

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of the Church shall be:

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SOUTH PLAINFIELD

ARTICLE II

GOVERNMENT

The government of the Church shall be vested in its members and it shall be amenable to no other ecclesiastical body. It shall always be an American Baptist Church, in covenant with the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey. For purposes of wider missionary endeavor, it shall be affiliated with the Raritan Association of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey and the American Baptist Churches U.S.A.

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE

The purposes of the Church shall be:

1. To promote the personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord both in the community and throughout the world;
2. To carry on systematic Christian Education based on the Bible;
3. To conduct services for the public worship of God;
4. To further the Kingdom of God by serving the community of which it is a part.

ARTICLE IV

CHURCH MEMBERS AND CHURCH AFFILIATES

Section A. MEMBERSHIP STATEMENT

Membership in or affiliation with this Church shall consist of such persons who are at least the age of twelve (12) and have professed their faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, as their Savior and Lord. It shall be the responsibility of the Pastor and Diaconate Board to properly instruct those seeking membership or affiliation. Members and Affiliates should fully understand and accept the views of faith and principles, as expressed in the Church Covenant, Vision Statement and this Constitution.

Section B. QUALIFICATIONS

A person may qualify as a Church Member in any of the following ways:

1. Believer's Baptism, by immersion when physically possible;
2. Transfer letter from another Christian Church (**See Note under Section 3**)
3. Profession of faith and Christian experience having been Baptized and Confirmed in another Christian Church.

Note: Those who have received baptism by a mode other than immersion shall be informed of the following: It is to be understood that this church teaches and practices Believer's Baptism. However, we make a distinction between what we believe and what we accept. We believe Believer's Baptism by immersion is the appropriate biblical mode,

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

but baptism is also seen in the New Testament as conversion-baptism. If these believers request to be re-baptized then that decision should be respected and honored, but they should not be coerced to do so.

4. Reinstatement, after confession of faith and giving evidence of repentance.

A person may qualify as a Church Affiliate in the following way:

1. Profession of faith and Christian experience

Section C. METHOD

Once qualified, and following a recommendation by the Pastor and the Diaconate Board, a person shall be received into church membership or affiliation after a favorable vote by the Church. Such persons shall be extended the “Right Hand of Fellowship” in recognition of their admission to all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of membership in or affiliation with this Church.

Section D. RESPONSIBILITIES

Church Members and Affiliates are expected to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to Christian life and to:

1. Strive to live by the Christian principles as expressed in the Church Covenant;
2. Attend meetings for instruction and worship;
3. Generously contribute their time and talents toward the support and missionary outreach of the Church;
4. Share in the Church’s organized work;
5. Provide financial support as faithful stewards of the Lord. We advocate the tithe, not as a New Testament commandment, but as a basic minimum under grace.

Section E. RIGHTS

Such Church Members, who are in full and regular standing, who do not hold Letters of Dismissal or Recommendation to another Church, may act and vote in the transactions of the Church. Church Members under the age of eighteen (18) can vote in all matters before the Church except legal matters of property and contracts. Church Members must be at least the age of eighteen (18) to be elected as officers on the various boards within the Church.

Church Affiliates have the same rights and responsibilities as Church Members, except as limited elsewhere in this Constitution.

Section F. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership in or affiliation with this Church may be terminated at death, resignation, or upon the recommendation of the Diaconate Board in the following ways:

1. If a Church Member, Letter of Transfer to another Church
2. Prolonged Inactive Status – See Section G (below)

Section G. INACTIVE CHURCH MEMBERS AND INACTIVE CHURCH AFFILIATES LIST

The Pastor and the Diaconate Board shall conduct an annual review of the membership list and report the results to the Church at the Annual Meetings. Any person who has not participated in the life of the Church for one (1) year shall be contacted regarding their membership or affiliate status. Those who express a desire to maintain active status shall continue as an active member or affiliate. In the event of lack of response to a written communication, or upon a member’s or affiliate’s request to be placed on the inactive list, the Diaconate Board shall place the names of those individuals on the inactive list. A letter to that effect shall be sent to such individuals.

After one (1) year on the inactive list, the member’s or affiliate’s name may be removed from the list and their membership or affiliation may be terminated.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Upon request, an inactive Church Member or Church Affiliate may become active upon faithful resumption in the life and duties of the Church and after the recommendation of the Diaconate Board.

ARTICLE V

CHURCH BUSINESS

Section A. CHURCH YEAR

The business of this Church will be transacted on a calendar year, January first to December thirty first.

Section B. MANNER OF CHURCH BUSINESS

In instances of procedures that are not specifically mentioned in this Constitution, Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed.

