First Baptist Church

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CONSTITUTION

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**

Memphis, New York

CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

Revised and Updated February, 2019

***Article I***

Name

The name of the Church shall be the First Baptist Church of Memphis, New York.

***Article II***

**Purpose**

The purpose of this organization shall be the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the establishment and maintenance of a place of public worship and instruction according to God's Word, the administration of the ordinances, and the spread of the gospel at home and abroad.

***Article III***

**Belief (Doctrinal Statement)**

Section 1. - *The Scriptures.* We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original autographs of the Bible and that the Bible is therefore reliable and inerrant in whatever it says on any subject.

"Inspired" - Literally "God breathed". I.e. the Bible is the very breath of God - 2 Timothy 3:16.

"Verbal" - God chose the use of every word of the Bible, using the background and temperament of the individual authors - Matthew 5:18.

"Plenary" - All Scripture is inspired, not just that dealing with faith and practice - 2 Timothy 3:16.

"Inerrant" - Literally "without error.” No statement in the Bible is wrong - in cases where it is quoting someone, that quote is accurate though the idea of the person making the statement may itself be wrong - John 17:17

Section 2. - *God.* We believe that there is but One God (Deuteronomy 6:4) consisting of Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). All Three possess all of the Divine attributes and were involved in the act of creation (Genesis 1:1, 2; John 1:3) as well as the provision of our redemption (Ephesians 1:3-14).

Section 3. - *Person and Work of Jesus Christ.* We believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1), His Virgin Birth (Luke 1:30-35); His Sinless Life (2 Corinthians 5:21); His Substitutionary Death on the cross for our sins (1 Peter 3:18); His Physical Resurrection from the grave (John 20:3-8); His Ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His Present Intercession there for believers (Romans 8:34); and His Imminent, Personal Return for the saints (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Section 4. - *The Holy Spirit -* We believe in the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4); that He reproves the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8); that He seals (Ephesians 1:13-14), indwells (1 Corinthians 6:19), fills (Ephesians 5:18), guides (John 16:13) and comforts (John 14:26) the believer, and that His role is to speak of Christ (John 15:26; 16:13). While we believe that He is the giver of gifts to the believer for the service and ministry to the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:4-11), we do not believe that He gives the sign gifts any longer (1 Corinthians 13:9-10).

Section 5. - *Man.* We believe that man was directly created by God in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27) on the sixth literal day of creation (Exodus 20:11), that he sinned in disobedience to God (Genesis 3), fell and came by nature to be totally depraved (Romans 7:18, 23) and dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). We further believe that he is in this condition, in need of regeneration through the Holy Spirit of God and faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:3).

Section 6. - Salvation. We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, having lived in perfect obedience to the Law of God, took upon Himself the just wrath of God for sin when He died on the cross (Romans 3:25; 1 Peter 2:24), providing just grounds whereby God the Father forgives and pardons sinners (Romans 3:26), declaring them righteous (Romans 3:24). We believe that Christ’s physical, bodily resurrection from the dead was affirmation of the satisfaction of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf (Romans 4:25), and proof that through faith in His redeeming work on the cross, the believer shall be raised from the dead in like manner (1 Corinthians 15:20). We believe that man, who by choice and birth are sinners and in need of forgiveness (Romans 3:23; 6:23), are freely granted this forgiveness of sin through faith alone in the Person and work of Jesus Christ apart from any merit of their own (Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:8,9), such faith declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9), manifesting a repentance of sin (Acts 3:19; 26:20). We believe that this salvation is granted by the gracious will of the Sovereign God Who dispenses of His favor and grace according to His own sovereign good pleasure (Ephesians 1:11). We believe that it is only by the effectual grace of God that sinners are drawn to Jesus Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit without which none would come (Acts 13:48; John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 2:14). We believe the one who receives the gift of eternal life through faith will be kept in faith by the preserving work of the Holy Spirit and is therefore secure in the righteousness provided by Christ Jesus and imputed to the heart and life of the believer (John 10:28, 29; 1 John 2:19). We believe that the Holy Spirit is given as seal and guarantee of that salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 14). We further believe that once justified, the believer is a new creation in which all things are become new so that they no longer live for themselves, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, but to please Him that saved them through a life of holiness by means of progressive sanctification (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:15), said sanctification to be completed and perfected when the believer is forever in the glorious presence of God (1 John 3:2; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 21:27).

