



***FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CARTHAGE  
CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS***

## **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS FOR FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CARTHAGE**

### **PREAMBLE**

The head of First Baptist Church of Carthage is Jesus Christ. The Word of God is the basis for our lives and conduct. The purpose of this constitution and bylaws is to:

1. Preserve and secure the principles of our faith.
2. To preserve the individual liberties of each member of the Church.
3. To ensure freedom of action and independence from any religious body or organization.
4. To provide for orderly conduct of internal affairs, in dealing with others, and of the governing of the Church.

### **ARTICLE I: NAME AND ADDRESS**

The name of this organization is First Baptist Church of Carthage. It is incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of Missouri, and its Articles of Incorporation were issued in 1974. The Articles are incorporated in this document by reference; if there is any conflict between the Articles and this document, the Articles will control. The principle address of the Church at the time of adoption is 631 S Garrison Ave, Carthage, MO 64836. First Baptist Church of Carthage will be hereafter referred to as “the Church”.

### **ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

The purposes of the Church, as stated in the Articles of Incorporation issued by the Secretary of State in 1974 are to:

1. Engage in the propagation, preaching and spread of the gospel, including the support and encouragement of missions, education, and missionary endeavor.
2. To cooperate with the ministry and activities of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Missouri Baptist Convention, and the Spring River Baptist Association.
3. To receive, own, hold, administer, distribute and dispose of property of all kinds, whether real, personal, or mixed, acquired by gift, bequest, devise, purchase, or otherwise.
4. To support the religious, charitable, and educational effort and activities of the First Baptist Church of Carthage, Missouri, the Spring River Baptist Association, the Missouri Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

5. To borrow money for the acquisition, purchase, erection, and improvement of houses of worship, parsonages, equipment and furnishings connected with the ministry of said church.
6. To execute, acknowledge, and deliver notes, bonds and other instruments evidencing any and all such indebtedness and to execute, acknowledge and deliver any and all necessary or proper mortgages, bonds, deeds of trust or other instruments on real and personal property belonging to said church to secure the payment of any and all such notes, bonds and other evidences of debt.
7. To do and perform all lawful acts necessary or appropriate for the accomplishment of any of the purposes herein set forth.

### **ARTICLE III: ASSOCIATIONS**

This Church shall be a self-governing church, subject only to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church. It is not subject to any other body ecclesiastically, and is not held in trust for any other body. It has the right to cooperate and associate with other Biblical groups on a voluntary basis and as such has chosen to cooperate with Spring River Baptist Association, the Missouri Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

### **ARTICLE IV: ARTICLES OF FAITH**

We believe that the Scriptures, as originally written, were verbally inspired and are the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore are truth without any impurity or error. We believe the Bible to be the standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience. The Church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of “The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000”. The Lead Pastor, subject to the Members, is the final authority for interpretations of the Church’s doctrine and faith.

### **ARTICLE V: AMENDMENT**

This document was drafted by faithful but fallible people. Should it become necessary to revise this document in any way, any proposed amendment shall be presented to the Elders. In the event that the Elders vote to adopt such an amendment by majority vote, the amendment will be presented to the membership for approval. A two-thirds majority vote is required to approve the amendment.

## **BYLAWS**

### **ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP**

#### SECTION I: General

A member of First Baptist Church Carthage is a man or woman who has met the qualifications for membership and who has been accepted by the Church as a member. The Church will maintain an accurate roll of the Members. The Members of First Baptist Church Carthage have the exclusive right to add or remove members. In order to accept or remove a member, the Members must act by a two-thirds majority at a properly called meeting of the Members.

#### SECTION II: Qualifications for Membership

1. A personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
2. Baptism by immersion as a testimony of salvation.
3. Completion of the Church Membership class or Membership Interview
4. A commitment to abide by the Membership Covenant.

The Elders, subject to the Members, will determine whether a candidate has met these Qualifications.

#### SECTION III: Responsibilities of the Membership

In addition to any responsibilities required by law, the Membership Covenant lists each Member's responsibilities. Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend members' meetings and vote on decisions regarding members, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

#### SECTION IV: Voting Rights of Membership

In addition to the rights granted by law, the Members age 18 and older shall have the right to vote on the following matters:

1. Affirmation and removal of members.
2. Affirmation and removal of Elders and Deacons.
3. Changes to the Articles, Constitution or Bylaws of the Church.
4. Acquisition/sale of land or buildings.
5. Debts secured by the Church's land or buildings.

6. Approval of an annual budget.
7. The sale or distribution of all or substantially all of the Church's assets.
8. The dissolution of the Church.

