll after having been dropped.

All persons coming for church membership shall be counseled by the pastor and/or deacon committee appointed for such purpose, as to their salvation experience and their beliefs as to our Articles of Faith and Purpose, and before baptism, reception of letter, restoration, or inclusion by statement.

To be admitted into church membership, candidates shall be recommended by the pastor and/or deacon committee for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special called business meeting.

While a candidate is waiting to be recommended for membership, they will be considered a “conditional member.” Conditional members shall adhere to all the duties and rights of membership, except for voting rights.

Section 3. VOTING RIGHTS OF MEMBER. Every member, who is of good standing in the church, is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in business sessions, provided the member is present.

Section 4. FORFEITURE OF GOOD STANDING. A person who has not had fellowship in the activities of this church within a period of six (6) months shall forfeit his right to participate in any business activities of this church. Reinstatement of good standing

will occur when the member resumes fellowship with any of the activities of this church at least thirty (30) days prior to business meeting. Judgment concerning questions of good standing shall be determined by the deacons and the pastor. Conditions of health will be considered on an individual basis as possible exceptions.

Section 5. NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION. New church members shall be expected to participate in the church's new member orientation program, as it is provided by the church.

Section 6. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP. The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership in the following ways:

- A. Death.
- B. Dismissal to another Baptist Church by letter.
- C. Exclusion by action of the Church, as an act of church discipline, when recommended by the Deacons and approved by two-thirds majority vote of members present at any regular or special called business meeting.
- D. Erasure (1) by choice, when a member requests it, (2) or when they unite with another church to which this church does not grant letters.

Under no circumstances in any of the above instances, other than death, will a member be removed from the church roll without a vote of the church. A permanent record shall be maintained of all names removed from the church roll.

Section 7. DUTIES OF MEMBERS.

- A. **Evangelize.** As often as possible, share the gospel with unbelievers in our community.
- B. **Serve.** Seek to be in some service for the Lord in the work of the Church.
- C. **Attend.** Be faithful in attendance at services and events.
- D. **Live a Holy Life.** Walk uprightly before the world and keep our covenant obligations before God and each tother.
- E. **Give.** Regularly give for the financial support of the Lord's work.
- F. **Pray.** Pray for the church, its leaders, and other church members.
- G. **Love.** Maintain Christian love toward one another and kindly conduct toward all.

Section 8. CHURCH DISCIPLINE. It shall be the basic purpose of the First Baptist Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. Reconciliation, rather than punishment shall be the guideline that governs the application of the church discipline process.

- A. Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so endangering the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition and discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the

example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

- B. Church discipline can include admonition by the Pastor, deacons, or congregation, suspension from communion for a definite period, removal from office, revoking of voting rights, and removal from membership (see Matt. 18:15-17; 2 Thes. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; 1 Cor. 5:4-5).
- C. The purpose of such discipline should be:
 - 1. For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined;
 - 2. For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them;
 - 3. For the purity of the church as a whole;
 - 4. For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians; and
 - 5. Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character.

ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS

Section 1. WORSHIP MEETINGS.

- A. Worship services shall be held regularly on the Lord's Day; and at other times as scheduled by the church.
- B. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once each quarter.
- C. Occasional religious meetings, such as revival, may be held at the discretion of the church council.

Section 2. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS.

- A. Quarterly business meetings shall be held on the second Sunday in March, June, September, and December. Nominating committees will present their slates in June.
- B. If any business meeting cannot be held at the scheduled time—due to inclement weather, lack of quorum, etc—it may be postponed, but not more the two weeks.
- C. Secret ballot will be used in voting on the call of paid ministry personnel, nomination of deacons, and Pastor Search Committees. It shall also be used when requested and approved by a majority on any matter of business.

Section 3. SPECIAL CALLED BUSINESS MEETINGS.

