



FIRST BIBLE CHURCH

FIRST BIBLE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

Glorifying God by helping people
know, love, obey and exalt
Jesus Christ.



GATHER



GROW



GO!

Article I — Name

The name of this church shall be the First Bible Church of Decatur.

Article II — Purpose

The purpose of this church is the salvation of souls and the encouragement of Christian growth through Bible study, prayer, and the promotion of Godly worship throughout the world [Matthew 28:19].

Article III — Doctrine

The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired Word of God, written by men by God's control, inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts, and the final authority in faith and life. [II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:20-21; Psalm 19:7-9].

The Godhead

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — these three being identical in essence, equal in power and glory and possessing precisely the same attributes and perfection [Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14].

The Condition of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God in innocence and without sin, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, became spiritually dead and alienated from God, and now man of himself is incapable of remedying his lost and depraved condition [Genesis 1:26; 3:1-24; Romans 3:10-18; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3].

The Person and Work of Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. This redemption He accomplished by voluntarily giving Himself as a sinless substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, thereby satisfying God's righteous judgments against sin. After substantiating the accomplishment of that redemption by His bodily resurrection from the grave, He ascended to the right hand of His Father where He intercedes on behalf of those who trust Him [John 1:1, 2, 14, 18; Luke 1:34-35; Romans 3:24-26; 8:34].

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who convicts the world of sin, that He alone brings new life to those who are spiritually dead, and that He baptizes [or places] all believers

into the one true Church, which is the Body of Christ, that He indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts upon them and fills those who are yielded to Him [John 16:7-11; 3:5-8; I Corinthians 12:13; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; I Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 5:18].

Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God's grace, freely bestowed upon all who put their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary, apart from human meritorious works. All who so trust the Saviour are forgiven of their sins and born into the family of God by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit [Ephesians 2:8-9; 1:7; John 1:12].

Security, Assurance and Responsibility

We believe that all the saved, those in whom God has accomplished His transforming work of grace, are kept by His power and are thus secure in Christ forever. It is their privilege to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation. This assurance must not be the occasion for sin, however, God in holiness cannot tolerate persistent sin in His children, and in infinite love He corrects them [John 10:27-29; Romans 8:29-30; I John 5:13; Hebrews 12:6; Matthew 7:20; James 2:20].

The Church

We believe that the true Church, called in Scripture the Body of Christ, is a spiritual organism into which every person who has trusted Jesus Christ for salvation in this present age has been baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Scripture also teaches the establishment and continuance of local churches, groups of redeemed individuals joined together for worship, instruction, fellowship, and service [Ephesians 1:22; I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:42; 12:1-2].

The Ordinances

We believe that there are two ordinances instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ to be observed by all believers until His return, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism is the outward testimony of the inward spiritual transformation in the life of one who has trusted Christ for salvation. It is to be administered to those who give evidence of having been born again [Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:36-38].
2. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of His death to be observed regularly by all self-examined believers. The elements are used as emblems of the Lord's body and blood [Matthew 26:26-29; I Corinthians 11:23-30].

The Second Coming of Christ

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, and His subsequent premillennial return to earth to establish His kingdom [I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6].

Eternal State

We believe that at death the souls of those who have trusted Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming for the Church, when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain in conscious misery after death until the final judgment at the great white throne at the close of the millennium, when souls and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be separated from God forever in conscious punishment [Luke 16:19-16; II Corinthians 5:3; Philippians 1:23; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15].

Article IV — Membership

Section 1 — Reception of Members

All persons desiring to unite with First Bible Church, whether by confession of faith, letter, or in any other way, shall complete a church membership seminar taught by the Pastoral Staff, Elders, or both. Afterwards, such persons shall meet with at least two Elders. The purpose of this meeting shall be fourfold:

1. To hear the testimony regarding their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
2. To assure that such persons are in agreement with all of the doctrines of the church stated in the Constitution. If any person seeking membership has not formed an opinion regarding the premillennial return of Christ, or holds to another view, they may be admitted into membership if their view falls within the bounds of historical and apostolic Christianity and they must not teach against First Bible Church's doctrinal position.
3. To assure that such persons are in agreement that as members of First Bible Church, they are responsible to 1) protect the unity of the church, 2) take responsibility for the growth of the church, 3) serve in the ministry of the church, and 4) support the testimony of the church.
4. To assure that such persons clearly understand and are in agreement with the mission of First Bible Church. The mission of First Bible Church is to glorify God by helping people know, love, obey, and exalt Jesus Christ.

