

Constitution
Of
Simsboro, First Baptist Church
of Simsboro Louisiana Inc.

PREAMBLE

For the purpose of preserving and making secure the principles of our faith and to the end that this body be governed in an orderly manner, consistent with the acceptable tenets a Baptist Church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of the church and to set forth the relationship of this body to other bodies of the same faith, we do declare and establish this Constitution

ARTICLE I: NAME

This body shall be known as Simsboro, First Baptist Church of Simsboro, Louisiana Inc.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

Simsboro, First Baptist Church exists to obey God, expand the kingdom, and change lives. Five primary strategies are central to our success:

We exist for **Celebration**

Celebration occurs every time we enter the presence of God. Scripture calls this worship and there are many expressions of worship including: singing, commitment, praying, hearing the word of God, giving, baptism, meditating, and the celebration of the Lord's supper. (Matthew 4:10, John 4:23-24)

We exist to **Change Lives**

Evangelism is the communication of God's word to a lost world. The Bible declares that God is not willing for anyone to perish and that God's desire is for his house to be full. The Bible places the responsibility of evangelism on the church. "His intent was that **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known." (Ephesians 3:10, 2 Peter 3:9)

We exist for **Service**

Ministry is the hands on demonstration of Christianity to one another and to the community we serve. God has put a high priority on ministry. The Bible says, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples-that you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

We exist for **Discipleship**

Discipleship is the growing of God's people in God's word. Discipleship brings about fulfillment and maturity in the church. "Let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity." (Hebrews 6:1)

We exist for **Prayer**

The first thing the early church did when they assembled was **pray** together. Prayer is the fuel that drives the ambitious priorities of the church and the spiritual power that changes the world. Christ demonstrated the power of prayer by making it a priority of his earthly ministry. If the church is going to be effective, it must pray. (Acts 1:14, John 17, 1 Peter 5:7)

ARTICLE III: STATEMENT OF FAITH

We recognize the Bible as the inspired word of God and as authoritative in matters of faith and practice. For a statement of faith, reference is made to the current "Baptist Faith and Message," adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE IV: RELATIONSHIPS

Our church is an autonomous body. Its government is vested in the membership. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body. However, we are voluntarily affiliated with the Concord Union Baptist Association, the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention; and therefore cooperate with and support financially these bodies. We are also glad to cooperate, insofar as it is practical and doctrinally sound, with other Christian groups in worthy endeavors as determined by the pastor, deacons, and church membership.

By-Laws
ARTICLE I: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section One: General: This is a sovereign Baptist Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto it the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of the church.

Membership in this church shall consist of all persons who have met the requirements for membership, as provided in the following articles, been approved by the congregation, and are listed on the membership roll.

Section Two: Candidacy: Any person may offer himself or herself as a candidate for membership in this church. New members are not required but strongly encouraged to complete a new member class. All such candidates shall be received by any of the following:

1. by profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and by baptism by immersion or,
2. by a promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist Church of like faith and practice, or
3. by statement of prior conversion experience and baptism by immersion, or
4. baptism by immersion from another denomination, or
5. by restoration as provided in Article 1, Section 6.

A two-thirds vote of those church members present and voting shall be required to elect such candidates to membership. Any dissent shall be resolved according to Article 1, Section 6 of these bylaws.

Section Three: Responsibilities of Church Members: In order to be a responsible member of Simsboro, First Baptist Church, members must:

1. Be in basic agreement with the churches statement of faith and purpose.
2. Discover, develop and deploy their spiritual gifts in the ministries of the church.
3. Be diligent to live according to the statements of the church covenant.
4. Be faithful in attendance to worship services and Bible study.
5. Become a student of the word of God and of prayer.
6. Make a commitment to personal evangelism and discipleship.
7. Encourage Scriptural stewardship of time, talents, tithes, and offerings.

Section Four: Voting Responsibilities of Members: Only active members of the church, over 16 years of age, are entitled to vote on questions submitted to the church in conference. An inactive member is defined as a member whose predominant attendance is at another church, or a member who has not attended this church in three months with exceptions to those members who are homebound due to medical reasons or age. Members must be present to vote. Any question of eligibility will be referred to the church clerk.

