

**CONSTITUTION OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
LOWELL, MICHIGAN**

August 2016

Our Purpose:

We exist to make disciples who make disciples.

Our Vision:

**We desire to see
*Christ-Centered,
Kingdom-Focused homes*
on every block in the Lowell Community.**

Our Mission:

**We endeavor to prepare, resource, and encourage the
home to be Christ-Centered and Kingdom-Focused.**

THE PREAMBLE

Basing our faith wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, and believing in the teachings of the Holy Bible as the plenarily (complete, absolute, full) and verbally (word for word...every word) inspired Word of the living God, we have affiliated ourselves with one another as a body of immersed believers, and we adopt this constitution as a declaration of our convictions.

CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LOWELL

The Bible admonishes us saying, "Let all things be done decently and in order." To this end do we members of the First Baptist Church of Lowell, Kent County, Michigan execute and adopt the following Articles of Association.

ARTICLE 1 NAME

The name declared by this non-profit corporation and by which it shall be called in laws is the First Baptist Church of Lowell, Michigan. Hereafter in this document will be referred to as FBC Lowell.

ARTICLE 2 PURPOSE, VISION, MISSION

Section 1. Our Purpose: We exist to make disciples who make disciples.

Section 2. Our Vision: We desire to see Christ-Centered, Kingdom-Focused homes on every block in the Lowell Community.

Section 3. Our Mission: We endeavor to prepare, resource, and encourage the home to be Christ-Centered and Kingdom-Focused.

ARTICLE 3 CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Scriptures

We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the old and new testaments, as originally written; that the whole of Scripture was inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and is without error in the original manuscripts, and that God, through the Holy Spirit, spoke through men to communicate His very words to humanity (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian unity and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed, and opinions shall be tried (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).

The True God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God (Exod. 20:2–3; Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:6), an infinite Spirit, the Maker and supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1). He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love (Rev. 4:11). We believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16–17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14), equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (John 14–16).

Jesus

We believe that Jesus is the promised messiah (Gen. 3:15; 12:7; 17:19; Gal. 3:16), born of the virgin Mary in a miraculous manner through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that He is both the Son of God and God the Son (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:35; John 1:14). We believe that He lived a perfect life without sin and died in our place so that we may have life (Heb. 2:17; 4:14–15). We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and in His ascension into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest interceding for us (Matt. 28:6–7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2–6, 39, 51; John 20:27; Acts 1:9–11; 1 Cor. 15:4; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 5:9–10; 7:25; 8:6; 12:2; 1 John 2:1; Rev. 3:21).

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son, and of the same nature (Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 14:16, 26; Heb. 9:14). He was active in the creation of the world (Gen. 1:1–3). He restrains the evil one until God sees fit to remove this ministry, ushering in the time of tribulation (2 Thess. 2:6–8). He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8–11). He bears witness to the truth of the gospel in preaching and testimony through the ministry of illumination (Acts 5:30–32; 1 Cor. 2:10–14). He is the agent in the new birth (Mark 1:8; John 1:33; 3:5–6), who seals (Eph. 1:13–14), gifts (1 Cor. 12:1–7), guides/teaches (John 14:26), testifies to salvation in (Rom. 8:16), sanctifies (Titus 3:5), and helps (Rom. 8:26–27) the believer. We believe that the gifts often referred to as signs and wonders are not normative today for the church in America, and these gifts do not give new revelation to the universal church.

The Devil or Satan

We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, the Devil, and that he was created by God as an angel but through pride and rebellion became the enemy of his creator (Isa. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:12–18); that he became the unholy god of this age and the ruler of all the powers of darkness (Matt. 4:1–11; 2 Cor. 4:4); and that he is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

Creation

We believe the biblical account of the creation of the physical universe, angels, and man; that this account is neither allegory nor myth but a literal, historical account of the direct, immediate creative acts of the Triune God; that man was created by a direct work of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all men are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race (Gen. 1–2; Col. 1:16–17; John 1:3).