ARTICLE VI

CHURCH MEETINGS

Section A. WORSHIP

The Church shall maintain services for the public worship of God each Sunday morning. The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed on the first Sunday of the month and on special occasions that are appropriate. Other services of worship may be held when deemed necessary and desirable by the Congregation, Pastor and/or Diaconate Board.

Section B. BUSINESS MEETINGS

The Council shall set the agenda for all business meetings.

Annual Church Business Meeting:

1. Will be held on a Sunday in February, preferable the first or second Sunday.
2. All boards, active committees and organizations as well as the Pastor, Pastoral Staff (such as Assistant Pastor, Minister of Music, Youth Pastor) and Treasurer must submit a written report covering the previous year's activities and accomplishments. The written reports must be submitted to the Church Clerk three (3) weeks prior to the Annual meeting.
3. All boards, active committees and organizations as well as the Pastor, Pastoral Staff (such as Assistant Pastor, Minister of Music, Youth Pastor) and Treasurer must present their prospective goals for the next year.
4. Annual elections will be held at this meeting.
5. The Council will recommend and the congregation will approve those active committees and organizations that shall have the right to appoint a voting member to the Council for the Church year.
6. Three (3) Delegates to the Annual Session of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey will be elected for a one (1) year term.
7. Two (2) representatives to the Council of the Raritan Association will be elected for a one (1) year term.
8. Meeting Notification:
 - Must be announced in the Church bulletin and from the pulpit two (2) consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the meeting.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

- Reports and list of the nominees must be available to the congregation at least one (1) week before the meeting.

Regular Business Meetings:

1. At least two (2) other regular Business meetings shall be held in lieu of the regular Council meetings, one in the spring and one in the fall.
2. Meetings must be announced in the Church bulletin and from the pulpit one (1) Sunday preceding the meeting
3. The purpose of Regular Business meetings shall be to conduct the business of the Church, providing an opportunity for issues to be voted on by the congregation rather than only by the Council, which acts in their stead between Business meetings.

Section C. SPECIAL MEETINGS

A Special Church Business meeting may be called at any time during the year by the Pastor, the Diaconate Board, the Board of Trustees, the Board of Christian Education, Council, or in writing by seven (7) Church members with one week notice. Any meeting where the business to be transacted is the calling or dismissal of a pastor must be announced in the Church bulletin and from the pulpit two consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the meeting.

Section D. QUORUM

Ten percent (10%) of the active Church Members eligible to vote shall constitute a quorum at all Business meetings. A majority of those present and entitled to vote shall determine all questions except when the business to be transacted is the calling or dismissal of a Pastor, in which case a two-thirds vote shall be required.

ARTICLE VII

CHURCH COUNCIL

The Church Council shall consist of:

1. Pastor
2. Pastoral Staff, such as:
 - Assistant Pastor
 - Minister of Music
 - Youth Pastor
3. Moderator
4. Vice-moderator
5. Clerk
6. Treasurer
7. Chairperson or representative of the Board of Trustees
8. Chairperson or representative of the Board of Christian Education
9. Chairperson or representative of the Diaconate Board
10. Two (2) members elected at large from the congregation

In the event of the formation of additional Church Boards, through the amendment of these by-laws, Council membership shall be given to the chairperson or representative of the new Board.

Active committees and organizations, other than Boards, as recommended by the Council and approved by the congregation at the Annual Meeting, shall have the right to appoint a voting representative to Council. That representative must be a Church Member or Church Affiliate in

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

good standing. At all times the majority of the members of Council shall be Church Members as distinguished from Church Affiliates. If any representative has not yet attained the age of 18, he or she can vote on all matters that are before Council except legal matters of property and contract.

Section A. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To function as Church governance on behalf of the congregation between meetings of the congregation.
2. To act for the congregation on any matter affecting the Church as a whole, in its overall policies or its general welfare. This authority is subject to any restrictions imposed by action of the congregation or by this Church Constitution.
3. To oversee all aspects of the corporate life of the Church on behalf of the Church congregation.
4. To continuously examine the total program of the Church, including the coordination of the activities and the goals of the Church Boards.
5. To review the Church Budget and to approve the moderator's appointment of one or more auditors to audit annually the Church financial records.
6. To review and resolve any questions in regard to the Pastor's duties and responsibilities.

Section B. MEETINGS

The Church Council shall meet on a monthly basis between meetings of the congregation or as required with a minimum of at least six (6) meetings annually. The Pastor, moderator or any three (3) members of the Council may call a special meeting of the Council at any time. Council meetings are open to the congregation for observation and input, but voting is restricted to Council members.

