

First Baptist Church

428 W. Cota, Shelton, WA 98584

Constitution

Revised February, 2017

**Constitution of the
First Baptist Church of Shelton, WA.**

PREAMBLE

Placing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, we, unite together as a body of immersed believers in Jesus Christ and adopt, ordain, and establish for our government and plan of worship and services the following Declaration of Faith, Covenant and Constitution.

Declaration of Faith

- We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being verbally inspired and completely inerrant in the original writings and thus the sole authority for faith and practice.
- We believe in one God, the God of the Bible, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary and is true God and true man.
- We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and in the case of those who reach moral responsibility, are sinners in thought, word and deed.
- 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.
- We believe God has ordained marriage and defined it exclusively as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself.
- We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood.
- We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into Heaven, and His present life for us as High Priest and advocate.
- We believe in “that blessed hope,” the personal and imminent return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and baptized by Him into the body of Christ; thus becoming eternally secure.
- We believe every Christian is a priest before God, having been gifted and uniquely placed into the body by the Holy Spirit.
- We believe the local Church is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by a covenant of faith and the fellowship of the gospel, observing the ordinances of Christ, which are: Believer’s Baptism by immersion and the Lord’s Supper.
- We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and of the unjust; the everlasting blessedness of the saved; and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost.

CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith in Him, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and 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 covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We determine, therefore, by the enablement of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to be mutually submissive to one another; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the needy, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also determine to maintain family and personal devotions; to train our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord; to seek the salvation of our family and acquaintances, to walk circumspectly in our world, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, to maintain a Christ-like attitude and behavior in the world, abstain from every appearance of evil and from all practices such as may bring harm to ourselves, cause another to stumble or dishonor the name of our God; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior .

We further determine to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense and always ready for reconciliation, pursuing it without delay.

We further determine, by the enablement of the Holy Spirit to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to strive to obey Him in all things and to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We moreover determine that when we leave this fellowship, we will 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.

Constitution

ARTICLE I- Name

The name of this organization, a corporation, shall be the First Baptist Church of Shelton, Washington, in the following referred to as FBC.

ARTICLE II – Purpose

FBC exists to make disciples of Jesus: a people of truth, with character, in community, and on mission.

- **Truth** - Since truth is personal (God), a message (Gospel), and a book (Scripture), our mission is to be a God-exalting, Gospel-centered, and Bible-focused church.
- **Character** - Since being a disciple of Jesus involves becoming like Him, our mission is to become more like Jesus in thought, word, and deed.
- **Community** - Since Christian community is indispensable for becoming mature disciples, our mission is to be a church filled with vibrant gospel-centered relationships.
- **Mission** - Since every church and Christian is called to make disciples of all people, our mission is to be a church that strives to seize every opportunity to make Jesus' known in our community and in the nations.

ARTICLE III – Membership

3.1 General:

The membership of this church shall consist of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have been baptized by immersion; have acknowledged agreement with the faith, practice, and covenant of this church; and have been received into the fellowship by regular action of the church.

3.2 Qualification of, and Manner of, Receiving Members:

- A.** Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and holding views of faith and practice in conformity with those of this church may be received into its membership by letter from another church on relation of Christian experience, or following baptism.
- B.** All applications for membership shall be made to the Board of Elders. No application shall be considered by the church except upon the unanimous

recommendation of the members of the Board at the examination of the applicant. Careful attention shall be given to each applicant to determine if they have a definite Christian experience followed by immersion in water as a believer in Jesus Christ and their agreement with and willingness to cooperate under the terms of the Statement of Faith and the Covenant and practices of this church, supporting its ministry and sharing in its services.

3.3 Termination of Membership shall be:

- A.** By letter
- B.** By removal from membership
- C.** By death

3.4 Duties of Members:

- A.** It shall be the responsibility of every member to endeavor to acquire knowledge of the Bible, to grow Spiritually, and to maintain consistent Christian conduct.
- B.** It shall be the responsibility of members to cheerfully contribute financially and spiritually to the support of the church according to principles of giving described in the New Testament.
- C.** It shall be the responsibility of members to endeavor to honor, esteem, love and pray for their spiritual leaders, and to submit to them in the scriptural exercise of their official authority.
- D.** It shall be the responsibility of each member to endeavor to cultivate brotherly love for all other members of the church, and to do all possible to promote their spiritual well-being.
- E.** It shall be the responsibility of every member to endeavor to preserve the unity of the church. All concerns or recommendations related to the health or operation of FBC are to be made first to Pastors or Elders. Malicious and slanderous gossip violates the Spirit of Christ and does irreparable harm to the cause of Christ and should not be practiced by the members.
- F.** It shall be the responsibility of members who are no longer in agreement with the Articles of Faith, or, are no longer in favor or agreement with the general practices of the church to notify the Elder Board of their change of heart, and if no satisfactory understanding is reached, to withdraw their membership.
- G.** It is the responsibility of members to be faithful in fulfilling obligations and performing promises toward those who are not connected with the church and, as opportunity and ability may enable, to commend the Gospel of Christ to them.