The Fall of Man

We believe that the first man and woman were created in innocence (in the image and likeness of God) under the law of their Maker (Gen. 1:26–31), but by voluntary transgression Adam fell from his sinless state (Gen. 3:1–6), and all humanity is affected by his disobedience (Rom. 5:12, 19). As a result, every human being is deeply damaged by the fall (Rom. 3:10–19), is a partaker of Adam's fallen nature, and is a sinner by nature and by conduct, and therefore under God's just condemnation without defense or excuse (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and completely by grace through an individual's faith in Jesus (Eph. 2:8–9; Acts 15:11), who is the mediator of the New Covenant that believers have with God (Heb. 9:15). Jesus, by the appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature (Heb. 2:14–18), yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21), and honored the divine law by his personal obedience (Isa. 53:4–7), thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior (Phil. 2:7–8). We believe that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin (1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 4:10); His sacrifice was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place

(Rom. 3:22–26). He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior (1 Cor. 15:3).

We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith (John 3:16; Rom. 10:9; 1 John 1:9; Eph. 2:8–9).

Grace and the New Birth

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again (John 3:3). When sinners put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior (Rom. 10:9), they immediately become a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). Although every believer was dead in trespasses and in sins (Eph. 2:1), he or she was made alive in his or her new nature and received eternal life, the free gift of God (Eph. 2:5; Rom. 6:23). This new creation is brought about by the sovereign God in a manner above human comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth. Though we believe salvation is by God’s grace through faith, and not by works (Eph. 2:8–9), works are a natural evidence of a grace-filled life and what we are called to do (Eph. 2:10; John 14:15).

Justification

We believe that justification is the judicial act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous (1 John 4:10; Rom. 3:24). We believe that justification is a free gift, not in consideration of any work of righteousness that an individual has done but solely through faith in the Redeemer’s shed blood (Rom. 3:24; 4:5; 5:1, 9; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9).

Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the divine “setting-apart” of the believer to God accomplished in a threefold manner:

1. A believer *has been sanctified* (Heb. 10:10–14; 1 Cor. 1:30; Jude 24–25). When an believers put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation they are sanctified eternally based on the redemption in Christ, establishing him or her in a position of holiness before God.

2. The believer *is being sanctified* (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 4:3). This is a continual process within believers as the Holy Spirit reveals the Word of God to them and they apply it to life (Phil. 2:12–13).

3. The believer *will be sanctified*. The final accomplishment of this process will happen at the Lord's return (1 Thess. 5:23).

The Security of the Saints

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Phil. 1:6; John 10:28–29; Rom. 8:35–39; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; Jude 24–25).

The Church

We believe that when the Scriptures talk about the church, they are referring to either the universal or local church. The universal church is composed of all New Testament believers who make up the body of Christ. It is composed of local congregations throughout the world (1 Cor. 12:12–27; Acts 15; Eph. 3:1–6).

The local church is a visible expression of the universal church. It is an organized congregation of believers, associated by a covenant of faith and the fellowship of the gospel. The local church observes the ordinances of Christ (Acts 2:41–42), is ruled by Christ its head, and exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges entrusted to it by His Word (Rom. 12:3–6; 1 Cor. 12). We believe that the local church's officers are elders and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). We believe the true mission of the church is to make disciples of all people groups. This includes the faithful witnessing of Christ to all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey Christ (Matt. 28:19–20). We hold that the local church has the responsibility of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5), and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22–23; 5:21–32). We believe that the church is to contend for the faith (Jude 3) and protect it against false doctrine (Titus 2:1; Rev. 2–3; 2 Tim. 1:13–14).

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that there are two ordinances that are to be practiced in the church today: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is God's ordained (Matt. 28:18–20) means for a believer to publically signify (Col. 2:11–12) the New Covenant relationship through the symbolic dramatization of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1–11). This dramatization is best captured by immersion into water (Acts 8:36–38) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Because of this, we believe baptism post-salvation is a prerequisite for membership into the local church.