Section C. CHURCH COUNCIL QUORUM

A majority of the Council membership shall constitute a voting quorum.

ARTICLE VIII

PASTOR

Section A. QUALIFICATIONS

The Pastor of this Church must be ordained or ordain-able within a one-year period based upon the standards of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey.

Section B. TERM

There shall be no term contract with the Pastor. The relationship may be terminated by the Pastor or by the Church Congregation upon thirty (30) days' notice or at once by mutual consent.

Section C. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To preach the Gospel.
2. To administer Christ's Ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism.
3. To provide pastoral care for the congregation.
4. To promote the spiritual interest of the Church.
5. To work with the Board of Christian Education to conduct Baptism classes.
6. To organize and develop the Church's strengths for the best possible service
7. To be an ex-officio member of the boards, committees and organizations of the Church
8. To attend or appoint a delegate to represent the Church in the Association of South Plainfield Churches.
9. To attend Council and business meetings.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

The Pastor will be extended the option of attending all other Church meetings.

ARTICLE IX

OFFICERS

Officers shall be selected by the Nominating Committee or nominated from the floor and shall be elected for a term of three (3) years. The election will be held at the Annual Church Business Meeting. Terms of office for Board members shall be staggered to prevent replacing the entire Board in one election year. Resignations of officers must be presented in writing to their Board or the Council (as appropriate). In case of a vacancy in the Moderator, Vice-Moderator or Clerk positions, the Council shall have the power to appoint a member to fill the unexpired term, the appointee shall be subject to the approval of the congregation at the next Church business meeting.

Officers of the Church shall be listed under Section A through G of this Article.

Section A. CHURCH CLERK

The Church Clerk shall be an active Church Member.

Responsibilities:

1. To take minutes and keep a record of all the proceedings of the Church at its Business and Council meetings.
2. To furnish the chairperson of each new committee with a copy of the resolution under which the committee is to act and a list of the names of those on the committee.
3. To faithfully maintain an up-to-date classified register of the names and addresses of the members.
4. To conduct the Church's correspondence; promptly issue all Letters of Dismissal when granted; and contact Churches for Letters of Transfer for prospective members.
5. In the absence of the Church Clerk at a Business or Council meeting, a member of the congregation shall be designated by the Moderator or Pastor to take the minutes.

Section B. MODERATOR

The Moderator shall be an active Church Member selected by the Nominating Committee and elected at the Annual Church Business meeting.

Responsibilities:

1. Set agenda for and conduct all Business and Council meetings.
2. Co-sign documents on behalf of the Congregation.
3. Appoint both the nominating and auditing committees, with approval of the Council.
4. Extend the "Right Hand of Fellowship" to all new members on behalf of the congregation.

Section C. VICE-MODERATOR

The Vice-Moderator shall be an active Church Member elected concurrently with the moderator. In the absence of the moderator or upon request of the moderator, the vice-moderator shall assume any or all responsibilities. In the absence of a Vice-Moderator, the Church Clerk shall call the meeting to order and ask for the election of a Moderator for that meeting.

Section D. DIACONATE BOARD

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

1. Membership:

- a. There shall be eight (8) Diaconate members for membership of one hundred (100) or less.
- b. There shall be one (1) additional Diaconate member for each additional twenty-five (25) members over one hundred (100).
- c. In case of a vacancy, the Board shall have the power to appoint a member to fill the unexpired term; the appointee shall be subject to the approval of the congregation at the next Church Business meeting.
- d. Church Members and Church Affiliates are qualified to serve provided that at all times the majority of Diaconate Board members shall be Church Members.

2. Organization:

- a. The Diaconate Board shall elect annually from among its members a:
 - Chairperson
 - Secretary
 - Diaconate Treasurer
- b. The Diaconate Board may appoint temporary committees as the need warrants.
- c. The Board shall designate a member to represent the Board at Council meetings.

3. Meetings:

- a. The Board shall hold regular meetings. Members absent from three (3) consecutive meetings without a just cause or proper notification may be dismissed from the Board by mutual consent of the Board members.
- b. The Pastor, Chairperson or any three members of the Board may call a special meeting of the Board at any time.
- c. A majority of members shall constitute a quorum.
- d. A majority of the Diaconate present shall determine a question.
- e. At the regular meeting following the Annual Church Business meeting the new Diaconate Board shall meet for the purpose of re-organization.