H. Each member who moves from the vicinity of the church should affiliate with another church as soon as possible.

3.5 Classification of Membership:

A. Active Members-as set forth in Article 3.2A.

B. Inactive Members who for unjustifiable cause habitually absence themselves for one year and fail to communicate with this church may be placed upon the Inactive Rolls by action of the Board of Elders and automatically forfeit their right to vote in any matter of church business. A letter will be sent informing said member of the action taken. Such member may be restored to the Active Roll by action of the Board of Elders. Any member on the Inactive Roll for a period of six months may be removed from the Roll by the Elder Board.

3.6 Removal from Membership:

Members who sin against another member, other Christian, or the church, or violate their covenant obligations or conduct themselves in any way so as to bring reproach upon the Lord Jesus Christ or the church may be removed from the membership by a two-thirds vote of the church upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders at any duly called business meeting of the church, provided that the Board of Elders has unsuccessfully sought the repentance of the member in accordance with the procedure outlined in the 18th chapter of Matthew.

ARTICLE IV - Officers: Their Election and Duties

4.1 The scriptural officers of this church are Elders, including Pastors, and Deacons; The Corporate Officers shall be President, Vice President and Secretary. Organizational Officers shall be Treasurer, Clerk, Moderator and Financial Secretary. All Organizational Officers shall be elected from the membership of the church by ballot, and, upon a majority vote, assume duties upon election. Unless otherwise provided, they shall serve for a period of one year; vacancies shall be filled for the un-expired term.

4.2 Pastors

A. Senior Pastor Search Committee.

1. Upon a vacancy in the office of Senior Pastor, the Board of Elders shall select members for a search committee from its various ministries. A search committee may also be utilized, at the discretion of the Board of Elders, for selection of any Pastor. The Search Committee, when selected, shall organize by electing a chairman and a corresponding secretary who shall keep a record of the minutes of the committee and do the official correspondence. The Search Committee shall be responsible for supplying speakers during the interim between pastorates.

2. It shall be the duty of this committee to prayerfully explore the field for qualified ministers who are available to call whose doctrinal position is in keeping with the

faith and practices of this church. The Committee shall thoroughly investigate each prospective candidate as to his spiritual, educational, and theological qualifications to serve the needs of this pastorate. All members of the Search Committee shall be pledged to not reveal any details of the deliberations of the Committee until they are ready to render a unanimous recommendation in written form to the Board of Elders of their choice of a recommendation for Pastor. The Board of Elders shall then consider the recommendation and, if in agreement, submit the recommendation to the church.

3. The Board of Elders shall then call a special business meeting of the church to consider the call of the Pastor. A favorable three-fourths majority of all ballots cast shall be necessary for the election of a Pastor.

4. Following the election by the church of a Pastor, the Board of Elders shall send a letter setting forth the terms of the call providing a space for the signature of the Pastor as he accepts the call. The call is considered made when the final acceptance is received from the prospective Pastor.

B. The Senior Pastor Responsibilities and Tenure.

1. The Senior Pastor is recognized as first among a plurality of Elders in Christ's local church and shall preach the Word of God, administer the Ordinances of the New Testament, shepherd the church and lead it in the fulfillment of its sacred task. He shall be ex-officio member of the Board of Elders. He shall maintain at all times a Godly deportment, that no reproach may come through him upon the Body of Christ.

2. The Senior Pastor shall meet the qualifications of Elder and shall be called for an indefinite period of time. Salaries shall be fixed by the Board of Elders at the time of the call and may be changed by the Board of Elders. The Senior Pastor shall be entitled to annual vacation with pay at whatever time is approved by the Board of Elders.

3. When a Senior Pastor is representing this church in any convention or conference, pulpit supply and necessary traveling expenses of the Senior Pastor shall be paid for by the church.