Section 7. - *Satan.* We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, that he formerly occupied the position of a special angel, fell through pride and is presently Prince of the Power of the air and god of this age, and that he HAS BEEN JUDGED (John 16:11) and will at the last be cast by God into the Lake of Fire forever.

Section 8. - *Heaven & Hell.* We believe in a Heaven of eternal bliss for all believers and in a Hell and Lake of Fire reserved for those who reject Christ and die unforgiven of their sins, and who will suffer everlasting punishment.

Section 9. - *The Church and its Ordinances.* We believe a local New Testament Church is a voluntary association of baptized believers equal in rank and privilege, subject to the Word of God, and independent of any external ecclesiastical control whatsoever. We believe God's Word commands every believer and only believers to be baptized and that the only scriptural mode is immersion. We believe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper should be observed and that it is a privilege peculiar to those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 10. - *Evangelization.* We believe in the great Commission of Christ to evangelize the world, and that this is the great mission of the Church and the solemn obligation of every believer.

Section 11 – *Human sexuality* - We believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral and therefore sin. (Gen. 2:24-25; Ex. 20:14, 17; 22:19; Lev. 18:22-23; 20:13, 15-16; Matt. 19:4-6, 9; Rom. 1:18-31; 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 15-20; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; Jude 7). We believe that God created the human race male and female and that all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one’s birth gender is immoral and therefore sin (Gen. 1:27; Deut. 22:5; Ps. 139:14).

***Article IV***

**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, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God and angels, most solemnly and joyfully enter into 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 this Church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort;

To promote its prosperity and spirituality;

To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;

To give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin;

To 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 also engage to maintain family and secret devotions;

To religiously educate our children;

To seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;

To walk circumspectly in the world;

To be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment;

To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger;

To abstain from the abuse of intoxicating drinks as a beverage or of any other mind altering and/or potentially addictive drug whether legal or otherwise, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage 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, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage, that when we remove from this place, 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.

***Article V***

**Membership**

Section 1. - The *membership* of this church shall consist of immersed believers who cheerfully subscribe to the Covenant and Doctrinal Statement as contained in Article III.

Section 2. - *Admission of Members.* Every candidate for Church membership must satisfy the Board of Deacons and membership as to Christian walk and testimony and must subscribe to the Doctrinal Statement and Covenant of this Church or be willing to submit to the same on non-salvative doctrines at the discretion of the Pastors and Board of Deacons. Upon satisfying the Board of Deacons, that board shall at any regular service or business meeting of the Church, recommend to the Church the acceptance of the candidate. The candidate shall become a member following the public testimony of their faith and upon a majority vote of those present and voting. This procedure shall be effective whether the candidate comes by baptism, letter or experience.

Section 3. - Discipline of Members. Should a member be found in known, unconfessed sin defined by the Scriptures, the principles of Matthew 18:15-16 shall be put into practice by:

1. That individual who is made aware of the offender’s sin shall personally and confidentially confront the offender to determine the validity of the accusation, and to seek repentance on the part of the offender.

2. Should the offender fail to accept the exhortation of the individual, that individual shall bring with him or her one or two others to again confront the offender. If the offender is a woman, the two or three confronting the offender shall consist of at least one other woman.

3. If the offender still refuses to repent, the charges shall be brought to the Pastor(s) and Board of Deacons. They shall seek to ascertain the validity of the charges and if found to be true, a registered letter shall be sent on their behalf to the offender listing the charges, expected actions commensurate with genuine repentance, and a deadline for action.

4. Should the offender still fail to accept the exhortation and repent by the deadline given, the individual will be brought to the attention of the church for church action. At that time the letter sent from the Pastor(s) and Board of Deacons to the offender will be read publicly in its entirety. A vote will then be taken to remove the individual from the membership of the church with all due love and regret. Upon majority vote of the membership, the offender will be removed from the membership of the church.

5. These procedures will be halted for one of two reasons. First, if the charges are ascertained to be false. Second, if the offender repents. Once either of these takes place, no further disciplinary steps will be taken.

6. No accusation shall be received by the Pastor(s) or the Board of Deacons until the accuser has personally confronted the accused.

7. Any individual removed from church membership due to the above disciplinary action may be reinstated to full membership upon public confession and a majority vote of the membership of the church.

8. The goal of the above is three-fold. First, to maintain the integrity and reputation of purity for God and His Church. Second, to fulfill Scripture. Third, to seek the repentance and restoration of the sinning Christian.