4. Responsibilities:

- a. To assist the Pastor in guiding and promoting the spiritual welfare of the Church.
- b. To cultivate the evangelistic purpose of the Church, to bring men and women to a personal acceptance and public confession of Jesus Christ.
- c. To assist the Pastor in the visiting and care of the sick or needy and, when necessary, to relieve their needs by appropriations from the Fellowship Fund or by other means.
- d. To examine the candidates for Church membership and make recommendations to the Church.
- e. In the absence or incapacity of the Pastor or any stated supply, to provide the temporary supply of the pulpit.
- f. To promote fellowship and service among the members.
- g. To welcome strangers and visitors at the Church services.
- h. To maintain worship attendance records.
- i. To prepare for Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- j. To oversee the Church membership list, as maintained by the Church Clerk.

A Diaconate member unwilling to participate in the responsibilities of the Board may be dismissed from the Board by mutual consent of the members of the Board.

Section E. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

1. Membership:

- a. There shall be a minimum of five (5) and a maximum of seven (7) Trustees. In the case of a vacancy, the Trustees shall have the power to appoint a member to fill the unexpired term; the appointee shall be subject to the approval of the congregation at the next Church Business meeting.
- b. Church Members and Church Affiliates are qualified to serve provided that at all times the majority of the Board of Trustees members shall be Church Members.

2. Organization:

- a. The Board of Trustees shall elect annually from among its members a:
 - Chairperson
 - Church Treasurer
 - Assistant Church Treasurer
 - Superintendent of the Cemetery
 - Assistant Superintendent of the Cemetery
- b. The Board of Trustees may appoint temporary committees as the need warrants.
- c. The Board of Trustees shall designate a member to represent the Board at Council meetings.

3. Meetings:

- a. The Board shall hold regular meetings unless otherwise designated. A member absent from three (3) consecutive meetings without a just cause or proper notification may be dismissed from the Board by mutual consent of the Board members.
- b. A special meeting of the Board of Trustees may be called at any time by the Pastor, the Chairperson, or any three members of the Board.
- c. Four (4) members shall constitute a quorum.
- d. A majority of the Trustees present shall determine a question.

4. Responsibilities:

- a. It shall be the duties of the Board of Trustees, as legal representatives of the First Baptist Church of South Plainfield, New Jersey, to hold the property in the trust and to provide for pecuniary liabilities.
- b. To appoint and assign duties for the Church Treasurer and the Assistant Church Treasurer, Financial Secretary, the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent of the Cemetery.
- c. To prepare and present a yearly budget at the Annual Church Business Meeting. The Board will review with the other Boards and approved organizations of the Church their planned budgetary expenditures for the upcoming year and incorporate into the budget.
- d. To have charge of the Hillside Cemetery of Samptown, having authority to sell plots at prices arranged by the Board of Trustees.
- e. To appoint and assign the duties of a Cemetery Committee.
- f. To make and enter into contracts on behalf of the Church in respect to all matters within its authority as herein or specifically concurred. All deeds, contracts and other instruments shall be executed in the name of the Church. Any action regarding the disposition of Church real estate shall be presented to the congregation.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

A Board of Trustees member unwilling to participate in the responsibilities of the Board may be dismissed from the Board by mutual consent of the members of the Board.

Section F: BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

1. Membership:

- a. The Board shall consist of a minimum of two (2) members and a maximum of six (6) members.
- b. In case of a vacancy, the Board shall have the power to appoint a member to fill the unexpired term; the appointee shall be subject to the approval of the congregation at the next Church Business meeting.
- c. Church Members and Church Affiliates are qualified to serve provided that at all times the majority of the Board of Christian Education's members shall be Church Members.

2. Organization:

- a. The Board may appoint temporary committees as the need warrants.
- b. The Board shall designate a member to represent the Board at Council meetings.

3. Meetings:

- a. The Board shall hold regular meetings, unless otherwise designated. A member absent from three (3) consecutive meetings without a just cause or proper notification may be dismissed from the Board by mutual consent of the Board members.
- b. A special meeting of the Board may be called at any time by the Pastor or any member of the Board.
- c. A majority of those present shall determine a question.

4. Responsibilities:

- a. To organize and administer the educational programs of the Church, including preparation for Baptism. It shall be responsible for developing and interpreting to the Church its educational objectives and goals with consent of the members of the Board.
- b. To study and meet the educational needs of the Church.
- c. To enlist, appoint, and train as appropriate all education workers.
- d. To evaluate and supervise the curriculum of the educational program.
- e. To coordinate and approve the outreach programs of the groups and organizations under its jurisdiction, which may include but are not limited to the following: Children's Education, Adult Education, Baptist Youth Fellowship, Vacation Bible School, 30 Hour Famine, Nursery, and Acolytes.
- f. To administer the educational budget as provided by the Board of Trustees.
- g. To maintain Sunday school attendance records.

