

First Baptist Church  
Whitewright, Texas

202 West Walnut Street  
Whitewright, Texas 75491  
[www.fbcwhitewright.com](http://www.fbcwhitewright.com)

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# Constitution and Bylaws

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The Theology, Strategy and Structure of Ministry at

**First Baptist  
Whitewright**

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## Preamble

### *Declaration:*

United by the Holy Spirit through our common redemption through Jesus Christ, the members of this local church recognize Jesus Christ as Lord and recognize The Holy Bible as the inspired Revelation of His Gospel, and agree to accept it as our rule of faith and practice. Declaring that we are a resource for people to meet Jesus and become members of his family, of encouragement for their Christ-like maturity, of equipping them to magnify God and to accomplish their personal ministry in the church and life mission in the world, we hereby establish and adopt this document as our Constitution and Bylaws.

The Constitution section describes a picture of the church, its appearance, including its vision, mission, core values, statement of faith, affiliations and leadership methodology. The Bylaws section describes an operational guide for the church, its governance, including its structure, operating principles, membership, leadership, manner of acting, and processes and procedures by which the church ensures the best possible environment in which to accomplish its God-given mission and biblical mandate.

The liberties of each church member and principles of our faith will be preserved. We will be governed in an orderly manner. Our freedom of action in relation to other churches will be recognized. The Constitution and Bylaws become effective as of the date of adoption by this church body.

### *Scriptural Basis:*

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

**Acts 2:41-47** So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

**Ephesians 1:22-23** And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

**1 Peter 3:8-9** To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

**1 Corinthians 12:24b-27** But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

**Ephesians 3:8-12** To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose, which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

**Ephesians 5:24-27** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; 26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

## Section

## 1

# Constitution

**Ephesians 2:19-22** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

## Article I. Name and Principal Office

The name of the corporation is First Baptist Church of Whitewright. This corporate organism will be further referred to in this document as "First Baptist Whitewright," "FBWW," OR "the church". The church maintains its principal office at 204 West Walnut Street, Whitewright, Texas 75491.

## Article II. Mission & Vision

We exist to glorify God by knowing, applying and proclaiming the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is demonstrated as love for God and love for others.

To the glory of Christ we aspire to become a unified family of believers connecting through small groups, gathering in one spirit for a weekly reunion of worship, and affecting the world around us through relevant relational ministries.

We envision every member of the family CONNECTING:

- With God through discipleship
- With each other through fellowship
- With the world in need of Christ through ministry

## Article III. Values

The following are values that will define our journey as members of FBWW:

- ❖ **Biblical Preaching & Teaching** which is Christ-centered and honors the Word of God as the infallible message of God to man. We expect the Word to be preached and taught with confidence, authority, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The paradigm for our message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is central to all scripture.

- ❖ **Authentic Fellowship** which creates an environment that is warm and welcoming to all who desire to become part of it. We see our church as a family that desires that all who participate will experience the love of God and want to be part of the family.
- ❖ **Dynamic Worship** which is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and honors the mandates and model of worship in God's Word. We also desire a worship environment that is relevant to the context of our church family and is inclusive of all of its participants.
- ❖ **Relational Evangelism** which emphasizes Jesus Christ as our only way of salvation and only hope in an otherwise hopeless world. We desire to equip every member of our family to be a witness of Christ and to support that cause worldwide through missions.
- ❖ **Intentional Discipleship** which encourages and equips every member of our family to continue growing spiritually from the moment of salvation to the last breath taken this side of heaven. We desire to equip each other to live life God's way!
- ❖ **Intercessory Prayer** which demonstrates expectant faith in a God that is unlimited in power. We desire that our ministry of prayer continually change us to be more like our God and that it affect others for His glory and their good.
- ❖ **Merciful Ministries** which carry the love of Jesus Christ to people who have specific needs and which demonstrate His grace accordingly. We desire that every member of our family be involved in ministry as God has called and gifted them.

## Article IV. Statement of Faith

We recognize that the unity of the church universal is based solely on the person and work of Jesus and not on absolute agreement of other doctrines outside the atoning work of Jesus.

Not all members will be in complete agreement to every detail of this statement, but it represents a general consensus of our collective doctrinal position:

### I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. 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 2:16; 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; 15:11; 20:1; 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 6:9; 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's penalty. 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 18:1; Psalms 2:7; 110:1; 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 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; 139:7; 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 sin nature, bringing them 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. Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female with no aberrations. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen 1:26-27.)

Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

**We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4.)**

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10.)

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of FBCWW as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the people of the church, and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by FBCWW in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality both personally and ministerially, and **that church facilities be used strictly for those upholding these biblical beliefs and doctrines.** (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22.)

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and Repent of their sin proving their repentance by their deeds, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11.)

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) 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 FBCWW.

## V. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who receive 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.

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 unto committing the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

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

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; 4:3; 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; 3:1; 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.*

## VI. 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 who receive Christ are sanctified by His Spirit, and 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 31:31; 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.*

## **VII. The Church**

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of the born again, associated by faith and fellowship in 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. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its leadership consists of the Elders and Deacons. Elders are responsible for the spiritual and administrative guidance of the body. They are accountable to one another and the congregation. Deacons fulfill the role of servant.