4. The Senior Pastoral relationships may be terminated upon sixty-day notice on the part of the Pastor, or an effective date may be set which is mutually acceptable. Termination of a Senior Pastor relationship by the church shall be acted upon at a duly called business meeting of the church, notice of such meeting and its purpose having been announced from the pulpit during services on the two preceding Sundays.

5. A vote of a majority of the members present and qualified to vote shall be necessary to dissolve a Senior Pastor relationship. The vote shall be by secret ballot.

6. Other full or part-time pastors, ministers, administrative, janitorial and other paid staff shall be employed at will, and may be terminated by the Senior Pastor upon consultation with the Board of Elders.

4.3 Elders

- A. Qualifications.** The qualifications for the office of Elder shall be those found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. They shall be elected for a term of three years, one third of the lay elders being elected every year. Their duties shall be to share with the Pastors the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the church, aid in administering the ordinances and have general advisory oversight of the policies and work of the church.
- B. Election.** The nominations for the office of Elder shall be made by the unanimous decision of the board of Elders. The name(s) shall be posted and announced from the pulpit at Sunday morning worship services at least thirty (30) days before the date set for election which shall be held on a Sunday selected by the Board of Elders. Any member who believes that the ballot of names includes a man or men who do not meet the qualifications of Elder as provided in paragraph 4.3A, or does not include a man or men that desire the office of Elder and meet these same qualifications may make that concern known to one or more of the members of the board of Elders. This information shall then be communicated to the entire Board of Elders for further consideration, after which the list may be modified by unanimous decision of the Board of Elders. Any modified ballot must be posted and announced from the pulpit on the Sunday before the date set for the election. A nominee, to be affirmed and elected by the church membership must receive 67% of the votes cast. For the purpose of this section unanimous means all Elders, less one.
- C. Discipline.** Elders shall be subject to discipline as prescribed in 1 Timothy 5:19-21. Any Elder may be removed from office upon recommendation of all the other elders (who are not the subject of discipline) by 67% vote of the church membership.

4.4 Deacons. The qualifications for the office of Deacon shall be those found in Acts 6:1-3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Their duties shall be to be helpers in the ministry of the church. They will be assigned specific responsibilities by the Board of Elders. The number will be determined by the Board of Elders. The term of office for Deacon shall be the time needed for the ministry the Deacon is leading and serving in. The nomination and election process for Deacons shall be similar to that prescribed for Elders.

4.5 Moderator. The Moderator, who shall be one of the elders, shall officiate at all business meetings of the church. The alternate order shall be the Chairman of the Board of Elders, the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Elders, or the Moderator's designee who shall be an Elder.

4.6 Clerk. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to keep an exact record of all business meetings of the church; and complete alphabetical and chronological record of the date and manner of admission and dismissal of members; issue letters of dismissal; and conduct the official correspondence of the church. The Clerk shall keep a master copy of the church Constitution and By-Laws. It shall include all revisions, additions, or deletions.

4.7 Treasurer. The Treasurer shall receive and keep in designated depositories all monies of the church. Payments from funds in the custody of a treasurer shall be made only by check signed by the Treasurer or their designee. The treasurer shall keep accounts of all funds and shall submit an annual report and any additional reports which may be requested the Board of Elders. All bank deposits of the church funds shall be made and kept in the name of the church.

4.8 Financial Secretary. The Financial Secretary shall cooperate with the Pastor and officers of the church in encouraging systematic giving, keep a confidential record of the same, and make available reports when requested.

ARTICLE V - Board of Elders

5.1 Number, Term and Positions. Ideally the number of elders on the Board of Elders should be not less than one elder for every 75 members, (unless there are not that number of qualified men who desire the office of elder who have been duly affirmed by the church membership in accordance with paragraph 4.3B, except where a vacancy or vacancies are pending election). The term of any elder so elected shall be for a period of three (3) years; or in the case of filling a vacancy, for the remainder of the vacant term. There shall be elected by them a chairman, vice-chairman and a secretary. The Senior Pastor and all vocational Pastors shall be ex-officio member(s) of the Board of Elders.

5.2 Meetings. The Board of Elders shall hold monthly and called meetings. Two-thirds of the Board is necessary for a quorum to do business.

5.3 Legal Representatives. The Board of Elders shall serve as the Corporate Officers of the church in conforming to the law. They shall handle legal affairs for the church.