Section Five: Termination of Membership: Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

1. By death.
2. By transfer to another Baptist church.
3. By disciplinary action of this church as provided in Article 1Section 6 of these by-laws.
4. By joining with a church of another denomination.
5. By a written personal request for their name to be removed from our church membership.

Note: Letters of membership transfer shall be granted only to other churches of like faith and order and not to individual members requesting termination of membership.

Section Six: Discipline: It shall be the basic purpose of Simsboro, First Baptist Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The senior pastor, other members of the church staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. Reconciliation rather than punishment shall be the guideline that governs the attitude of one member toward another and of the church toward any individual member.

Should some serious condition exist which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, or whose conduct and/or beliefs violate Scriptural principals and jeopardizes God's reputation every reasonable measure will be taken by the senior pastor and by the deacons to resolve the problem in accordance with Matthew 18:15-35, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, & 2 Corinthians 2:1-11.

All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. If it is determined that the welfare of the church would best be served by the exclusion of the member, the church may take this action by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a meeting called for this purpose; and the church may proceed to declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the church.

Any person whose membership has been terminated for any condition which has made it necessary for the church to exclude him or her may upon his request be restored to membership by the recommendation of the pastor and deacons and a two-thirds vote of the members present at a meeting called for this purpose upon evidence of his repentance and reformation.

ARTICLE II: MEETINGS

Section One: This church shall hold regular meetings for worship, teaching, discipleship, and fellowship.

Section Two: The church shall hold monthly business meetings at which time the material and spiritual conditions of the church will be discussed, plans projected, and decisions made. All questions of parliamentary procedure not covered in this Constitution and bylaws will be decided in accordance with the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order

Section Three: A special called business meeting may be held to consider special items of a significant nature. A one-week notice must be given for all special called business meetings except in extreme circumstances. A special called business meeting can be called by the pastor, deacon chairman, and/or the church body. No item of business may be considered in a special called business meeting except the one matter or matters for which the meeting is called.

Section Four: Other meetings of the church as a whole or of authorized groups within the church shall be set according to the needs of the congregation and placed on the church calendar.

ARTICLE III: CHURCH OFFICERS

Section One: Officers: The officers of the church shall be a pastor, church staff, deacons, trustees, moderator, clerk, and such other officers as shall be required for the work of the church in any of its departments or organizations. All church officers shall be elected by the church.

Section Two: Pastor: The pastor is the under-shepherd of the church. He is responsible for leading the charge to function as a New Testament church. The pastor shall lead the congregation, the program organizations, and supervise the church staff and other church employees to perform their task. The pastor's job description, calling of the pastor, and all other matters related to his employment can be found in the church's Personnel Policy.

Section Three: Church Staff: The church staff shall include both pastoral staff and support staff. A job description, employment for each of church staff, and all other matters related to church staff's employment can be found in the church's personnel policy.

Section Four: Deacon Ministry: In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. The task of each deacon is to serve with the pastor and church staff in performing pastoral ministry task, proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers, care for the church members and other persons in the community, be a promoter of reconciliation, and lead the church to achieve its mission. All deacon qualifications and matters related to Deacon Ministry can be found in the church's Deacon Ministry Policy.

Section Five: Trustees: The church shall be served by three trustees. The nominating committee shall annually submit the names of three people for election by the church body. The trustees shall have no power to buy, mortgage, lease or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. The trustees' function shall be: to sign any and all legal paperwork, consult with attorneys if necessary, and relay legal and business information to the church.

Section Six: Moderator: The pastor shall be the moderator of all business sessions of the church. In the absence of the pastor, the deacon chairman shall preside; or in the absence of both, the deacon vice chairman shall preside.

Section Seven: Church Clerk: The nominating committee shall annually submit the name of a person for election by the church body. The clerk shall keep a record of all actions of the church in a designated place. All church records are church property and should be filed in the church office. It shall be his/her duty to attend, or be represented at, all church business meetings. He/she shall issue letters of transfer as authorized by the church, and preserve all papers, valuable letters, records that belong to the church, and preserve a true history of the church. It shall also be the duty of the clerk to see that an accurate roll of the church membership is kept with dates and methods of admission and dismissal, change in name, correct mailing addresses, and other pertinent information.