While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the roles of elder and deacon are 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.*

### **VIII. 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 faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby the Redeemed in Christ, 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.*

### **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; 5:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.*

## Article V. Polity

**Colossians 1:15-18** And He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities -- all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church and the true source of all the church is and does. His glory is to be the object of every act, function and motive of the body both individually and corporately. It is before Him that all other leadership must bow. He communicates his will for the church through his Word, the Bible, as well as through the leadership of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the heart of each believer. He calls out leaders for the church to whom He has given specific spiritual gifts. These leaders are given the ultimate responsibility for the oversight of the church body and the shepherding of its members. The government of this church is vested in its elders. (Refer to Constitution Article VI. Plurality of Leadership)

All internal groups formed and empowered by the church shall exist to further the purpose of the church. These groups shall be accountable to the elders. The elders shall be accountable to God and to the church.

## Article VI. Plurality of Leadership

**Acts 14:23** And when they [Paul and Barnabas] had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**Acts 20:28** Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

**Titus 1:5** The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

The New Testament clearly teaches that the church is to be led by a plurality of elders. Their assignment falls into four categories: First, they are given the responsibility, accountability and authority to skillfully and lovingly **lead** the flock. Next, they are to **feed** the flock, offering accurate and insightful teaching of the

Scripture. Third, they are to **care** for the flock. This care is shown in the love, concern, prayers, ministry, and adept management of church resources. Finally, they are to oversee **protect** the flock from harmful influences and beliefs.

These leaders are known by three titles, each of which reveals a separate aspect of their function. All three titles are used in

**1 Peter 5:1-2** To the **elders** among you, I appeal as a fellow **elder**, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be **shepherds** of, (pastor), God's flock that is under your care, serving as **overseers** -- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

They are first called "**elders**". An elder (Greek "presbuteros") is a godly leader whose wisdom and maturity are respected by God's people. Next, these are people who give oversight. That is, they are "**overseers**" (Greek "episkapos"). An overseer is a person who is a good manager of resources and guardian of people. Finally, these leaders are called "**shepherds**", which is also translated as "pastors" (Greek "poimain"). This word refers to the role of caring for and leading the flock.

Within the New Testament model of church organization, authority for leadership is not granted to just one individual pastor, nor is it given as democratic rule by the congregation. Instead, the Bible states that authority for leadership is conducted by a plurality of leaders who are accountable to God. The Scripture further teaches that when the church supports the elders, both the church body and individual Christian will flourish. (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Acts 20:28) These elders do not form a separated "clergy class" of Christians. Instead, the elders, some of whom fill church vocational roles or other non-vocational roles, are like family with the people, always seeking God's best for the members of the church. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 2 Corinthians 8:19).

## **Article VII. Ordinances**

Jesus instructed his disciples to remember his death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols called "ordinances" as reminders of his death. The two ordinances are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of these acts of obedience to Jesus is a means of obtaining salvation. (Refer to Constitution Article VIII. Affiliations)

## **Article VIII. Affiliations**

We are an autonomous, independent local church. We are not subject to the control of any ecclesiastical or denominational body. For example, when a vacancy in the lead pastor position occurs, the church, guided by the Holy Spirit's direction and led by the elders, determines who will fill that position.

We have chosen to affiliate with numerous organizations in ministering and spreading the gospel locally, nationally and worldwide including but not limited to the Grayson Baptist Association, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBC), and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), as an example. However, we may also affiliate or co-operate with other entities of like faith and practice for ministry and missions purposes, as God would lead. This may be for short, long, or seasonal duration or for the duration of a particular project and would in no way bind us to any other belief systems or practices that fall outside our doctrinal statements.

[Click here](#) to read the SBC Baptist Faith and Message.

## **Article IX. Church Facility Use Policy**

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, we make our 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.

However, facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the church's constitution and bylaws. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed inconsistent with the church's faith or moral teachings. The pastor, or Elders are the final decision-maker concerning use of church facilities.

This restricted facility use policy is necessary for two important reasons. First, the church may not in good conscience materially cooperate in activities or beliefs that are contrary to its faith. Allowing its facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity, and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice. (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:22.)

Second, it is very important that the church present a consistent message to the community, and that the church staff and members conscientiously maintain that message as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Allowing facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the church's faith\beliefs expresses in the constitution or Bylaws would have a severe, negative impact on the message that the church strives to promote. It could also cause confusion and scandal

to church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the church agrees with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using its facilities.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may church facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church's faith or beliefs. This policy applies to all church facilities, regardless of whether the facilities are connected to the church's sanctuary, because the church sees all of its property as holy and set apart to worship God. (Col 3:17.)

### **Approved Users and Priority of Use**

The pastor or Elders must approve all uses of church facilities. Generally, priority shall be given to church members, their immediate families, and organized groups that are part of the ministry, organization, or sponsored activities of the church. Church facilities and equipment may only be used by non-members or outside groups provided they meet the following stipulations:

1. Groups or persons requesting facility use must affirm that their beliefs and practices and planned uses of the facilities are consistent with the church's faith and practice.
2. The group or person seeking facility use must submit a signed "Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form.
3. The group or person seeking facility use must be willing to take responsibility for the facilities and equipment used and must agree to abide by the church's rules of conduct for facility use, as stated within the reservation agreement and as described in any additional instructions by church staff.