#### SECTION V: Termination of Membership

Membership is terminated upon any of the following conditions:

1. Upon the death of the member.
2. Upon the Church's approval of the Member's request to transfer his or her membership to another Church,
3. Upon the Member's resignation, except the Church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.
4. Termination by the Church according to the following conditions:
  - a. The member's life and conduct are not in accordance with the Church's doctrine or Membership Covenant in such a way that the member hinders the ministry influence of the Church in the community.
  - b. The member moves out of the area making the Church's care for that person's discipleship impossible.

Procedures for the dismissal of a member shall be in accordance to Matthew 18:15-17.

It shall be the practice of this Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for reconciliation rather than punishment. Termination of membership shall be evidenced by a two-thirds majority vote of members in attendance at a regular Member's Meeting.

#### SECTION VI: The Restoration of Members

The Church, acting according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8, may restore members previously dismissed by the Church. In addition to the normal qualifications, before the candidate is presented to the Church, the Elders will inquire as to the individual's repentance, reformation, and conduct, and determine whether the individual meets the qualifications for Members.

## SECTION VII: Congregational Meetings

Congregational meetings will be held in the times, in the manner, and the purposes set forth below:

1. Corporate Worship services will be held on each Lord's Day, as He allows.
2. A meeting of the Members will be held quarterly, as He allows. The purpose of the Members Meeting is to conduct any business listed in Article I, Section IV and to handle any other business deemed necessary by Church leadership.
3. The Members will establish a schedule for their quarterly meetings. The Elders may change the dates of the quarterly or other scheduled congregational meetings as provided below.
4. Special meetings of the Members may be called at any time by the majority of the Elders, or at the written request, submitted to the Elders, of five percent of the voting membership. with reasonable advance notice.
5. Members shall be notified no less than one (1) week prior to a meeting which considers any matter set forth in Article I, Section IV.
6. Members shall be notified by any one of the following methods:
  - a. Distribution of written materials to the congregation in attendance at a weekend service.
  - b. Announcement of the meeting on the Church's public social media accounts.
  - c. Oral announcement to the congregation at a weekend service.
  - d. By email to members, at the last address provided to the Church.
  - e. By first class mail to members, at the last mailing address provided to the Church.
7. A quorum shall consist of those members present and voting.
8. Motions to be presented at any meeting of the Members must be submitted to the Elders for consideration one week prior to the meeting.

## **ARTICLE II: OFFICERS**

The Biblical offices in the church are Elders and Deacons. All officers must be members of the Church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

### SECTION I: Elders

The Elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. No Elder shall hold the office of Deacon during his tenure.

Subject to the will of God, the Elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the Church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1–6 and I Peter 5:1–4, the Elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

The Church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, as Elder candidates are presented to the congregation by the existing Elders. Elder candidates are affirmed and added to the Eldership by a two-thirds majority vote of the membership at any Member's Meeting. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Elders. An Elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal.

Any two members with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the Elders. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and Timothy 5:17–21. Any of the Elders may be dismissed by a two thirds vote of the members at any members' meeting of the Church.

Lay Elders shall serve a term of three consecutive years. An Elder may be re-nominated by the existing Elders and re-installed as an Elder by a two-thirds majority vote of the congregation no less than one year after an Elder's term has expired. If fewer than four Elders are serving at the expiration of one or more lay elder's terms, an exception may be made to extend the term of the lay Elder by one additional year or until a new elder is installed to meet the minimum of three Elders.

The Elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the Deacons and appointed church agents and ministry teams, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the Church, and mobilize the church for world missions. Further, the Elders should seek to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, affirm our fundamental gospel convictions and do not teach our Church anything contrary to the Statement of Faith. The Elders may establish ministry positions or ministry teams to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The Elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of Lead and Associate Pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position. Each year the Elders, after consultation with the Deacons and the membership,

shall present to the Church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a regular or specially-called budget meeting and called up for a vote at the following members' meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the Church or any of its ministries without the approval of the Elders.

#### SECTION II: The Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor shall be an Elder. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Section 1, above, and shall be recognized by the Church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching, and directional leadership of the Church. The Lead Pastor shall function as a "first among equals" in relation to the Elders. He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in this constitution. The Lead Pastor shall have primary responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member. In the absence or incapacity of the Lead Pastor, the Elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

#### SECTION III: Associate Pastors

The Church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the Lead Pastor is that of associate.

An Associate Pastor shall be an Elder. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Section 1, above, and shall be recognized by the Church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching. He shall assist the Lead Pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation. In the absence or incapacity of the Lead Pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the Associate Pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the Elders.

#### SECTION IV: Election of Lead Pastor and Associate Pastors

In the calling of any man to the role of Lead Pastor or Associate Pastor, the same basic process of calling an Elder must be followed. In addition, however, the Church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential Lead or Associate Pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as Lead Pastor or Associate Pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.