- A.** The officers of the Board of Elders shall serve as the legal officers of the church as a Corporation. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary shall serve as President, Vice-President, and Secretary respectively.
- B.** They shall acquaint themselves and endeavor to comply with the laws of the state and the ordinances of the city that pertain.

- C. They shall have legal and financial charge of the property of the church, but shall not sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber the real estate or other property of the church. or incur any debt on behalf of the church that exceeds 2% of the then current annual budget without the consent of two-thirds of the adult members of the church present at a special meeting called for that purpose by public notice given at least three weeks previously.

5.4 Responsibilities. The entire Board of Elders shall provide spiritual leadership to the members of the church and in the various ministries of the church. This spiritual leadership shall include the following duties:

- A. They shall oversee the evangelistic outreach of the church.
- B. They shall oversee personnel nominating responsibilities as specified in the church constitution. They shall nominate church officers for election by the members.
- C. They shall administer the ordinances of the church.
- D. They shall secure speakers for the Pulpit and leaders for the various church meetings in the absence of the Senior Pastor.
- E. They shall oversee and assist in the shepherding and visitation work of the church. This shall include maintaining contact with the membership of the church, visitation of members who are sick or in need. This shall also include the administering of material aid when deemed necessary through the general supervision of the fellowship fund.
- F. They shall oversee the membership rolls. This shall include the examination of all applicants coming for membership. They shall also seek to reclaim any inactive members and recommend periodic membership roll purges according to the church constitution and by-laws.
- G. In the event that a vacancy should occur in the Senior Pastorate, the Board of Elders shall arrange immediately for the election by the church of a committee of at least seven (7) members, at least two of whom shall be Elders, who shall be responsible for pulpit supply in the interim between pastorates and shall recommend a candidate as a Pastor to the church. (See Duties of the Pulpit committee in the standing Rules.)
- H. They shall oversee all public relations for the church. They shall promote the interest of the church through the various means of advertising, news releases and brochures. They shall endeavor to keep the members, friends and community of the church informed of the overall program.

- I. Elders shall teach and provide oversight to the teaching of the scriptures and guard against false teachers. They shall develop and implement policies regarding the faith practices of the church in accordance with their interpretation of the Bible (including, but not limited to: administering the ordinances, use of facilities, etc.). The Elders are the final authority in resolving theological or doctrinal disputes arising in connection with such policies and practices.

ARTICLE VI – Meetings

6.1 Worship Meetings. Meetings shall be held for public worship each Sunday morning and such other times as determined by the Board of Elders.

6.2 Business Meetings.

- A. The Annual Meeting of the church for the election of officers (with the exception of the offices of Elder and Deacon) and transaction of other business shall take place on the second Sunday of June. Officers (with the exception of Elders and Deacons) shall assume their duties on the first day of July. At any meeting of the church, persons may be received into membership and letters of dismissal be granted.
- B. Special Meetings. Special meetings for the transaction of business may be called by the Senior Pastor, by the Board of Elders, or by the petition of at least 25% of the members of the church.
- C. Notice of Member Meetings. Notice, in the form of a record, in a tangible medium, or in an electronic transmission, stating the place, day, and hour of the annual meeting and, in case of a special meeting, the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called, shall be delivered not less than ten nor more than fifty days before the date of the meeting, by or at the direction of the president, or the secretary, or the officers or persons calling the meeting, to each member entitled to vote at such meeting. Notice of regular meetings other than annual shall be made by providing each member with the adopted schedule of regular meetings for the ensuing year at any time after the annual meeting and ten days prior to the next succeeding regular meeting and at any time when requested by a member. If notice is provided in a tangible medium, it may be transmitted by: Mail, private carrier, or personal delivery; telegraph or teletype; or telephone, wire, or wireless equipment that transmits a facsimile of the notice. If mailed, such notice shall be deemed to be delivered when deposited in the United States mail addressed to the member at his or her address as it appears on the records of the corporation, with postage thereon prepaid. Other forms of notice in a tangible medium described in this subsection are effective when received. If notice is provided in an electronic transmission, it must satisfy the requirements of RCW 24.03.009.
- D. Quorum. Fifteen percent (15%) of the voting members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a meeting of the members.

E. Voting. Each member shall be entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote at a meeting of the members. A member must vote in person.

F. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the business proceedings of this church in all cases where they are not inconsistent with this Constitution.

ARTICLE VII – Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at the Annual or any other meeting of the Church called for this purpose, provided that the proposed amendment has been posted and announced from the pulpit at services on two successive Sundays.