## **Article X. Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution shall be made in the same manner as amendments to the following Bylaws. (Refer to Bylaws Article XII. Amendments to Bylaws)

## Section

## 2

# Bylaws

**1 Corinthians 14:33** ... for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. **40** ... let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

## Article I. UNITING WITH THE CHURCH BODY (Becoming a Member)

### 1.01 General

The people of this local church recognize that, collectively, we are more than an organization, even more than an evangelistic or teaching organization. We are a community of faith in Jesus Christ. We value every individual who enters our scope of influence, and thus all who participate in worship, fellowship, and discipleship are welcomed with open arms. However, we believe God calls his people to unite their lives with a local church family in order for that person to fulfill the will of God for his\her life, and to help the church body to be all that it can be, and all that God calls it to do! And so, at the bottom line of uniting with a church is commitment!

Commitment is a very biblical concept for the following reasons:

**Biblical:** Christ is committed to the church. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul wrote, "... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her..." Also, in the New Testament, believers clearly identified themselves with a specific local body and were challenged to become devoted, committed participants.

**Cultural:** We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything... a job, a marriage, our country. The attitude has produced the phenomenon of "church shoppers and hoppers", which a church cannot be built upon. The church is not to reflect the culture, but to transcend it and to transform it. This starts with commitment!

**Practical:** Uniting our lives with a church body also helps to know who can be counted on to help build the body of Christ. Every team has a roster. Every school has an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration all for the purpose of knowing who can be counted on

**Personal:** Uniting with a church body also produces spiritual growth. Paul makes clear that we can never be all that God has created us to be, nor do

all that God calls us to do outside of a church family. The bible bottom-lines this as “one-anothering.” We all have a need to be loved\ served. We all have a need to love and serve others. As we assemble together to do these things, we grow into Christ-likeness, as God desires.

## **1.02 Process - How do I unite with FBC Whitewright?**

To unite with this church family, a person must:

Talk with an Elder and provide testimony of:

1. Surrendering to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, (as the leader of one’s life and the forgiver of one’s sins)
  
2. All Christians will be encouraged to be scripturally baptized if they have never taken this step, not as an act of salvation, but as an act of obedience.

## **1.03 Responsibilities and Privileges**

As part of the FBCWW family, we have the responsibility and privilege to join God in the great work He is doing through our body. This means that it is our responsibility and privilege to be active in serving Him through the church. One way we do this is by discovering our spiritual gifts and finding a place of service that best puts those gifts to use for His kingdom.

Those (18) and older have the responsibility and privilege of participating in the decision-making process if the body convenes for a body wide vote. If the process requires a paper ballot, each person must be physically present to submit it. In no case will a paper ballot be accepted by proxy or in absentia.

## **1.04 Leaving the Church Family**

FBCWW Keeps a roster of those in our church family, recognizing also that God will move people in and out of it over time. We expect families who move from this body to simply inform an elder of this move.

## **1.05 Church Discipline**

FBCWW recognizes God’s clear commands to protect His body and preserve the unity of the Spirit in order for His will to be done in the world through His church. For this reason, the elders will take the biblical path of Matthew 18:15-18, and Matthew 5:23-24, or 1 Timothy 5:20, when body life is threatened or disrupted by personal sins on the part of an attendee or one of the FBCWW family.

## Article II. CHURCH MEETINGS

### 2.01 General

In addition to expected periodic meetings of the church for worship, instruction, planning, prayer, encouragement and other biblically motivated purposes, the membership of FBWW will have ADDITIONAL MEETINGS to the body from the elders or vice versa, or when significant decisions need to be made. The meeting place and time will be communicated in advance to allow for body participation.

The church holds formal vote on a limited number of items. Ballots will be used for:

- The calling of the lead pastor\Elder
- Indebtedness associated with the purchase of real estate
- Cumulative indebtedness for all other aspects of church business that exceeds 20 percent of the annual church budget
- The construction of buildings
- The disposition of all or substantially all of the church’s assets
- The merger or dissolution of the church
- Any other actions the elders deem as major and extraordinary

To increase the probability these ballots will be used to record the will of God, they will be constructed by support staff according to the following model. These ballots will be collected from those formally having united with this body that are in attendance on that day. An eighty (80) percent positive count is required to accept each decision.

<p>After receiving information and communicating with God,</p> <p>___ I sense that God is definitely leading us to accept and support the proposed_____.</p> <p>___ I sense that God definitely is not leading us to accept and support the proposed _____.</p>
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## **Article III. Church Leadership**

### **3.01 Elders**

#### **(a) Purpose**

The elders serve as the “spiritual overseers” of the body. The biblical elder has the responsibility for the spiritual and moral care of the flock of God whom he shepherds. When biblical elders are established, the body functions in victory and freedom. Church order is maintained because a centralized authority is established and recognized by the body resulting in the following:

- Unified vision
- Accountable leadership
- Shared responsibility for the equipping of the saints as member-ministers
- Restorative church discipline

Elders are called, appointed of God because of their spiritual qualifications and are servants who consistently seek direction for the body from the Lord through prayer and diligent study of the Bible while maintaining the highest standards of integrity and maturity before God and man. The elders are to complement the lead pastor\elder as they carry out their responsibilities.