After completing a satisfactory interview, said persons are received as members at that time and recognized appropriately.

Section 2 — Removal of Members

Members may be removed from the roll in any one of the following three ways:

1. Letter — A letter of membership transfer will be issued to any member in good standing who submits a written request.
2. Failure to Attend — The name of any member who fails to attend the services of the church for a period of six months shall be removed from the church roll. However, exceptions may be made by majority vote of the Board of Elders.
3. Disciplinary action — In accordance with the Scriptures, Matthew 18:15-19, and Galatians 6:1, any name may be removed from the roll of the church for disciplinary reasons. Such disciplinary action shall be taken only after careful investigation and prayerful consideration by the Board of Elders and the three fourths vote of the Board. No member shall be dismissed without having opportunity to answer before the Board of Elders the charges brought against him.
4. Charges shall be in writing and signed by those bringing same. Before a vote is taken, a report of an attempt at restoration must be given in writing to the Board of Elders by the chairman of the Board.

Article V — Officers

Section 1 — List of Officers

The officers of First Bible Church shall consist of the Senior Pastor, a Board of Elders, and a Board of Deacons. Membership on the Board of Elders shall be at least three and not more than five, and on the Board of Deacons at least three and not more than seven, until church membership reaches 200. Thereafter, one member may be added to each board for each whole increment of 50 additional church members if seen necessary by the Board of Elders. Additional board members shall be selected and elected by the processes laid out in this constitution.

Section 2 — Qualifications of Officers

All officers of the First Bible Church of Decatur shall be men who are members of the church in full fellowship. No women shall serve in these official capacities. The moral and spiritual qualification of those who assume placed of leadership in the church are contained in the New Testament, particularly in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.

Officers shall be nominated and elected in the light of these God-given requirements.

Section 3 — Duties of Officers

Senior Pastor — It shall be the duty of the Senior Pastor to have general oversight of the spiritual life of the church with the Elders, to preach the Word in the regular services of the church, and to administer the ordinances. He shall be an advisor and consultant to all other boards and committees.

Board of Elders — It shall be the duty of the Elders to care for the church and its spiritual condition, to guard the purity of doctrine and life of the church and to discipline the church in accordance with the Word of God. The Elders shall assist the Pastor in the administration of the Lord's Supper, act for the church in the reception and dismissal of members and examine all seeking membership in the church. It shall be the duty of the Elders to assist the Pastor in counseling the needy, comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick and supplying the pulpit of the church in the absence of the Pastor.

The Elders shall have oversight for the operation of the church and for all its ministries. The Board of Elders shall nominate to the congregation any ordained pastor to be employed by the church. The Board of Elders shall also appoint such commissions as it deems necessary for the efficient conduct of church activities, and shall empower them appropriately; however, all actions and appointments of such commissions shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall appoint executive level pastor(s) to help lead the staff and the church. The Board of Elders shall meet as often as necessary in order to transact the business under its jurisdiction. For secular purposes, and as required by the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Law, the Board of Elders shall have the same authorities, and shall constitute, the Board of Directors of the Church.

The Chairman of the Board of Elders shall be the principal executive officer of the church and, subject to the control of the Board of Elders, shall in general supervise and control all of the business and affairs of the church. He shall represent the church in all matters pertaining to civil law. He shall, when present, preside at all meetings of the Board of Elders. He may sign, with the Secretary of the Board of Elders or any other proper officer of the church thereunto authorized by the Board of Elders, deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments which the Board of Elders has authorized to be executed, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Board of Elders or by this constitution to some other officer or agent of the church, or shall be required by law to be otherwise signed or executed; and in general shall perform all duties incident to the office of Chairman of the Board of Elders and such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Elders from time to time.