Section Eight: Ministry Teams: The church should use ministry teams as a means of accomplishing its mission and purpose. Unless otherwise specifically provided by church policy, all team shall be nominated by the nominating team and approved by vote of the church annually. The nominating team shall specify the number of members for each team. Teams are responsible for electing their own chairman and establishing operating guidelines. All teams shall be responsible to the church and shall bring a report to the church at its regular business meetings. The nominating team may also recommend to the church body for approval a special committee which is deemed necessary for a specific task. Special committee members shall serve until the task has been completed. The pastor, as well, or his representative from the church staff shall be an ex officio non-voting member of all ministry teams and special committees.

Article IV: Ordinances:

Section One: As set forth in Holy Scripture, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the ordinances of this church.

Section Two: Baptism: Baptism is the symbolic representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners and of the fact the person being baptized has in union with Christ died to their former life of sin, is being buried with Christ, and raised with Christ to walk in a new life with him. In obedience to the command of Christ, the ordinance of baptism shall be by immersion of the professed believer in water and shall be administered on the authority of, and in the presence of the church. The pastor, his designee, or someone elected by the church shall administer the ordinance.

Section Three: Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of worship. The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remind the participants of the death of Jesus, which was necessary to bring the participants into fellowship with God. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed at a worship service at least once a quarter. The pastor, pastoral staff members, and deacons shall be responsible for the administration of the Lord's Supper. The deacons shall be responsible for the physical preparations of the Lord's Supper.

Article V: General

Section One: Licensing & Ordination: Licensing and ordaining ministers and the ordination of deacons shall be under the authority of the church and the joint leadership of the pastor and the deacon ministry.

Section Two: Marriage & Sexuality: We believe that marriage is a union between one man and one woman, following biblical principles (Genesis 2:19–24, Leviticus 18:22, Matthew 19:4–6, Romans 1:18–27, Ephesians 5:22–33, Hebrews 13:4). We believe that God sanctions only the union in marriage of a man to a woman. Therefore, this church sanctions only a ceremony compatible with the standards. Due to our belief in the biblical teaching about marriage, same-sex couples will not be married in any facility or on any property owned by the church. Ministers of Simsboro, First Baptist Church will not perform any same-sex marriages or civil unions whether on or off church property. Doing so will be grounds for termination. Any other matter related to weddings may be found in the wedding policy of Simsboro, First Baptist Church.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with scripture nor the doctrines of the church.

Section Three: Property Holdings: It is agreed that the securing and maintaining of real property, buildings and equipment by this church shall be for the express purpose of providing facilities for public worship and for the engagement of the mission, education, and the benevolent interests of this church.

Section Four: Finances: The church recognizes God's plan as outlined in the Scriptures to be the basic method of financing the program of the church, that is that our tithes rightfully belong to God and that we should pay our tithes regularly into God's storehouse. Appropriate means shall be made to bring the truth of this biblical teaching on stewardship to the membership and thus to implement the plan for financing our church ministry. Opportunities for the giving of regular offerings shall be provided. A budget shall be adopted annually prior to the beginning of the church fiscal year, which begins each calendar year. All donations accepted by the church will be allocated to the general fund unless it is specified to a designated fund. Procedures for establishing such funds may be found in the designated fund policy of Simsboro, First Baptist Church.

Section Five: Church Year: The church program year shall begin on September 1; at which time all officers, teachers, and church ministry teams shall begin their term of office. The church financial year shall begin on January 1; at which time the new budget will take effect.

Article VI: Adoption & Amendments

Section One: This Constitution and Bylaws shall be in effect when agreed upon by a majority vote of the active members present at a regular or special called business meeting of the church.

Section Two: The adoption of this Constitution and bylaws shall repeal all previously adopted rules in conflict herewith.

Section Three: A copy of this Constitution & Bylaws shall be kept at all times in the church office and copies made available to all members.

Section Four: This Constitution & Bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular business meeting of the church; provided, however, that such amendments, alterations, or repeal must be given to the moderator (pastor) in writing; and this proposed change shall be presented to the church at least thirty days prior to the time the vote is taken. Further, the proposed change must be announced from the pulpit and printed in the church bulletin for two weeks prior to the business meeting.