#### **(b) Responsibilities**

The elders shall be the spiritual leaders of the congregation and responsible for establishing policies, teams and ministries to support the work of the church in the following areas without limitation: (a) spiritual matters, (b) personnel matters, (c) business and financial matters, (d) use and maintenance of church property and facilities, and (e) all ministries whether standing or arising out of a recognized need. Because the elders will be assigned responsibilities based on God’s gifting to each elder, responsibilities could change as the lead pastor or elders change.

The elders shall fulfill the following responsibilities:

- Shepherd the flock by providing spiritual leadership and accountability in accordance with Scripture (1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:9; 1 Peter 5:1-2)
- Pray together, listening to God for wisdom and power in caring for the body
- Lead through example
- Study the Bible, teach and exhort
- Refute those who contradict the Truth and administer church discipline
- Establish objectives and goals to accomplish the mission of the church

- Evaluate achievements in accordance with church objectives and goals
- Give guidance to church leadership staff
- Oversee the business affairs of the church
- Serve as moderators of the church when in sessions of business or family conference sessions
- Establish guidelines and leave the day-to-day coordination of the ministry to the church staff
- Model the active and ongoing use of spiritual gifts within the body.
- Select members of the three ministry teams: Financial Resources, Human Resources, and Facilities Management
- Appoint Trustees to act as legal representatives in all transactions of the church involving real property transactions as approved by the body
- Review and approve the financial audit
- Where appropriate, responsibilities will be delegated to the deacons or other ministry teams within the church body
- Meet or assign the personnel requirements of the church, including but not limited to:
  - Oversight of all staff activities
  - Annual evaluation of the lead pastor to nurture, encourage, counsel, advise
  - Reviewing the evaluations of ministerial staff and support staff
  - Employing and releasing all staff enforcing policies as outlined in Personnel Policies and Procedures Document

### **(c) Qualifications**

**1 Tim 3:2-7** An overseer, then must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and snare of the devil.

**Titus 1:5-9** ... appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the

teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Elders at FBWW must be adult males who have been active participants in the church for a minimum of one year prior to consideration and who are

Above Reproach	Elders must be blameless, presenting no patterns of scriptural disobedience or grounds for accusation.
Husband of One Wife	An elder, must be a devoted spouse.
Temperate	Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.
Prudent	Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
Respectable	Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and good behavior.
Hospitable	Elders must be unselfish with their personal resources. They must be willing to share blessings with others.
Able to Teach	Elders must be able to communicate the truth of God and exhort sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way. (2 Timothy 4:2; 2:24)
Not Addicted to Wine	Elders must be free from addictions and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
Not Pugnacious	Elders must be gentle and characterized by forbearance and tenderness – not having a quick temper.
Non-contentious	Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.
Free from the Love of Money	Elders must not be stingy, greedy nor out for sordid gain. They should not be preoccupied with amusing material things, but rather should be a model of giving.
Manage Own Household	Elders must have a well-ordered household, a healthy family life, and well-behaved children

(pertains to those whose children still live under parental authority).

Not New Converts

Elders must not be new believers. They must have been Christians for long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of their spirituality.

Good Reputation with Outsiders

Elders must be well respected by unbelievers.

Not Self-willed

Elders must not be stubborn, insensitive or prone to force opinions on others.

Not Quick Tempered

Elders must exercise patience and self-control in difficult situations.

Loves What Is Good

Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.

Just

Elders must be fair and impartial. Their judgments must be based on scriptural principles.

Devout

Elders must be reverent, continually desiring to be separated from sin. They must be devoted to prayer, the study of Scripture and the guarding of their own spiritual walk (Acts 20:28).

Holding Fast the Faithful Word

Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

**(d) Number of Elders** – Minimum number of elders shall be 2, (plus lead pastor). Maximum shall be 4, plus lead pastor.

**(e) Recurring Selection:**

- Elders will continuously evaluate men of the church relative to the qualifications of elders. Elders will evaluate annually whether to appoint additional elders.
- If the elders determine that there is a need for additional elders, they will list all men that they believe meet the qualification for elders. These will be evaluated and interviewed by the elders. All men deemed to be qualified and who indicate a desire to serve in the office will be presented to the church as elder candidates. No single family may hold a majority of elder positions.

- Those in the church body will have 3 Days, to provide to the elder chairman signed written reasons based on Scripture why a candidate is not qualified to serve as an elder. These reasons will be discussed with the individual. If the individual agrees he is unqualified or if the elders determine that he is unqualified, the individual will no longer be a candidate. All candidates remaining after review of any reasons presented during the 3-day process will become elders, and shall be ordained as elders.

**(f) Term**

Three years. If an elder wishes to continue to serve after a three-year term, he may elect to continue following unanimous recommendation in one-year increments by the other elders. The initial group of elders will determine a rotating term for the group of elders so vacancies will not all occur in the same year.

