

**CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF
GARLAND, TEXAS
APPROVED – JULY 2023**

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PREAMBLE

Recognizing ourselves to be an organized body of baptized believers, equal in rank and privileges, democratic in spirit and principles of government, and independent in administering our affairs;

Acknowledging the headship of Jesus Christ, united in beliefs of what He taught, and bound in covenant together to do what He commanded;

Voluntarily cooperating with other like Baptist bodies in the missionary calling of spreading the Gospel throughout the world;

Believing that the Bible is the sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice in all matters of church doctrine and policy, and that the mandates of the Scriptures are authoritative and binding as interpreted by this body; and

Being mindful of the Biblical admonition to let all things be done in a decent and orderly manner;

We, the members of The First Baptist Church of Garland, Texas do, therefore, ordain and establish this Constitution for the First Baptist Church of Garland, Texas.

ARTICLE I. Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into this covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of the Church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of this Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk obediently in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid the misuse of our tongue and unhealthy expressions of anger; to realize the importance of our Christian testimony and to refrain from the manufacture, sale or use of illegal drugs or intoxicating beverages; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

As biblically instructed in Genesis 2:24, we acknowledge that marriage is a sacred union, and only to be entered into by one man and one woman. As a result, we will not approve of or aid those of the same gender who wish to be married within our congregation, nor will we approve of or aid those who seek to be married to multiple parties at the same time. In addition, this church will not rent or make available our facilities for such ceremonies and/or receptions. This church also believes that each person must be treated with respect, compassion, love and kindness in accordance with Scripture.

We further covenant to care for one another in Christian love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and in courtesy of speech; and to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the teachings of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

Moreover, we covenant that if we feel led from this fellowship we will unite, as soon as possible, with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word to ensure our continued dedication to the Lord's service.

ARTICLE II. Confession of Faith

This Church honors the historic Baptist emphasis related to the soul's competency before God and the priesthood of the believer. Many members in this church support the Baptist Faith and Message statement of 1963 while other members support the 2000 version. Members of this Church walk together in Christian love, and recognize that truth for the believer can be found in both statements. This Church seeks to be inclusive of Baptists of sincere faith rather than to use either statement to exclude persons.

ARTICLE III. Name

The name of this Church is and shall henceforth be known as "The First Baptist Church of Garland, Texas", hereinafter referred to as "Church", and is the same Church organized as the Antioch Baptist Church on March 8, 1868, which was also known at one time as the Garland Baptist Church. This Church is a Texas non-profit corporation, duly registered as such with the office of the Secretary of State in Austin, Texas.

ARTICLE IV. Purpose

This Church is a community of believers following Jesus and telling His story. The corporation is organized and will be operated exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the corporation's purposes also include the limited participation of the corporation in any other activities, including taxable activities, but only

to the extent the activities would be permitted by a tax-exempt organization. More particularly, but without limitation, the purposes of the Corporation are:

1. To fulfill the Great Commission by promoting and advancing Christ's kingdom throughout the world and seeking the salvation of the lost at home and abroad.
2. To worship God and observe Christian ordinances.
3. To study and practice Christian principles.
4. To practice the Christian life as revealed and taught in the Holy Bible.
5. To collect and disburse any and all necessary funds for the maintenance of said corporation and the accomplishment of its purposes.
6. To make distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
7. To exercise all rights and powers conferred by the laws of the State of Texas upon nonprofit corporations and by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, to acquire by donation, contribution, bequest, devise, gift, purchase, lease, or otherwise any property of any sort or nature, without limitation, as to its amount or value, and to hold, reinvest, manage, use, apply, employ, sell, expend, disburse, lease, mortgage, convey, option, donate, or otherwise dispose of such property and the income, principal, and proceeds of such property for any of the purposes set forth herein; and without the necessity of authorization or approval of any individual or entity whatsoever save and except as provided in this restated certificate of formation and the governing documents of the corporation.
8. To do such other things as are incidental to the purposes of the corporation or are necessary or desirable in order to accomplish them.

ARTICLE V. Membership, Rights, and Privileges

This Church membership will consists of persons who have made a public profession of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, who desire to be numbered among His disciples, who believe in and subscribe to the faith and practices of this Church, who have experienced Scriptural baptism in this Church or a church of like faith and order, and who have been received into this fellowship by a majority of the members present and voting at any meeting.

This Church may reprove, rebuke, or exclude any member from its fellowship or membership. If a member of this Church becomes a member of any other church or passes away, his or her name will be removed from this Church's membership roll and that person will no longer be a member of this Church.

All members of this Church have the same rights and privileges as any other member, provided, that the exercise of those rights and privileges do not conflict with the Church Covenant and Confession of Faith above. In addition, this Church may determine qualifications for persons holding any office, and the conditions of election and/or

appointment to such office will be in such manner as this Church may from time to time establish.