## **ARTICLE III: DEACONS**

### **SECTION 1: General**

In addition to Elders, the body is served by Deacons. Deacons serve under the authority of the Elders and provide for the temporal needs of the Church, enabling Elders to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word. While Deacons should be exemplary Christian leaders in the Church, they do not possess authority not given to them by the Members.

### **SECTION 2: Selection**

1. Potential Deacons are recognized as they serve, meet the biblical qualifications, and evidence Spirit-led ability to care for the physical needs of the Church.
2. Deacons are selected by the Elders in accordance with the qualification in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
3. They are appointed by a two-thirds majority affirmation among the membership.

Deacons will be evaluated by the Elders annually in light of biblical qualifications and personal factors. An individual's service may be terminated by resignation, or upon the occurrence of both the unanimous decision of the Elders and the two-thirds vote of the Members. A Deacon may be suspended until the next Members meeting by the unanimous decision of the Elders or the written request of two-thirds of the other Deacons submitted to the Elders.

### **SECTION 3: Deacon Chairman**

The Deacon Chairman acts to lead the Deacons in their work as outlined in scripture. He is the liaison between the Elders and Deacons. The Deacon Chairman is selected by the Elders, and joins the Elders in comprising the "Leadership Team" of the Church.

## **ARTICLE IV: CHURCH STAFF**

Employees other than Pastors may be employed or terminated at the direction of the Elders.

## **ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP COVENANT**

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this Church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

## **ARTICLE VI: GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND SEXUALITY**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex, determined at birth, is a rejection of the image of God within that person. Since the human body is a creation of God, we believe sexual identity must be solely determined by one's biological sex, determined at birth, and that it is not a choice open to any person – a choice often influenced by fallen human nature in ways contrary to God's design. We believe that efforts to live contrary to birth sex, whether by behavior, attire, cosmetics, or even medical or surgical therapy, are resisting or rebelling against the gift of God and a central dimension of His will for that person, and therefore such behavior is sinful. We oppose efforts to alter one's bodily identity (e.g., cross-sex hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery) to bring it in line with one's perceived gender identity. We commit ourselves to make decisions about membership, personnel, and other Church matters based on this biblical perspective of human sexuality.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union for their joint lifetime, as delineated in Holy Scripture and the first divine institution, because it is God alone who has the ultimate authority to define

marriage. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other, and furthermore, that He has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and a woman. We believe this is for their good and for the welfare of any children who may be conceived and born into this union. Re-defining marriage to fit popular norms rejects these truths. By encouraging the norms of true marriage – man-woman monogamy, sexual exclusivity, and permanence – the state strengthens civil society and promotes human flourishing, including the well-being of children. Christian marriage is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church. As such, the Church believes that ceremonies are spiritual observances of worship of God who created this divine institution. As such, weddings are officiated by one or more ordained ministers of the gospel, and the Church may decline to make its facilities or ministers available for weddings where one or more of the parties are not biblically and/or legally qualified to marry. No minister or employee of the Church shall officiate at any ceremony unless such marriage is consistent with this policy.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, pornography, representation of one’s self as being of the opposite biological sex, and any attempt to change one’s biological sex) is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. For those fighting temptation and repenting of sin, the Church will provide love, care, and direction.

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing attitudes or behavior directed toward any individual are to be repudiated, and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the Church. Further, we believe that the faithful proclamation of Holy Scripture, including the call to repentance, does not constitute hate speech or hateful and harassing behavior, but rather is a fundamental part of the Christian church’s mission to the world.

Supporting information and Scripture references may be found in the doctrinal statement entitled, *The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* (or current edition), which we adopt and affirm.

#### **ARTICLE VII: GENERAL**

1. No profit shall ever accrue to the benefit of any individual from the assets, holdings, or other transactions in which the Church may become involved.
2. In the event of the dissolution of the Church, after the satisfaction of debts any remaining assets will be distributed by the Members to the Spring River Baptist Association, Missouri Baptist Convention, or the Southern Baptist Convention, so long as they remain charities. If these entities cease to exist, the assets of the Church may be designated to such other non-profit, religious charities as the Members may direct.

3. For purposes of Missouri law, the Lead Pastor is also the President of the Corporation. The Elders constitute the Corporation's Board of Directors. The other officers of the Church, including the Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer are appointed by the Elders for one year terms, or until their successors are announced. These appointments shall be announced at the first Members Meeting of each year.

#### 4. Indemnification.

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

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

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

Adopted at First Baptist Church, Carthage, MO this 22nd day of November, 2020.

(07.21.2024)