

Adopted in Church Conference on February 22 , 2017

PREAMBLE

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body of believers may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the general tenets common among Baptist people, for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member and the freedom of action of this body of believers with respect to its relation to other churches, we do declare and establish this constitution.

ARTICLE I – NAME AND LOCATION

The name of this body of believers shall be the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Georgia. The church facilities are located at 751 Green Street, NW, Gainesville, Georgia 30501 according to the present postal address system.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of the First Baptist Church shall be to maintain the public worship of God, to witness to all people of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, to exalt the Christian way of life, to aid members in growth in Christian maturity, and, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to cooperate with other churches and Christian groups in promoting the Christian faith and in extending the Kingdom of God throughout the earth.

ARTICLE III–BELIEFS

Section 1. Primary Article of Faith

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain, and authoritative standard by which all human conduct, beliefs and religious opinions are to be tried. The criterion by which the Scriptures are to be interpreted is Jesus Christ under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Section 2. Accepted Beliefs

The beliefs of this church are in general accord with those characteristic among Southern Baptists as stated in the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. Since the founding of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in 1990, this church has come to share its strong priorities on missions and theological education.

A. Authority:

1. **Christ as Lord.** The ultimate source of authority is Jesus Christ the Lord, and every area of life is to be subject to His Lordship.

2. **The Scriptures.** The Bible as the inspired revelation of God's will and way, made full and complete in the life and teachings of Christ, is the authoritative rule of faith and practice.
3. **The Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is God actively revealing Himself and His will to mankind. He therefore interprets and confirms the voice of divine authority.

B. The individual:

1. **Worth.** Every individual is created in the image of God and therefore merits Christian love, respect and consideration as a person of infinite dignity and worth.
2. **Competence.** Each person is competent under God to make his or her own moral and religious decisions and is responsible to God in all matters of moral and religious duty.
3. **Freedom.** Every person is free under God in all matters of conscience and has the right to embrace or reject religion and to witness to his or her religious beliefs, always with proper regard for the rights of other persons.

C. The Christian Life:

1. **Salvation by Grace.** Salvation from sin is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, conditioned only upon trust in and commitment to Christ the Lord.
2. **The Demands of Discipleship.** The demands of Christian discipleship, based on the recognition of the lordship of Christ, relate to the whole of life and call for full obedience and complete devotion.
3. **The Priesthood of the Believer.** Each Christian, having direct access to God through Christ, is his or her own priest and is under obligation to become a priest for Christ in behalf of other persons.
4. **The Christian Home.** The home is basic in God's purpose for human well being, and the development of Christian family life is a supreme concern of all believers in Christ.
5. **The Christian as a Citizen.** The Christian is a citizen of two worlds – the kingdom of God and the State – and is responsible to obey the law of the land as well as the higher law of God.

D. The Church:

1. **Its Nature.** The church, in its inclusive sense, is the fellowship of persons redeemed by Christ and made one in the family of God. The church, in its local sense, is a fellowship of baptized believers, voluntarily banded together for worship, nurture, and service.
2. **Its Membership.** Membership in the church is a privilege properly extended only to regenerated persons who voluntarily accept baptism and commit themselves to a faithful discipleship in the body of Christ.
3. **Its Ordinances.** Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two ordinances of the church, are symbolic of redemption, but their observance involve spiritual realities in personal Christian experience.
4. **Its Government.** The church is an autonomous body, subject only to Christ, its head. Its democratic government, properly, reflects the equality and responsibility of the believer under the lordship of Christ.

5. **Its Relation to the State.** Church and state are both ordained of God and are answerable to Him. They should remain separate, but they are under the obligation of mutual recognition and reinforcement as each seeks to fulfill its divine function.
 6. **Its Relation to the World.** The church is to be responsible in the world, but its character and ministry are not to be of the world.
- E. The Church's Continuing Task:**
1. **Centrality of the Individual.** The individual's worth, needs, moral freedom, and potential for Christ have primary consideration in the life and work of the church.
 2. **Worship.** Worship – which involves an experience of communion with the living and holy God – calls for an emphasis on reverence and orderliness, on confession and humility, and an awareness of the holiness and majesty and grace and purpose of God.
 3. **The Christian Ministry.** Every Christian is under obligation to minister or to serve with complete self-giving, but God in His wisdom calls many persons in a unique way to dedicate their lives to full time church related ministry.
 4. **Evangelism.** Evangelism, which is primary in the mission of the church and the vocation of every Christian, is the proclamation of God's judgment and grace in Jesus Christ and the call to accept and follow Him as Lord.
 5. **Missions.** Missions seeks the extension of God's redemptive purpose in all the world through evangelism, education, and Christian service and calls for the utmost dedication on the part of Christians to this task.
 6. **Stewardship.** Christian stewardship conceives the whole of life as a sacred trust from God and requires the responsible use of life, time, talents, and substance – personal and corporate – in the service of Christ.
 7. **Teaching and Training.** The nature of Christian faith and Christian experience and the nature and needs of persons make teaching and training imperative.
 8. **Christian Education.** Christian education grows out of the relation of faith and reason and calls for academic excellence and freedom that are both real and responsible.
 9. **Self-Criticism.** The church, if it is to remain healthy and fruitful, must accept the responsibility of constructive self-criticism.

ARTICLE IV– CHARACTER

Section 1. Polity

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body or secular organization.

Section 2. Relationships

The church recognizes and accepts the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation with other churches and religious groups. Consistent with the principle of voluntary

cooperation, the church maintains relationships with the churches of the Chattahoochee Baptist Association, the Georgia Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Section 3. Doctrine and Authority

The church receives the Scriptures as its authority in all matters of faith and practice. The accepted beliefs and ideals set forth in Article III express common religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, but are only guides in interpretation, and have no authority over the conscience.

ARTICLE V – AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by three-fourths of the members present and voting at a special meeting called for this purpose at the conclusion of the Sunday morning worship service, said proposed amendment having been laid before the church in writing at a business meeting not less than one month before the time of the proposed action and read from the pulpit at the Sunday morning worship service next succeeding such proposal.