- A. Special business meetings shall be announced a minimum of three (3) times at regularly scheduled church services, two of which shall be Sunday morning services. The purpose of this meeting shall be clearly stated and no other business shall be discussed. Special business meetings may be called for the following reasons:
 - 1. When requested by the pastor, deacons, or church council.

2. When called by the church secretary/clerk upon written applications of ten (10) members representing ten (10) families.
3. When there are motions pertaining to the purchase of church property with a cost over \$5,000.00.
4. When voting for the purpose of Pastoral or Ministerial call. This shall be voted on at the conclusion of the Sunday morning worship service. The church shall vote on only one candidate at a time for Pastor. Vote shall be by secret ballot with a minimum of a three-fourths (3/4) affirmation being necessary to call the pastor. Moving expenses shall be paid by the church.

Section 4. QUORUM.

Ten (10) members representing at least ten (10) different families shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 5. PARLIAMENTARY RULES.

Roberts Rules of Order shall be followed at all business meetings of the church voting members, council, departments, committees, or groups.

ARTICLE VII – CHURCH OFFICERS

All church officers must be members of the church in good standing. The officers of this church shall be as follows:

Section 1. SENIOR PASTOR

- A. A Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place at a special business meeting called for that purpose. The pastor shall serve until the relationship is mutually terminated and notice is mutually agreed upon by the church.
 - (1) The pastor shall be the overseer of the church. His duties shall be to:
 - a. Preach the Gospel.
 - b. Lead and equip the congregation, the deacons, the committees and coordinating groups, ministries, and church staff to perform their tasks of engaging in worship, witness, education, and ministry.
 - c. Proclaim the Gospel to believers and unbelievers.
 - d. Care for the church's members and other persons of the community.
 - e. Encourage family worship and Bible study.
 - f. Oversee the administration of the church ordinances.
 - g. Promote missions and afford opportunity for contributions.

- (2) Recognition of the direction of the Holy Spirit by both pastor and people constitutes a compatible placement of the pastor as God's chosen leader of the congregation. The senior pastor shall be chosen according to instructions in these bylaws. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees (except the council of which he has voting rights and responsibilities) of the church and shall be notified in advance of all meetings regardless of whether or not he is able to attend.
- (3) The senior pastor shall assume full responsibility for the direction of leadership and shall work closely with the church council in sharing his goals and objectives, in seeking the help of the council to achieve those goals, and regarding the work of the church.
- (4) The senior pastor shall call a special meeting of the council or any department, board, or committee for emergency action as he deems necessary by making a verbal request for such a meeting to the chair of the designated group.

B. Retention or Dismissal of Senior Pastor:

- (1) If a minimum of twenty-five (25) voting members object to the continued leadership of the senior pastor they may present their objections in writing over their signatures to the church council where the objections shall be carefully studied by the church council. When such a objection occurs, the church council shall seek mediation and consultation from the Lamine Baptist Association and/or the Missouri Baptist Convention to work toward a resolution to the objections presented. In this event, a member/leader of either or both of these organizations shall be invited by the church council to be present at a meeting of the council and those requesting the meeting. If no solution to the objections are reached, the council shall bring the matter to the church, and shall be responsible to call and conduct the meeting in keeping with these bylaws. The decision of the church shall be final.
- (2) The decision to remove the senior pastor from office shall require a majority vote of the voting members present and voting. If the vote is for removal, a period of sixty (60) days including pay and benefits shall be allowed for termination of the pastorate. If there has been an obvious defection of character resulting in the loss of recognized ministerial status, the removal shall be immediate, and the church shall have no further financial obligation. The church council shall have the power to extend the sixty-day (60) period of the pastorate, and/or the pastoral privileges and pay any benefits if they deem it advisable.

- (3) Should the senior pastor feel inclined to terminate his leadership he shall present his resignation to the council, which in turn shall arrange with him to have it presented to the church in a proper manner. The resignation should provide for a minimum of thirty (30) days before vacating the pastorate unless other arrangements are worked out to the satisfaction of both the church council and the pastor.