A Board of Christian Education member unwilling to participate in these responsibilities of the Board may be dismissed from the Board by mutual consent of the members of the Board.

Section G: MEMBERS AT LARGE

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Members at Large shall be active Church Members and are full members of the Council. They are responsible for listening to the Church Congregation and for communicating their issues, needs and interests to the Council.

- a. Member's at Large absent from three (3) consecutive Council meetings without a just cause or proper notification may be dismissed from the Council by mutual consent of the Council members.
- b. In case of a vacancy, the Council shall have the power to appoint a replacement Member at Large to fill the unexpired term; the appointee shall be subject to the approval of the congregation at the next Church Business meeting.

Section H: MEMBERS FOR LIFE

Whenever the congregation feels it is desirable they may elect an individual to a particular Board as an honorary life member of that Board.

ARTICLE X

PERMANENT COMMITTEES

Permanent Committees report directly to the Church Council.

1. **Nominating Committee:** The Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the Moderator and approved by the Council in the September prior to the Annual Church Business Meeting.

Responsibilities:

- a. To communicate open positions and terms to the Church membership.
 - b. To approach and nominate Church members to fill the open positions.
 - c. To provide a copy of the Constitution and By-laws to the nominees.
 - d. To present the slate of nominees at the Annual meeting. List of the nominees must be available to the congregation at least one (1) week before the annual meeting.
 - e. To recommend the organizations and committees that should have a voting member on the Council.
 - f. To maintain staggered terms of the Boards.
2. **Auditing Committee:** The Auditing Committee shall be appointed by the Moderator and approved by the Council in the September prior to the Annual Church Business Meeting.

Responsibilities:

- a. To conduct the audit of the Unified Budget.
 - b. To provide a written report of the audit findings of the committee.
3. **Pastoral Relations Committee:** Each board shall furnish a representative. The Nominating Committee shall appoint at least one (1) and up to four (4) representatives from the Church at large for three (3) year terms. Upon the call of a new Pastor, members of the Pastoral Search Committee shall be invited to participate in the Pastoral Relations Committee.

Responsibilities:

- a. To work directly with the Pastor in the interpretation of his or her role in the Church

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

- b. To provide for an effective means of communication between the Church membership and the Pastor
- c. To conduct reviews of the Pastor in accordance with the Pastor Covenant

ARTICLE XI

OPTIONAL COMMITTEES

Committees shall be appointed as a need arises. Committees may include but are not limited to:

1. **Sanctuary Committee:** The Sanctuary Committee shall be appointed and its duties assigned by the Diaconate Board.
2. **Usher Committee:** The Usher Committee shall be appointed and its duties assigned by the Diaconate Board.
3. **Nursery Committee:** The Nursery Committee shall be appointed and its duties assigned by the Board of Christian Education.
4. **Music Committee:** The Music Committee shall be appointed and its duties assigned by the Diaconate Board.
5. **Pastoral Search Committee:** Each Board shall furnish a representative and the Nominating Committee shall appoint four (4) representatives from the Church at large. The Pastoral Search Committee shall be formed at the request of the Diaconate Board when deemed necessary.

Responsibilities:

- a. To select candidates for the position of Pastor
 - b. To present only one (1) candidate at a time to the membership of the Church for consideration and calling to the Ministry.
 - c. To seek guidance and assistance from the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey.
 - d. To issue periodic progress reports to the congregation.
6. **Stewardship Committee:** The Stewardship Committee shall be appointed and its duties assigned by the Board of Trustees.
 7. **Constitution and By-Laws Committee:** The committee shall be a volunteer committee supported by each board and the general congregation (minimum of five (5) volunteers). The Constitution and By-Laws Committee shall report to the Council.
 8. **Renewal Team:** The purpose of the Renewal Team is to support the ongoing spiritual activities of the church by various means. Members will be appointed by pastoral recommendation. The Renewal Team shall report to the Council.

ARTICLE XII

ORGANIZATIONS

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

1. **The American Baptist Women's Ministries (Women's Evening Circle) of the First Baptist Church of South Plainfield** is hereby recognized as the official women's organization of the Church, as organized and regulated by its Constitution and By-laws.
2. **The Baptist Youth Fellowship of the First Baptist Church of South Plainfield** is hereby recognized as the official youth organization of the Church, as organized and regulated by its Constitution and By-laws.

ARTICLE XIII

AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be changed or amended at any annual, regular, or special Church Business Meeting called for that purpose by a two-thirds vote of the members present. The proposed change or amendment shall be posted and read two Sundays prior the meeting.