The Secretary of the Board of Elders shall: (a) keep the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of Elders in one or more books provided for that purpose; (b) see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of this constitution or as required by law; (c) be custodian of

the corporate records and of the seal of the church and see that the seal of the church is affixed to all documents the execution of which on behalf of the church under its seal is duly authorized; (d) sign with the Chairman of the Board of Elders or the Treasurer, deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments which the Board of Elders has authorized to be executed, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Board of Elders or by this constitution to some other officer or agent of the church, or shall be required by law to be otherwise signed or executed. In general, the Secretary shall perform all the duties generally incident to the office of secretary of a church, subject to the direction and control of the Board of Elders and of the Chairman of the Board of Elders. For secular purposes, and as required by the Alabama Nonprofit Corporation Law, the Chairman of the Board of Elders shall have the same authorities, and shall constitute, the President of the Church corporation and the Secretary of the Board of Elders shall have the same authorities, and shall constitute, the Secretary of the Church corporation.

Board of Deacons — It shall be the duty of the Deacons to have the care of all matters pertaining to the physical properties and finances of the church. They shall also be responsible for such temporal duties as ushering at church services and the provision of every material thing for proper worship. The Board of Deacons shall meet as often as necessary in order to transact the business falling under its jurisdiction. All actions of this Board of Deacons are subject to review and approval by the Board of Elders. The chairman of this Board of Deacons or his appointee shall report transactions of the Board of Deacons to the Board of Elders. Deacons may be ordained to serve the church's physical and financial needs without being a voting member of the Board of Deacons but under the authority of the Board of Elders and Board of Deacons.

Section 4 — Election of Officers

Senior Pastor — The Senior Pastor shall be recommended to the Church by the Board of Elders. He shall be called in a regularly convened congregational meeting by a two-thirds vote of the eligible membership present. The election shall be for an indefinite period of time. Termination of the Senior Pastor's services shall be in accordance with Article V. Section 6. In addition, while other ordained pastors are not considered officers, they are to be called and terminated in the same manner.

The Boards of Elders and Deacons — The Board members shall be elected by the church at the annual meeting for a term of three [3] years on a rotating basis in order that the terms of approximately one third of the members of the Boards shall expire each year. The election shall be by written ballot and those candidates receiving two thirds of the votes cast by the eligible membership present shall be elected, whereas, if a candidate receives less than two thirds of the votes cast, a vacancy shall exist on that Board until the next election. At the decision of the Board of Elders a special business meeting may be called in lieu of waiting until the next annual meeting.

No Officer shall be elected to either Board who has just completed three consecutive years in the same office. At least one year must elapse before the retiring officers may be re-elected to the same office. A retiring Elder may be immediately elected to the Board of Deacons, and a retiring Deacon may be immediately elected to the Board of Elders.

Should the office of an Elder or a Deacon become vacant before the expiration of his term in office, his successor may be elected by the congregation at a specially called congregational meeting to fill the unexpired term.

Within thirty days after the annual congregational meeting the Board of Elders shall elect a chairman and appoint a Secretary of the Board of Elders. Each shall hold office for one year or until his successor has been duly elected and qualifies or until his death or until he resigns or is removed in the manner hereinafter provided.

The Board of Deacons within the same time shall elect a chairman and a treasurer. Each shall hold office for one year or until his successor has been duly elected and qualifies or until his death or until he resigns or is removed in the manner hereinafter provided. The Senior Pastor shall not be eligible for these offices.

Candidates for officers of the church shall be recommended by nomination to the church by the Board of Elders at least thirty [30] days before the annual meeting. Additional suggestions or nominations may be made to the Board of Elders for their consideration, by any member, at least sixty [60] days before the annual meeting. Thereafter, no nominations may be made, in view of the fact that prayerful consideration could not be given them.

Part/Full Time Ministry and Support Staff — These staff members are hired and terminated by executive level pastoral staff in consultation with the Board of Elders and/or Board of Deacons.

Treasurer — The Board of Deacons shall elect the Treasurer. Unless necessity required otherwise, the office of Treasurer shall be filled from the Board of Deacons. He shall serve for one year, and may be reappointed at the expiration of his tenure of office.

Section 5 — Limitations of Officers

No officer or Board of Officers of this church shall assume any of the following prerogatives without expressed congregational consent:

1. To amend this constitution or by-laws.
2. To call a pastor.
3. To purchase, sell or mortgage real property.

4. Neither Board shall authorize the expenditure of more than 101% of the total approved church budget in any year without congregational consent.
5. The Board of Deacons shall have the authority to reallocate funds between the line items within the total approved budget.

Section 6 — Termination of Tenure of Officers

An office on any church board or the office of Senior Pastor shall be declared vacant when any of the following conditions occur:

1. Death
2. Resignation
3. Removal by a three-fourths vote of the Board of Elders for reasons consistent with the best interests of the church.