9. No member shall be permitted to seek removal from membership once the process of church discipline has begun on that member.

Section 4. *- Dismissal of Members.* The Church by majority vote of those present and voting at any regular service or business meeting shall grant to any member in good and regular standing a letter of dismissal to unite with some other Baptist Church of like standard. A member uniting with another Church will automatically relinquish his membership in this Church and shall be notified. Should he wish to unite with a Church of another denomination, he may be given a letter of dismissal, stating his Church standing at the time of dismissal.

Section 5. - A watch-care member is a member who does not attend a minimum of one regularly scheduled business meeting per calendar year, and/or shows a lack of faithfulness in personal involvement in the Church. A member who fails to attend one of the first three business meetings, or shows a lack of involvement, will be contacted reminding them of the responsibilities of active membership. If said member then fails to attend the October meeting, that member will again be contacted informing them that action will be taken at the annual business meeting to place them on the watch-care members' list and remove them from the active list. While the person is on this list they will be a non-voting member, and also will not be able to hold Church office.

1. Exceptions will be made at the discretion of the Pastor(s) and Deacons.

2. A watch-care member may be placed back on the active roll by church vote at a regularly scheduled business meeting.

3. The length of time allowed to remain on this list will be one year, after which they

 will be removed from the membership roll. Contact will be made a minimum of one month prior to Church action unless the individual agrees to immediate removal.

Section 6. - Because of Scriptural teaching, we hold that a believer should not be a member of any lodge or secret order that denies any part of this constitution, and no such member shall be permitted into an elected office. We will not knowingly take into membership anyone who is a member of such a lodge or organization. (II Cor. 6:14-28; Lev. 20:7; Matt. 6:24).

Section 7. – Associate Membership – an Associate Member is one who holds only temporary residence in the area, but who wishes to be involved in the ministries of the Church. Associate Membership is circumscribed by the following:

1. The individual must be a member in good standing of a church of like faith and practice. Contact will be made with the candidate’s home church to affirm membership in good standing.
2. The individual will be subject to Article V, Sections 1-3 and 6.
3. An Associate Member may not vote nor hold office but may be involved in all other ministries of the church.
4. An Associate Member need not re-apply each time they return to the area. They shall be considered in good standing until such time as they withdraw their membership either here or at their home church.
5. An Associate Member may become a fully active member upon written request and the majority vote of the Church membership.

Section 8 – Conflict Resolution - We believe differences or conflicts should bring receptivity to change and growth, not litigation (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Therefore, in the highly unlikely event that we are ever unable to resolve a dispute between us, an arbitration committee will be formed which will include at least one deacon and one other member in good standing. They shall recommend to the individuals a course of action to resolve the issue. Outside arbitration by pastors of churches of like faith and practice may be asked to provide counsel or act on the behalf of the arbitration committee.

In the event a dispute between individuals is related to matters of child abuse or sexual assault, these disputes shall be referred to the police for possible criminal action and this resolution policy will not be applicable.

***Article VI***

**Meetings**

Section 1. *- For Worship.* Public services shall be held twice on the Lord's Day, morning and evening; always for the preaching of the Gospel and the exposition of the Word. A meeting for prayer and praise shall be held at least once a week.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed the first Sunday of each month or at the pastors’ discretion.

No conflicting meeting shall be held during the stated meeting or during any church-wide special meetings such as evangelistic meetings or Bible conferences.

Section 2. - *For Business*

a. The fiscal year of the Church shall close the last day of December.

b. The annual business meeting of the Church shall be held on a mid­week service in December, such meeting to be announced at least two weeks in advance. The Church's annual budget, recommendations of the membership committee, and slate of officers will be voted on at this meeting.

c. Quarterly business meetings shall be held on a Wednesday evening of each quarter; i.e. January, April, July, and October. The annual report of the previous year will be presented at the January meeting.

d. Special business meetings may be called by the Pastor(s), the Board of Deacons, or by the request of 20% of the active members of the church of legal voting age to the Clerk. Particular objects of the meeting must be announced in the notice of the special meeting. Meetings for the removing of church officers shall require a minimum of two weeks public notice.

e. Roberts Rules of Order shall be the guide in all matters of business where there is no conflicting rule.