- (4) Whenever a vacancy occurs, a Pulpit Committee shall be organized by the Personnel Committee. The Pulpit Committee shall be composed of five members representing both genders. One member shall come from the Deacons, Personnel Committee, Finance Committee, and two members at large. They shall be voted on by the church. A pastor shall be elected at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one-week notice has been given.

Section 2. PASTORAL AND SENIOR LEVEL STAFF.

- A. Pastoral and senior level personnel may be selected by the senior pastor with ratification by the church.
- B. Such personnel may include:
 1. Associate pastors to serve in such areas of the church program as the senior pastor and council deem advisable.
 2. Business Manager
 3. Other program directors
 4. Administrators
- C. Associate pastors and all senior level staff members are ultimately responsible to the senior pastor.
- D. The senior pastor is responsible for the hiring and placement of staff within the limits of existing budget.
- E. Associate pastors and other senior staff members are ex-officio members of the council and ex-officio members of committees of their responsibility.
- F. Termination of personnel shall be in accordance with the established personnel policy as approved by the council.

Section 3. DEACONS.

One deacon shall be elected for each fifty (50) active members of the church including homebound members and those in residential care. These deacons will be ordained for life, but their tenure of service will be at the pleasure of the church. They shall be elected by the church. The option to implement three (3) year terms on a rotation system, whereby one-third (1/3) of the terms expire each year is left to the discretion of the deacons.

Deacons shall be nominated by the church by secret ballot and be screened by a Deacon Screening Committee composed of three (3) deacons and the pastor. This

Committee shall present the approved candidates for election by the church. If the church selects anyone who has not been previously ordained, an ordination service is to be held for him.

- A. A deacon shall meet the Biblical qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3: 8-13.
- B. He must have been a member in good standing of the First Baptist Church, Versailles, Missouri, for the last full year.
- C. An active deacon must attend at least three (3) church activities each month.
- D. Deacons shall meet monthly.
- E. Deacons shall organize themselves as needed to carry out their tasks.
- F. Deacons may be deemed inactive only by a vote of the church in a regular business session.

Deacons shall be responsible to organize the following:

Lord's Supper. Maintain an adequate inventory of supplies. See that all equipment is gathered, cleaned, and stored after each observance of the Lord's Supper.

Baptisms. Assist persons being baptized by preparing for and cleaning up after Baptismal Services.

Ushers. Organize and maintain the list of ushers for church services. Train ushers as necessary.

Greeters. Organize and maintain the list of greeters for church services. Train greeters as necessary.

Section 4. TRUSTEES.

The Trustees shall be composed of three (3) members who represent both genders.

The First Baptist Church of Versailles, Missouri, Incorporated shall hold in trust the property of the church. The trustees shall serve as the corporate Board of Directors, the chairman of the trustees shall serve as the president of the corporation, and the church clerk shall serve as the corporate secretary. The president, secretary, and the board of directors shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action. It shall be the function of said president, secretary, and-board of directors to pass such resolutions and affix their signatures to such legal documents as they may be directed to carry out the will of the church.

The trustees shall assist the church in all matters relating to maintenance, protection, and use of the church property—including supervising the maintenance and repair of all buildings, vehicles, and equipment. Trustees shall make recommendations to the church for improvements in any of these areas.

The trustees shall recommend to the Personnel Committee the employment, training, and supervision of maintenance personnel. The trustees shall establish maintenance responsibility between maintenance personnel and establish regular and preventative maintenance schedules. This would include—but is not limited to—custodial cleaning, lawn care, snow removal, and hiring outside companies for maintenance and repairs.

The trustees shall recommend policies for use of the church facilities and equipment and prepare all budget requests for maintenance of church property; including all matters relating to insurance.

The Stewardship and Finance Committee is authorized to approve emergency expenses presented by the Trustees as they arise.

Section 5. CHURCH STAFF.