**(g) Removal**

Removal of an elder will follow a process outlined in scripture from 1 Timothy 5. Accusations must be by two witnesses, with disqualification based upon neglect, or sin, or character or actions. The elder body will convene all meetings for elder removal purposes. An elder will be removed based upon a majority decision within the elder body.

**(h) Duties of Lead Pastor**

The lead pastor will serve as an elder, being accountable for and a representative of all staff positions. Compensation paid to the lead pastor is for services rendered as lead pastor of the church and is not to be considered for services rendered as an elder. The lead pastor's service as an elder is considered non-compensatory. The lead pastor must meet the qualifications of an elder as outlined in Bylaws Article IV. Section (c).

In addition to his shepherding role as an elder, the lead pastor is primarily to be a teacher of the Word of God. He is to teach and exhort by precept and example. His goal is to help mature believers through insightful and accurate presentation and proclamation of the Word, equipping them to perform effectively works of ministries within the body of Christ. Thus, the lead pastor should be limited in responsibilities in other areas unrelated to his primary function as a teaching and equipping elder. The lead pastor must be allowed to make the highest priority of prayer, study time, and devotion to the Word. As shepherds of the church, it is one of the roles of the elders to appoint other leaders with complementary gifts to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that should not be filled by the lead pastor.

The lead pastor is also responsible as a member of the elders to lead the church to function as a New Testament church and ultimately achieve its mission and ministry objectives. This individual is to give oversight, direction and leadership to the ministries of FBWW. As such, he will work closely with the ministries and church staff. The lead pastor shall be an ex officio member of all ministry teams, and his leadership shall be recognized in all of them. The elders will oversee the Human Resources Team in the preparation of a Position Description for the lead pastor, which outlines more specific responsibilities and duties.

### **(i) Election of Lead Pastor**

The lead pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place at a church meeting called specifically for that purpose.

### **(j) Lead Pastor Search Team**

When a vacancy in the lead pastorate exists, a Lead Pastor Search Team shall be established. The Search Team shall be comprised of church members who are appointed to this team by the elders. The Search Team shall be selected based on a balanced cross-section representation of the church as a whole. After appointing the Search Team, the church shall affirm the team members. The Search Team shall consist of a minimum of 5 members, two of which shall be elders.

The Search Team will be responsible for screening all résumés, interviewing applicants, and confirming the qualifications and experience of top candidates. The elders will be consulted during the search process. If the elders approve of the candidate, they will enter into contract negotiations with the candidate and recommend that candidate to the church for election using the process outlined in Bylaws Article II. Section 2.01.

### **(k) Tenure of Office of Lead Pastor**

The lead pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his or the church's request. If the lead pastor relinquishes the office, he may do so by giving at least two (2) weeks' notice at the time of resignation.

The church may declare the office of lead pastor to be vacant. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, with at least two (2) weeks notification given to all comprising the church. The meeting may be called only upon the recommendation of two-thirds (2/3) of the elders.

## **3.02 Ministerial Staff**

Staff ministers (excluding the lead pastor) are called to serve by the recommendation from the elders and are empowered by the elders for running the day-to-day ministry operations of the church. Ministers can act individually to

enter into transactions regarding their specific area of ministry, conditioned upon budgetary constraints, but they are subject to the oversight of the elders and authorization levels given to them by the lead pastor and the elders. If a minister exceeds his or her authorization level in a church transaction, the minister will be held personally responsible for any obligations incurred as a result. The lead pastor is responsible, and will be held accountable to the elders, for oversight of all ministerial staff of the church.

### **3.03 Support Staff**

Guidelines for the hiring and termination of support staff positions are documented in the Personnel Section of the *Policies and Procedures Manual*.

### **3.04 Deacons**

Deacons are the servant-ministers of the church. Their purpose is to relieve the elders of the multitude of practical duties of caring for the flock. No specific, on-going deacon roles are mentioned in Scripture, probably because service needs change, and so the role of the deacons must remain flexible. Perhaps this is why qualifications for deacons are stressed in Scripture rather than specific tasks. Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the congregation's physical welfare. Deacons have the honor of modeling, for the church and the lost world, God's compassion, kindness, mercy, and love. As the church compassionately cares for people's needs, the world sees a visible display of Christ's love, which will draw some to the Savior. Deacons are to be an example of commitment, unity and harmony in their service. As a body, they will meet regularly for prayer and will perform ministry duties as assigned by the elders.

#### **(a) Qualifications**

Any man, who is at least twenty-one (21) years of age and is actively serving this body may be presented as a candidate for selection as deacon. The instructions provided in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7 will be the authority by which all decisions regarding men qualified for the office of deacon will be made.

Those members selected as deacons shall through witness and example demonstrate: a love for Christ and His church; a mature and growing spiritual life; a strong commitment to family, morality and ethics; and a willingness to serve God and others selflessly.

Each member, before serving, shall be interviewed by an elder and agree to the following:

#### DEACON EXPECTATIONS

Pray for our church and staff.

Support the elders through counsel and prayer, and service.

Encourage and strengthen the unity and spirit of our church by listening compassionately and responding to the needs of our fellowship

Set an example of Christian service, giving and leadership, AND conducting church business and personal life with integrity and honor.