Any member of this Church may, at any reasonable time, examine any record, property, action, or affair of this Church, provided that the individual contributions of any member will be confidential subject to examination only as this church will from time to time prescribe. Further, a member may have a voice in any committee or other deliberative body if he or she first notifies at least one committee member of the desire to address the committee on a specific topic, and obtains permission of the Committee Chair to speak to the committee in advance of a meeting to address said topic.

Each member will have the privilege of designating his or her mission offerings to the Baptist body or bodies of their choice.

Each member of this Church is entitled to one vote on all matters placed before the membership of the Church for a vote. A vote of the majority of the votes cast by the members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present will be regarded as an act of this Church, unless a vote of a greater number is required by law, the Constitution or the Bylaws of the Church. The members present at a meeting, notice for which has been duly given in accordance with Article IX of the By-Laws, will constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE VI. Political Activity

No part of the purpose or activities of this Church will promote propaganda, or otherwise attempt to influence legislation, or participate in, or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office (including the publication or distribution of statements). No part of the income or assets of this Church will be contributed to an organization whose activities promote propaganda, or otherwise attempt to influence legislation, except as otherwise provided by the Internal Revenue Code and related regulations, rulings, or procedures.

ARTICLE VII. Church Offices

ARTICLE VII(a) Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor's life and conduct will reflect the Word of God as found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. He must be a man called of God to preach the Word, having been ordained by this Church or a church of like faith. As "shepherd of the flock," he will be responsible to:

1. Plan, direct, and lead this Church in public worship;
2. Shepherd and equip the flock for the work of the ministry;

3. Counsel with individuals in need of a Pastor's guidance;
4. Lead, manage, and oversee the Church staff and other members in the performance of their tasks;
5. Serve as an ex-officio member, or appoint a designee, of all committees and groups organized by this Church;
6. Preside at all business meetings of this Church, except in his absence, a staff person or chair of the Deacons shall preside as designated by the Senior Pastor;
7. Appoint the Church Clerk in accordance with Article VII (e) and
8. Affirm to third parties whether a person is an active member of the church, in good standing.

In the case of a Senior Pastor vacancy, the Personnel Committee will proceed with the Interim process in accordance with the Personnel Committee Policy Manual. Whenever the Church deems it necessary to call a new Senior Pastor, the Church, will during a business meeting, elect a Pastor Search Committee. The Deacon Chairman will conduct the election of the Pastor Search Committee. The committee shall contain nine (9) official committee members elected in accordance with the following procedures:

- a. Committee Nominations: On a Sunday morning special called meeting of this Church, on a date of which members have been notified at least one week prior, by personal or electronic media, as well as the Sunday bulletin, nominations will be taken. At said meeting, each Church member present will be entitled to name nine (9) members as nominees to the committee. The twenty-seven (27) members named the greatest number of times and who are willing to serve will become the nominees. Nominees will be members of this Church for at least three (3) years and be at least twenty-one (21) years of age. No more than one member of any household will serve on the committee.
- b. Committee Election: The immediate following Sunday morning a ballot containing the names of the twenty-seven (27) nominees will be presented to the Church. Individual Church members may select up to nine (9) individuals from the list of nominees. Those nine nominees receiving the greatest number of votes will comprise the Senior Pastor Search Committee.
- c. Committee Alternates: The next five (5) members receiving the most votes will serve as alternates to the committee. An alternate will serve on the committee in the event any regular member becomes unable or unwilling to serve.
- d. Committee Function: Under direction of the Deacon Chairman, the committee will select its own Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary within one week. The committee shall give a status report to the Church at least once a month during its

deliberation. This committee so constituted shall be dissolved immediately following the call, and acceptance of the call, of a Senior Pastor by this Church. If the committee, by a majority vote, decides that it can come to no recommendation regarding a Senior Pastor, the committee shall be dissolved and a new committee shall be elected in accordance with the procedures set out herein.

- e. Recommendation of the Senior Pastor Search Committee: The recommendation of the committee and action of the Church taken to fill the office of Senior Pastor will be at a meeting of the Church. Notice of said meeting will have been given not less than seven (7) days before such meeting and at which not less than ten percent (10%) of the Church's membership (determined as of the preceding first day of October) is present. An affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) or more of the members present at a meeting shall be required to elect a person to the office of Senior Pastor.

ARTICLE VII(b). Deacons

The office of Deacon will be recognized as a high and holy one with the recognition and honor being the result of service and commitment rather than position. Consistent with the New Testament, it will exist for the purpose of supporting the spiritual leadership of the Pastor, ministering to the membership, and advising and leading the congregation in carrying out the Christian Commission of a New Testament Church.

Servant leadership, along with spiritual depth, wisdom, and the fullness of the Spirit, are hallmarks of persons serving as Deacons. The Deacon Body will assist the Pastor in pastoral ministry to the Church membership through plans developed between the Pastor and Deacon Body. Officers of the Deacon Body shall be the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary. Each officer shall be elected by the Deacon Body and will serve a one year term.