This church shall call or employ such staff members, as the church shall need. A job description shall be written by the Personnel Committee when the need for a staff member is determined. Vocational staff members other than the Pastor shall be recommended to the church by the Personnel Committee and employed by church action. At least two weeks notice at the time of resignation should be given.

The secretaries and custodians shall likewise be recommended to the church by the Personnel Committee and employed by church action. The church secretary and custodians shall not be considered “officers” of the church.

Section 6. CHURCH CLERK.

The Clerk shall be elected annually by the church from its membership after the Nominating Committee has submitted its nomination for the clerk.

The Clerk shall attend or be represented at all church business meetings, to keep accurate record of all business meetings and prepare the annual church profile.

Additionally, the clerk will keep a register of the names of members, with the dates of admission, dismissal, transfer, or death, together with a record of all baptisms. This will include issuing letters of transfer or dismissal when voted on by the church.

Section 7. CHURCH TREASURER.

The church shall elect annually a Church Treasurer. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer, with the assistance of the Financial Secretary, to receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of vouchers approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money, or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.

It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to render to the church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements for the proceeding

month. The treasurer's report shall be audited annually by an Auditing Committee or public accountant.

The Treasurer shall also serve as Chairman of the Stewardship-Finance Committee.

Upon rendering the annual account at the end of each fiscal year, and its acceptance and approval by the church, the records shall be delivered by the Treasurer to the Church Clerk, who shall keep and preserve the account as a part of the permanent records of the church.

All books, records, and accounts kept by the treasurer shall be considered the property of the church and shall be opened for inspection at all times by any member of the church by appointment with the church treasurer. The treasurer shall upon election of his/her successor promptly deliver to the chairman of the trustees all books, records, and accounts pertaining to his/her work.

Section 8. CHURCH MODERATOR.

The Pastor shall be the moderator of the church. In the absence of the moderator, the Chairman of the Deacons shall preside; or in the absence of both, the Vice Chairman of the Deacons; or, in the absence of all of all afore mentioned, the Clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator shall be elected.

ARTICLE VIII – COMMITTEES AND COORDINATION GROUPS

Section 1. GENERAL.

All church committee members shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church unless otherwise indicated in the description below. Committee members shall be elected annually. All committee members shall be a faithful and active members of the church. Vacancies on any committee shall be filled by the Nominating Committee.

Section 2. CHURCH COUNCIL.

The primary functions of the Council shall be to recommend to the congregation (1) suggested objectives and church goals; (2) to review and coordinate ministry plans—making sure that appropriate calendar time and resources are prioritized; (3) assist the pastor in reaching the goals and objectives of the church; and (4) plan church wide events.

The Council, unless otherwise determined by vote of the church, shall have as regular members the Senior Pastor, any Associate Ministers, the chairperson of the trustees, the chairman of the deacons, the treasurer, and the chairpersons of each committee.

All matters agreed upon by the Council, calling for action not already authorized, shall be referred to the church for approval.

Section 3. NOMINATING COMMITTEE.

The Nominating Committee may consist of three (3) or more members of the church who have been recommended by the church council and elected by the church.

The Nominating Committee shall nominate all committee members, church officers, Sunday school workers, and organization workers, The Nominating Committee to the church for election.

Section 4. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE.

The Personnel Committee may be composed of four (4) members and shall work with the Pastor in the employment and supervision of all persons employed by the church. The Personnel Committee shall establish policies concerning areas connected to the benefits and privileges of staff members. All church-related vocational leaders must be called by the church.

Section 5. STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE COMMITTEE.

The Stewardship and Finance Committee (SAFC) may be composed of four (4) members plus the elected Church Treasurer who shall serve as chairman. In cooperation with the various committees and departments, the SAFC shall recommend to the church a budget—including the salaries of all employed personnel.

It shall be the responsibility of the SAFC to organize a system for counting offering and other gifts, making sure that the correct amount is reported, and ensure the money is deposited in the bank according to the SAFC policies.

When memorial funds are received, the SAFC shall supervise the distribution of those monies as indicated by the donor. This committee shall review and recommend to the church for approval items to be purchased with these funds.