### **(b) Number, Terms, Selection and Ordination**

The church will maintain a body of deacons sufficient to fulfill its mission and purpose but not less than five (5). The elders will determine the number of deacons to be selected. The term of office shall be three years after selection by the elders. After serving three years, a deacon will be inactive unless he desires to continue in his role with 2\3rds of Elder body affirming. The consideration to select additional deacons will take place once per If those selected agree to serve under the qualifications and conditions specified ABOVE, they will be interviewed by the elders and then affirmed by the church in a service of ordination unless previously ordained by FBWW. There is no obligation to constitute as an active deacon a member who comes to FBWW from another congregation where he served as a deacon.

### **(c) Vacancy**

Should a vacancy occur within the deacon body, the elders will operate the process in (b) to fill a vacancy.

### **(d) Officers**

The deacon body will elect their own officers who shall include a chairman and vice-chairman. In the absence of a chairman, one of the elders will serve in this role.

## **Article IV. Small Groups**

**Acts 2:46-47** They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

### **4.01 General**

At FBWW, we place a premium on ministry that allows us to develop relationships where we can care for one another, help one another to grow and join one another in serving others. We believe the best venue for this process is a ministry of small groups.

Small groups were an integral part of the early church structure. These groups were small enough to allow individual members to minister to one another, use their spiritual gifts and for mutual discipleship in the teachings and example of Christ. They were vibrant, life-giving communities within a church fellowship

where evangelism could take place as un-churched people watched a loving and compassionate community in action.

Small groups give us an opportunity to know the people we sit next to every service and to share with them how God is working in our lives. As we allow God's spirit to transform our lives, we will discover more and more of what it means to lead a God-centered life. By giving our small group permission to help us through the transformation process, we will discover the blessings that true community brings.

Small groups are intentional efforts to create an atmosphere that causes believers and non-believers to grow in their understanding and application of God's direction in our lives. Small groups help create biblical community.

## **4.02 Small Group Leadership**

Those in the church who are committed to the vision and mission of the church and are called by God to utilize their giftedness to impact and serve others lead small groups. They do that by leading their group in prayer, ministry and spiritual growth. The following is a list of characteristics that challenge our small group leaders to mature spiritually:

- Christ follower – a passion for Christ
- Character – leading an authentic life
- Calling – called to care for God's people
- Competence – able to lead and guide a group
- Compatibility – having the temperament and passion for leadership
- Commitment – doing what it takes

A leader has four major tasks:

1. Build a leadership team for the group
2. Conduct life-changing group meetings
3. Shepherd the members of the group
4. Expand the ministry

Small group leaders are accountable to the small group ministry leadership of the church and to the elders.

## **Article V. Ministry Teams**

**1 Peter 4:10** Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you....

**Ephesians 4:11-12** God gave...some to be pastors and teacher to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up....

**Philippians 2:3-4, 7** Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ...who took on the very nature of a servant....

## 5.01 General

In a New Testament church, people are commanded to serve one another and to do works of ministry. At FBWW, we commit to this by agreeing to serve the ministry of the church by allowing God to develop servants' hearts in them, by discovering their gifts and talents and by being equipped to serve by their pastors. The church empowers members to accomplish these commitments through ministry teams.

A ministry team is a group of church members who come together to fulfill a necessary ministry in the life of the church. Teams can be established in various ways.

Oversight of ministry teams can be assigned to the deacons; however, ministry teams are ultimately responsible to the elders, and elders are accountable for ministry team effectiveness. The ministries assigned to ministry teams can include but are not limited to the following:

- Missions
- Facilities and Grounds
- Communications
- Women's
- Men's
- Technology
- Baptism
- Lord's Supper
- Welcoming
- Outreach and Follow-up
- Security and Safety

## 5.02 Operating Procedures

Routine decisions, planning, evaluating, etc., will be done by and within ministry teams. If a ministry team has a church approved budget for approved operations and the activity of this team does not alter the direction of the church, the team will make all necessary decisions of that ministry. The need for action or decisions

not covered above will be brought to the attention of the deacons and/or elders who have oversight of the team.

### **5.03 Ministry Team Make-up**

Those who desires to participate in an existing ministry may volunteer to the team leader of that ministry team and begin to participate after approval by the elders as described later in this section.

A ministry team needing additional members will make its need known to the small group ministry leader who will share that request with small group leaders for communication with group members. The request for additional team members will include a summary of the qualifications and responsibilities and a request for potential new members to seek God's direction. The goal of this process is to allow the Holy Spirit to indicate God's choice for team members.

Members may be recommended to certain teams after completion of a spiritual gifts inventory and an interview with an elder or ministry team leader pertaining to gifting, skills, and relevance.

The team leader will be selected by the elders or by the elders' designee. Appropriate spiritual gifts that team leaders should possess include, but are not limited to, leadership and administration. The team leader should display a passion for fulfilling the purposes of that ministry.

### **5.04 Establishing New Ministries**

If a person of the church feels a burden for a ministry, has prayed for God's will concerning that ministry, and has received God's leading to participate in the ministry, the member should speak with an elder. The elders will then decide if this ministry should be established. This will prevent duplication of effort and conflicts of purpose.