g. Special Circumstances - Any member in good standing must be given an updated list of active members within two weeks of a written request. A business meeting may be called upon the written request of a majority (more than half of the active membership), age 18 and above. The purpose(s) of this meeting and date and place proposed must be stated in the request which may be in the form of a petition, signed by those calling for the meeting. A copy of this written request will be submitted to a Deacon. The original petition is to be presented at the meeting and kept as part of the legal record of the meeting. Every reasonable effort will then be made to make the entire membership aware of the meeting, its time, place, and purpose(s), at least two weeks in advance. This contacting of the membership may be done by any member in good standing, who will give record of contact or attempt thereof, at the time of the meeting called. The meeting may be held with or without the presence of a deacon or pastor as long as a majority of the active membership, age of 18 and above, is present. A moderator and secretary will be selected by those present. The matter of business at the meeting, other than the selection of a moderator and secretary, will be limited to the subject of the meeting stated in the request for the meeting. No other business may be enacted at that time. Any action on the stated purpose(s) will require an affirmative vote of a majority of the active membership, age 18 and above, on record at the date of the meeting, for the business to be binding. Any decisions made at this meeting in accord with the above shall be considered immediately legally binding unless stipulated otherwise in the meeting.

Section 3. - *Quorum.*Shall consist of at least 15% of Active Membership, including at least 2 deacons except as noted in Section 2 above.

Section 4. - *Age.* Voting age of members at any business meeting of the Church shall be 16 years of age and over except in cases where State Law requires 18 years of age for certain officers.

Section 5. - The above stated meetings may be held at other times at the discretion of Pastor(s) and the Deacon Board.

***Article VII***

**Church Officers**

Section 1. - The officers of the Church shall be Pastor(s), Deacons, Clerk, Treasurer and Bible School Superintendent. All officers must subscribe to the Doctrinal Statement of the Church and upon failure to do so, they shall automatically relinquish their office.

Section 2. - The Senior Pastor shall be called at a special or regular meeting of the Church, having been announced two weeks in advance, and by three-quarters of the ballots cast. His term of office shall be unlimited, the relation to continue so long as there shall be mutual satisfaction. The relations between Senior Pastor and the Church may be dissolved, at the option of either, by giving three months’ notice or otherwise by mutual consent. The qualifications of the Senior Pastor are those stated in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Senior Pastor shall serve as the shepherd of the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). As such the Senior Pastor shall be the authority in all spiritual matters of the church (Hebrews 13:7) upon consultation of the Board of Deacons as he deems appropriate. The Senior Pastor’s decision may, however, be overruled by a majority of the voting membership at any official meeting of the Church called for said purpose in accordance with Article VI, Section 2, subsection e. In the event of a serious moral or doctrinal deviation, the Church may call for his immediate dismissal with no further financial remuneration.

Section 3. – Any additional Pastors shall be voted on by the Church at a special or regular meeting of the Church. His qualifications and term shall be the same as those of the Senior Pastor, stated above. In addition, the Senior Pastor may call for his resignation at any time upon consultation with the Board of Deacons.

Section 4. - The Deacons shall be a minimum of three in number and shall be elected at the annual business meeting in such a manner that one or two terms expire each year. A person to be a Deacon must have been an active member of the Church in good standing for one year prior to his election to that office and must conduct himself according to the New Testament requirements for the office of Deacon as set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13. A Deacon must also subscribe to the Church’s Doctrinal Statement in its entirety. A candidate to the office of Deacon who does not fully endorse the Doctrinal Statement must withdraw his name from consideration. Failure to do so will result in his dismissal as Deacon when evidence to that effect is given.

Section 5. - All other officers shall be elected by the Church at the Annual meeting and must be an active member of the Church in good standing for one year prior to election to that office.

Section 6. - All officers and all Bible School Teachers shall be required to subscribe to the Doctrinal Statement of this Church as stated in Article III.

Section 7. - Limitation for Church Officers. A Deacon's term of office shall be for three (3) years. A deacon may serve up to two consecutive terms but will be unable to be nominated for an additional term until at least one year has passed. All other officers of the Church shall be elected by the Church at their annual meeting for a term of one (1) year; a break of one year being required after three consecutive terms.

***Article VIII***

**Duties of Officers**

Section 1. - The duties of the Pastor(s) shall be those pertaining to that position in Baptist Churches, namely, have charge of the spiritual welfare of the Church, preach the gospel according to Article III, and administer the ordinances. The Pastor(s) shall serve as an ex-officio member of all committees.