Section 6. HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE.

The Hospitality Committee may consist of six (6) members and be organized into three subcommittees:

- (1) Kitchen Committee: Formulating and recommending to the church policies for the kitchen and communicating these policies to church members; looking after the kitchen so that it can be used effectively for church dinners; maintain an adequate supply of necessary supplies; and see that adequate provisions are made for preparation and clean-up of all church sponsored dinners.
- (2) Decorating Committee: Securing, arranging, and disposing of floral arrangements for church services; and, shall work in conjunction with the Trustees in the general decorating of all facilities of the church. This includes seasonal decorations to celebrate special holidays.
- (3) Shower Committee: Scheduling, planning, and holding bridal and baby showers for church members.

Section 7. WORSHIP COMMITTEE.

The Worship Committee may be composed of the Minister of Music (or volunteer worship leader in the absence of a Minister of Music), accompanists, visual projectionists, and audio technicians.

This committee shall have general charge of all matters connected to the worship service, working in close cooperation with the pastor to maintain a high quality of worship for all church services. They may recruit additional members to assist them with running audio, projecting visuals, and special singers and musicians.

Section 8. MISSIONS COMMITTEE.

The Missions Committee may consist of two members whose responsibility is to plan opportunities to fulfill the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20), by sharing Jesus through friendship, service, and love. Part of this responsibility includes the process of making disciples after someone is saved.

They shall work closely with the pastor to plan missions trips (both near and far, Acts 1:8), evangelistic outreach events, and revivals.

Section 9. CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE.

The Children's Committee may consist of the Minister of Children (or volunteer children's leader in the absence of a Minister of Children), and other members interested in the ministry to children.

Their duties will be to coordinate all the activities of the children and make recommendations to the church concerning what might benefit the growth and effectiveness of the children's ministry.

Section 10. YOUTH COMMITTEE.

The Youth Committee may consist of the Minister of Youth (or volunteer youth leader in the absence of a Minister of Youth), and other members interested in the ministry to youth.

Their duties will be to coordinate all the activities of the youth and make recommendations to the church concerning what might benefit the growth and effectiveness of the youth ministry.

ARTICLE IX – MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1. GENERAL.

All organizations of the church shall be under church control, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church.

Section 2. SUNDAY SCHOOL.

There shall be a Sunday School, divided into departments and classes for all ages and conducted under the direction of the Sunday School director for the study of God's Word. The Sunday School director, who shall be elected by the church, will work with the Nominating Committee to recruit Sunday School teachers who will be voted on by the church.

The tasks of the Sunday School shall be to teach the Bible, reach persons for Christ and church membership, perform the care of the church within its constituency, and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

Section 3. AWANA.

An AWANA program shall be organized for the discipleship of the children of the church, as well as outreach to the children of the community. The commander, who shall be elected by the church, shall be responsible for the organization of the program volunteers. The AWANA Commander will work with the Nominating Committee to recruit program volunteers who will be voted on by the church.

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended, altered, or changed by a three-fourths (3/4) affirming vote of the church voting members present at a regular or special meeting of the voting members of the church. Motions for amendments, alterations, or changes can be made by any active church member. A copy of the proposed amendments, alterations, or changes and notice that action will be taken thereon shall be provided the congregation as a whole at least one week prior to such regular or special meetings.

ARTICLE XI – FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year for the church shall begin on January 1, and end December 31.

Appendix A

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000

I. 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; 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.

II. 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.

A. 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.

B. 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.

C. 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 Saviour, 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.

III. 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.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, 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.

A. 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 Saviour.

B. 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.

C. 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.

D. 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.

V. 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.

VI. 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.

VII. 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 Saviour, 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.

VIII. 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.

IX. 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.

X. 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.

XI. 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; 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.

XII. 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.

XIII. 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.

XIV. 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.

XV. 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.

XVI. 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.

XVII. 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.

XVIII. 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.