## **Article VI. Officers**

### **6.01 Corporate Officers**

The officers of First Baptist Whitewright and the corporation shall be as follows: An elder serving as chairman, who is the corporation president; and an elder serving as vice-chairman, and a church clerk or secretary. The same person may not hold two offices. The elders select the elder chairman. The church clerk is also selected by action of the elders.

## 6.02 President

When authorized and instructed by the church, the president of the corporation or the elders' designee shall execute all conveyances of title to church property; all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property; all notes and loan instruments; and such other legal documents as may require execution on behalf of the church. He shall utilize the trustees for execution of agreements requiring their signatures.

## 6.03 Clerk

The church clerk shall serve as secretary of the corporation. The responsibilities of the clerk will be to keep the minutes of all family conferences and to maintain an up-to-date record of all members.

## 6.04 Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in any corporate office, the elders will appoint a successor.

# Article VII. Indemnification of Elders, Officers, Employees and Other Agents

## 7.01 Definitions

For the purpose of this Article,

**Agent** -- "Agent" means any person who is or was an elder, director, officer, trustee, employee or other agent of the church, or is or was serving at the request of the church as an elder, director, officer, trustee, employee or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust or other enterprise, or was an elder, director, officer, employee or agent of a foreign or domestic corporation that was a predecessor corporation of the church or of another enterprise at the request of such predecessor corporation.

**Proceeding** -- "Proceeding" means any threatened, pending or completed action or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative.

**Expenses** -- "Expenses" include, without limitation, all attorneys' fees and any other expenses incurred in the defense of any claims or proceedings against an agent by reason of his position or relationship as agent and all attorneys' fees, costs, and other expenses incurred in establishing a right to indemnification under this Article.

## **7.02 Successful Defense by Agent**

To the extent that an agent of the church has been successful on the merits in the defense of any proceeding referred to in this Article, or in the defense of any claim, issue, or matter therein, the agent shall be indemnified against expenses actually and reasonably incurred by the agent in connection with the claim. If an agent either settles any such claim or sustains a judgment rendered against him, then the provisions of 7.03 through 7.05 of this Article shall determine whether the agent is entitled to indemnification.

## **7.03 Actions Brought by Persons Other than the Church**

Subject to the required findings to be made pursuant to Bylaws Article VIII. Section 7.05 below, the church shall indemnify any person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party, to any proceeding other than action brought by, or in the right of, the church, to procure judgment on its favor, an action brought under State or Federal law, by reason of the fact that such person is or was an agent of the church for all expenses, judgments, fines, settlements, and other amounts actually and reasonably incurred in connection with the proceeding.

## **7.04 Actions Brought by or on Behalf of the Church**

**Claims Settled Out of Court** -- If any agent settles or otherwise disposes of a threatened or pending action brought by or on behalf of the church, without court approval, the agent shall receive no indemnification for either amounts paid pursuant to the terms of the settlement or other disposition or for any expenses incurred in defending against the proceeding.

**Threatened Pending or Completed Actions Against Agent** -- The church shall indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action brought by or in the right of the church, or brought under State or Federal law, to procure a judgment in its favor, by reason of the fact that the person is or was an agent of the church, for all expenses actually and reasonably incurred in connection with the defense or settlement of that action, provided that both the following are met:

- The determination of good faith conduct required by Bylaws Article VIII. Section 7.05 below, must be made in the manner provided for in that section; and
- Where the agent has actually been adjudged liable to the church in the performance of such person's duty to the church, unless, and only to the extent that the court in which such proceeding is or was pending, shall, upon application, determine that, in view of all of the circumstances of the case, the agent is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnity for the

expenses incurred. If the agent is found to be so entitled, the court shall determine the appropriate amount of expenses to be reimbursed.

## **7.05 Determination of Agent's Good Faith Conduct**

The indemnification granted to an agent in Bylaws Article VIII. Sections 7.03 and 7.04 is conditioned on the following:

**Required Standard of Conduct** -- The agent seeking reimbursement must be found, in the manner provided below, that he acted in good faith, in a manner he believed to be in the best interest of the church, and with such care, including reasonable inquiry as an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use in similar circumstances. The termination of any proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith or in a manner which he reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church or that he had reasonable cause to believe that his conduct was unlawful. In the case of a criminal proceeding, the person must have had no reasonable cause to believe that his conduct was unlawful.

**Manner of Determination of Good Faith Conduct** The determination that the agent did act in a manner complying with Bylaws Article VIII. Section 7.05 above shall be made by:

- The elders by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of elders who are not parties to the proceeding; or
- Approval of the church members, with the person to be indemnified not being entitled to vote thereon; or
- The court in which the proceeding is or was pending. Such determination may be made on application brought by the church or the agent or the attorney or other person rendering a defense to the agent whether or not the application by the agent, attorney or other person is opposed by the church.