Section 2. - The duties of additional Pastors shall be determined by the Senior Pastor, to be voted on by the Church as a whole. Supplementary duties may be required at the discretion of the Senior Pastor. He shall, like the Senior Pastor, serve as an ex-officio member of all committees.

Section 3. - The Clerk shall keep accurate records of all proceedings of all business sessions of the Church. He shall have charge of all records and changes of membership, deaths and baptisms.

Section 4. - The Church Treasurer shall have charge of the Church funds and finances, including those of the missionary funds and any other funds brought in through the Church, and shall keep accurate records of the same and submit regular reports of such accounts. The Treasurer's records shall be yearly audited by a duly elected auditor who may, with the consent of the Board of Deacons, seek outside assistance, and said auditor report to the Church.

Section 5. - As per state law, an odd number of deacons shall serve as Trustees; said Trustees to be elected by the Board at their January meeting. The board shall have charge, subject to the order of the Church, of all properties of the Church. The Deacons shall assist the Pastor(s) in the general oversight of the spiritual welfare of the Church; in the administration of the ordinances, and in matters of discipline. They shall provide for pulpit supply in the Senior Pastor's absence and other interim's; have charge of fellowship and memorial funds; hold regular monthly meetings; and give reports of work at the annual meeting of the Church. All deacons shall serve as Trustees. The board shall have charge, subject to the order of the Church, of all properties of the Church, and shall be responsible for the care and upkeep of said properties. Except in petty properties, the Deacons shall not have authority to sell or purchase Church property without a vote of the Church after a meeting called for that announced purpose or at a regularly scheduled business meeting.

Section 6. - All offices of the Bible School shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Church. With the Pastor(s) and Associate Bible School Superintendent, the Bible School Superintendent shall conduct the affairs of the School; appoint teachers and associate teachers with the approval of the Deacons and an acceptable background check and make recommendations to the School. The Bible School Superintendent and his associate must be active members of the Church and subscribe to the Doctrinal Statement of this Church.

Section 7. - All officers of the Church shall serve until their successors have been elected or appointed and qualified at which time each officer shall turn over to his successor all records and properties related to his or her office. Vacancies shall be filled by the Church at regular or special meetings with notice given in those cares required by State Law. Such vacancies will be filled by qualified candidates to complete the fiscal year. Those who fill a vacancy, upon the completion of said term, will be entitled to serve additional terms as limited above, the partial term not being counted against them.

***Article IX***

**Committees**

Section 1. - *Membership Committee.* The Membership Committee shall be comprised of the Pastor(s) and the Board of Deacons. Its duties shall be for the making, preservation and annual revision of the Church roll.

Section 2. - *Nomination Committee.* The Nominating Committee shall be made up of the Pastor(s) and Deacon Board. A nomination form shall be provided to each active member two months prior to the annual meeting which shall be used by the Nominating Committee at its discretion for the making of the final ballot. Such recommendations shall be posted two (2) weeks prior to the Annual Meeting. The Senior Pastor shall be chairman of this committee.

Section 3. *Pulpit Committee.* The Board of Deacons and any remaining Pastors shall comprise the Pulpit committee whenever it shall become necessary for the Church to call a Pastor. They shall be sure the candidate is wholly in accord with the Doctrinal Statement stated in Article III of the Constitution and shall prayerfully and diligently seek out such a one for the pulpit. Not more than one candidate may be voted upon at one time.

Section 4. - *Missionary Committee.* The Missionary Committee of two or more active members, including the Pastor(s), shall investigate missionary enterprises and recommend a missionary policy to the Church in finance and service. It shall promote missionary activity in the affairs and services of the Church and present a budget at the annual meeting for the coming year.

Section 5. - *Finance Committee.* The Pastor(s), Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Deacons shall constitute the finance committee, who shall recommend to the church an annual budget, execute such budget when adopted and devise plans and programs for the raising of finances for the accepted budget. Only scriptural means for raising moneys shall be employed. All moneys shall be raised by voluntary subscription or offering and no other way.

Section 6. - Other committees may be appointed by the Church, as and when deemed necessary.

Section 7. - No subsidiary organization of this Church shall engage in any practice or policy contrary to the doctrinal and practical position of this Church. Neither shall any Church organization conduct either on the Church property nor elsewhere, any type of sale or affair for financial profit in the name of this Church. This does not prohibit the sale of gospel literature and books.

***Article X***

**Amendments**

This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting or special meeting, providing such notice of proposed alteration or amendment shall be made public on two Sundays immediately preceding such meeting.