Every man elected to be a Deacon shall possess the qualifications of a Christian as set forth in the New Testament. The Deacon's life and conduct shall be in harmony with the special requirements as described in 1 Timothy 3:8-10,12,13 and Acts 6:1-6. Furthermore, every Deacon shall demonstrate:

1. Active support of this Church's programs through consistent attendance of worship, Sunday School, and other meetings of the congregation as well as through leadership roles in this Church;
2. A consistent commitment to stewardship by the Deacon's example of Biblical tithing to this Church; and
3. Maturity in spiritual and emotional realms by reputation of spiritual constancy and emotional stability.

A Deacon candidate will be a professed and practicing Christian for at least five years, a member of this Church for at least the prior 12 months, and not less than 25 years of age. Candidates to the Deacon Body may be nominated by any Church member, on the

appropriate, church-provided nomination form, signed nomination, and the candidates' names will be submitted to the Deacon Body for consideration. Candidates who are qualified to serve will be presented to the Church for ordination.

ARTICLE VII (c). Trustees

The Trustees will be elected by the Church body and will have no authority other than that authorized from time to time by action of this Church. Each action authorized will be evidenced by a resolution outlining the action(s) to be taken or carried out by the Trustees, with a copy of the resolution to be placed in the minutes of a regular or special business meeting of this Church.

The duties of the Trustees will be the execution of legal documents pertaining to the business of this Church, including but not limited to Notes, Deeds, Deeds of Trust, Guarantees and other legal documents deemed appropriate by the church. To be legally binding all actions taken will require the signature of two Trustees unless additional signatures are required in the resolution authorizing the action.

The number of Trustees shall be six. Nominees for Trustee will be presented to the Church by the Nominating Committee in order for new Trustees to take office with the beginning of the Church's financial year.

The term of each Trustee will be three years, with two Trustees being elected each year. In the event of a vacancy, this Church will elect a new Trustee at the next business meeting of this Church.

All reasonable expenses incurred as a result of carrying out the actions of this Church as a Trustee will be reviewed by the Treasurer and paid by this Church.

ARTICLE VII(d). Treasurer

The office of Treasurer is held by the Business Administrator. In the event of a vacancy in the position of Business Administrator, the Personnel Committee will choose an Interim Treasurer.

The Treasurer will have responsibility for and custody of all monies and securities of this Church, and will maintain permanent records of all transactions relating to those monies and securities. The Treasurer will prepare a monthly itemized report of receipts and disbursements, and make it available to the Church and the Finance Committee. The Treasurer's report will be audited annually by a certified public accountant or an auditing committee. The Treasurer will be responsible for procuring, on behalf of the Church, an insurance policy or bond indemnifying the church against dishonesty or theft by employees and volunteers.

ARTICLE VII(e) Church Clerk

The Church Clerk shall record the minutes of the business meetings of this Church, and prepare reports for associations with which this Church cooperates. Minutes of business meetings of this Church are, and shall remain, the property of this Church. The term of office of the Church Clerk shall be for one year, such term to start on the first day of the fiscal year immediately following his or her appointment by the Pastor, or in the Pastor's absence, the Chairman of the Deacons.

ARTICLE VIII. Church Organizations

This Church shall maintain programs of Bible teachings; member training; church leader training; new member orientation; mission education, action, and support; and music education, training, and performance.

This Church shall have any such offices, departments, or organizations as it may from time to time through its Bylaws create. These organizations and departments shall promote the policies of this Church as determined by this Constitution and the Bylaws.

ARTICLE IX. Notices

Unless otherwise provided herein, whenever any notice is required to be given to the members of this Church, such notice shall be sufficient to effect notification if it is published in a Church bulletin or other Church paper and all available church media that is distributed to members attending any regular worship service of this Church. A minimum of ten days notice shall be given for all regular business meetings; and a minimum of three days notice shall be given for all special meetings, with the exception of meetings referred to in Article XI. All regular or special meetings shall be called by either this Church's Senior Pastor or Chairman of the Deacons.

Regular Meetings will deal with items related to:

- Routine financial reporting and approvals;
- Committee and Trustee approvals or appointments; and

Special Meetings will deal with:

- All other non-routine matters requiring approval of the Church.

ARTICLE X. Bylaws

This Church shall adopt Bylaws containing provisions for the regulation and management of this Church not inconsistent with the law, the Articles of Incorporation, and this Constitution.

ARTICLE XI. Amendments

This Constitution and the Bylaws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of this Church present at a business meeting called for the purpose of considering the proposed amendments. Notice of the date and time of the meeting shall be given to the members at least two consecutive Sundays prior to this meeting, and shall contain the text of the proposed amendment. A minimum of two (2) Town Hall Meetings shall be held to discuss proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws when they are reviewed.

ARTICLE XII. Integrated Auxiliaries

The Board of Trustees may authorize an unlimited number of integrated auxiliary entities. The Church will have the power to elect and replace a minimum of one (1) director of each integrated auxiliary.

Approved – July 2023