## **7.06 Limitations**

No indemnification or advance shall be made under this Article, except as provided in Bylaws Article VIII. Sections 7.02 or 7.05, in any circumstances when it appears:

- That the indemnification or advance would be inconsistent with a provision of the Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws, a resolution of the elders, or church members, or an agreement in effect at the time of the accrual of the alleged cause of action asserted in the proceeding in which the expenses were incurred or other amounts were paid, which prohibits or otherwise limits indemnification; or

- That the indemnification would be inconsistent with any condition expressly imposed by a court in approving a settlement.

## **7.07 Advance of Expenses**

Expenses incurred in defending any proceeding may be advanced by the church before the final disposition of the proceeding on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the agent to repay the amount of the advance unless it is ultimately determined that the agent is entitled to be indemnified as authorized in this Article.

## **7.08 Insurance**

The elders may adopt a resolution authorizing the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of any agent of the church against any liability asserted against or incurred by the agent in such capacity or arising out of the agent's status as such, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify the agent; provided, however, that the church shall have no power to purchase and maintain such insurance to indemnify any agent of the church for violation of State or Federal laws.

# **Article VIII. Ordaining, Licensing and Commissioning**

## **8.01 Ordination and Licensing of Ministers**

Any present member of First Baptist Whitewright, or former member now serving in ministry at another location, who by his piety, zeal and aptness to preach and teach gives evidence that he is called of God to the work of the ministry may, by approval of the elders, and after examination by the lead pastor and elders as to his Christian experience, be ordained and/or licensed by the church as appropriate.

When a church calls a member of this church to its staff and requests in writing that he be ordained, this church shall consider such a request. If approved by the elders, the lead pastor will assemble an ordination council of ordained ministers and elders who shall perform the ceremony of ordaining this member to the Gospel ministry in the name of, and in the presence, of the church.

## **8.02 Commissioning of Missionaries**

Any present member of this church, or former member now serving in ministry at another location, who by his or her leadings and convictions feel called of God to the work of missions may, by approval of the elders and after examination by the lead pastor and missions ministry team, be commissioned by the church to missionary related service.

## **Article IX. Binding Arbitration**

The Bible teaches in Matthew 18:15-20 and I Corinthians 6:1-8 that every effort must be made to live at peace and to resolve disputes or conflicts with each other in private or within the church. Therefore, the members of First Baptist Whitewright agree that any claim or dispute arising from or related to being a member of FBWW, which claim or dispute is not resolved between the parties through the use of principles set forth in Matthew 18, shall be settled by biblically based and legally binding arbitration. Judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court having jurisdiction. Members understand that these methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising out of their church membership and expressly waive their right to file any suit or claim against one another for such claims or disputes, except to enforce an arbitration decision or the provisions of this Article.

## **Article X. Fiscal Responsibilities**

### **10.01 Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of the church will be on a calendar basis beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31 of each year.

### **10.02 Finances**

The elders and staff will prepare and submit to the church for approval a budget by items, the amount needed and sought for all local and other expenses.

It is understood that membership of this church involves financial responsibility to support the church and its causes with regular tithes and offerings.

The elders and staff will establish procedures for budgeting process, system of accounting, generating reports, and coordinating budget changes.

### **10.03 Accounting Procedures**

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the financial agent/s of the church and be properly recorded on the books of the church. Those who have responsibility that involves actual handling of funds shall be bonded, the church paying the bond.

### **10.04 Inspection of Records, Reports and Documentation**

Every active member shall have the absolute right, at any reasonable time, to inspect all financial records, reports and documentation of every kind (with the exception of contribution records, confidential counseling, and elder deliberation

sessions), along with the physical properties of First Baptist Whitewright. The elders may restrict and limit the number of inspections or establish an orderly manner for such to be conducted. But in no event shall a reasonable inspection of the books and records or properties be denied to a member.

### **10.05 Internal Auditing**

The elders will establish an Internal Auditing Team for the purpose of providing:

- Assurance that the church is operating its activities in an effective and efficient manner which demonstrates the wise stewardship of time and material resources
- Assurance that key risk areas of the church are being managed by the use of adequate internal controls in its operational systems
- Assurance that the financial disclosures made by the staff and finance ministry team of the church reasonably portray the ministry's financial condition, results of operations, cash flow needs and long-term commitments, and
- Assurance that the church is in reasonable compliance with pertinent laws and regulation, is conducting its affairs ethically, and is maintaining effective controls against leadership and employee conflict-of-interest.

Throughout the year, this team will continue to review the organizational structure and operational systems of the church to accomplish the assurances mentioned above. They will work closely with the staff and the elders. They will report directly to the elders regarding their findings.

## **Article XI. IRS 501(c)(3) Tax Exemption Provisions**

### **11.01 Limitations on Activities**

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these bylaws, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

### **11.02 Prohibition against Private Inurement**

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, if any, directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes of this corporation.

### **11.03 Distributions of Assets**

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, its assets remaining after payment or provision for the payment of all debts and liabilities of the corporation shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as the elders shall determine. Such distribution shall be made in accordance with all applicable provisions of the laws of this state.

## **Article XII. Amendments to Bylaws**

Amendments to these Bylaws may be made using the process outlined in Bylaws, provided the elders communicate the proposed amendments to members at least two (2) weeks prior to the vote.

**Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes,  
I am coming soon."**

**And this church says, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"**