In any action taken under item c, the officer in question shall not be permitted a vote related to his dismissal. However, he shall be advised in writing of the charges against him, and shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers.

All ordained pastors, whether officers or not, shall be removed in the same manner.

Article VI — Business Meetings

Section 1 — Annual Meeting

The fiscal year of the church shall end on the thirty first day of December each year. The annual meeting of the congregation shall be held the first Sunday in December and announced to the congregation at the two Sunday morning services preceding said meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to present the annual report, elect officers and present the budget for approval for the upcoming year.

Section 2 — Quorum

Those members of the church who are eligible to vote and are present at a business meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All members age 18 and above are eligible to vote.

Section 3 — Special Business Meetings

Any regular or called meeting of the congregation may constitute a meeting for the transaction of business provided announcement of said meeting shall be announced from the pulpit two Sunday mornings preceding said meeting.

Special meetings of the congregation may be called any time by the Board of Elders, or upon written request of ten percent of the members who are eligible to vote.

In all business meetings, the chairman of the Board of Elders or his appointee shall preside.

Only those matters described in Article V, Section 5, or others which the Boards consider beyond their jurisdiction, need be presented to the congregation. The congregation shall, however, be kept informed regarding the actions of the official boards of the church.

In the transaction of business in all business meetings, the most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used in all cases not covered by this constitution.

Article VII — Amendments

Amendments cannot be made to Articles I, II and III.

All other portions may be revised and amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any regular business meeting provided that said revision or amendment is submitted in writing and announced from the pulpit two Sunday mornings before the vote is taken.

Article VIII — General

Section 1 — Prayer

All business meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer for blessing and divine guidance.

Section 2 — Attitude Toward Others

Our attitude toward our brother shall be conducted in the light of I John 4:7-21 and James 3. Our attitude toward other groups, though not in accord with us, should be governed in the light of Luke 6:27-46 and Matthew 28:19.

Section 3 — Missions

We believe that it is the obligation of the saved to witness by life and by word to the truth of the Holy Scriptures to seek to proclaim the gospel to all mankind [Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:19-20; Matthew 28:19-21].

Section 4 — Baptism

We believe that water baptism is important for discipleship and spiritual growth, but it is not essential to experience the new birth. We also recognize believers disagree as to the proper mode. Anyone who has received Christian baptism prior to uniting with First Bible Church and whose conscience is satisfied with his or her baptism, is not required to be re-baptized for membership. Because we practice believers' baptism by immersion, anyone requesting baptism in our church will be immersed after having made a credible profession of faith in Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

While baptism is not a condition for salvation, it is essential to be an obedient follower of Christ. First Bible Church does require baptism for church membership because it symbolizes our unity with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12) and the unity of the body of Christ, the church (Ephesians 4:4-5). The Pastors or Elders shall perform or arrange for baptismal services as required.

Section 5 — Ordination

Pastor - In the providence of God, He leads Spirit-filled men out from among us to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God and to lead our church. In such cases, after a thorough examination by the board of Elders pertaining to their integrity, doctrine and discipleship and a two thirds vote, the candidate will be ordained by the Board of Elders in the presence of the congregation.

Elders and Deacons - Elders and Deacons will be chosen in accordance with provisions of this constitution, and ordination shall be performed within a reasonable time of their election for any who have not been previously ordained.

Section 6 – Marriage

We believe that God has expressly and exclusively reserved the gift of sexual intimacy and intercourse for marriage. God expects the married to live in faithfulness to their spouse. God expects the unmarried to live pure and celibate lives, refraining from sexual intimacy (1 Th. 4:3; Mt. 19:12; Exodus 20:14; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:9,18; 7:2–5; Heb. 13:4; Mt. 15:18–20; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Ro. 1:26–27; Lev. 18:22; 1 Tim. 1:10; Gen. 19; cf. Jude 7).

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning, which is the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union designed by God to last as long as they both shall live. All teaching, counseling, and policies of First Bible Church shall affirm and abide by this definition of marriage (Gen. 2:18–25; Matthew 19:4–6; 1 Timothy 3:2; Heb. 13:4).

Revisions or Amendments made to the Constitution on October, 1973;
January, 1989; December, 1991; December, 1993; December, 2006;
December, 2015; November 2021