The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes (Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26) and should always be preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Cor. 11:27–32). We believe that the bread and cup are symbols of Jesus' body and blood that were shed on the cross and are important to celebrate together (1 Cor. 11:23–26; Acts 2:42). We do not believe that the elements transform into the actual body or blood of Christ, nor do we believe that there is a spiritual presence contained within the elements, but that they serve as a reminder of Christ and provide anticipation for His return.

Civil Government

We believe that the civil government is divinely appointed for the interest and good order of human society (Rom. 13:1–2). We believe that Christians are to pray for those leaders (1 Tim. 2:1–4; Jer. 29:7) and conscientiously honor and obey them (Rom. 13:3–7; Matt. 22:21; Acts 23:5), except in laws that oppose the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming King of Kings (Acts 4:19–20; 5:29; Dan. 3:17–18). We also believe that opposition toward laws that violate God's will should be carried out with respect toward those in authority (1 Pet. 2:17–18).

Israel

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God's eternal covenant people. Israel is now dispersed because of its disobedience and rejection of Christ, but it will be regathered in the Holy Land during the tribulation and will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ (Gen. 13:14–17; Rom. 11:1–32; Ezek. 37).

Rapture and Subsequent Events

We believe in the premillennial return of Christ, and that at that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Cor. 15:42–44, 51–54; Phil. 3:20–21; Rev. 3:10).

We believe that the tribulation will be culminated by the revelation of Christ in power and great glory to sit upon the throne of David and to establish the millennial kingdom (Dan. 9:25–27; Matt. 24:29–31; Luke 1:30–33; Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–9; Acts 2:29–30; Rev. 20:1–4, 6).

The Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked (Prov. 14:32; Mal. 3:18; Gen. 18:23). We believe only those who are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in His esteem (Rom. 6:17–18). We believe that all who continue in unrepentance and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse. We believe that this distinction holds among human beings both in and after death, in the everlasting blessing of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in the Lake of Fire (Matt. 25:31–46; Luke 16:19–31; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11–15).

Marriage and Sexuality

Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for sexual behavior: monogamous marital relations between one man and one woman (Gen. 1:27–28; 2:18, 21–24; Matt. 19:4–6; Mark. 10:5–8; Heb. 13:4) or sexual celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7; Matt. 19:12). Both are gifts from God, given as He wills for His glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in His gift to them.

We believe that marriage is a sacred union between one man and one woman, established by God from the very beginning (Gen. 2:22–24). This union serves as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church, which is referred to as His bride (Eph. 5:25–32). Marriage is more than a contractual relationship recognized by the state; it is a covenant that one man and one woman make with each other before God to live as one in this life (Mal. 2:14–15). This sacred covenant between one man and one woman is a lifetime commitment and should never be entered into lightly.

God created human beings as male and female (Gen. 1:27). The complementary, relational nature of the human race as “male and female” reflects the created order given by God when He created human beings “in His image” (Gen. 1:26–27; 5:1, 3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23–24; Col. 3:10). In our limited understanding, we are called to receive the gift of being created male or female. All of human existence, including our sexuality, has been deeply damaged

by the fall into sin (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23; 5:12). We all are sinners, broken in some measure by this fall.

Everything, from our environment to our bodily genetic code, has been ravaged by sin and the fall. Whether the homosexual attractions people experience are the product of their environment, their genetics, or another source, they are not what God intends and so do not render homosexual behavior legitimate. Temptation, including sexual attractions, is not sin. Sin is yielding to temptation. Jesus himself was tempted, yet without sin (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15).

ARTICLE 4 ASSOCIATION

Section 1. This church shall not cooperate or fellowship with any organization that permits the presence of modernistic teaching (i.e., any group or organization that denies the fundamentals of the faith) or apostate leadership.

Section 2. This church shall fellowship with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches.

ARTICLE 5 The Nominating Committee

Purpose of the Nominating Committee:

The Nominating Committee exists to search amongst the members of FBC Lowell for individuals that meet the qualifications to serve as Lay Elders, Mercy Deacons, and Administrative Deacons.

Responsibilities:

1. To select from the nominating committee members its own chairman.
2. To confirm that qualifications for the office are met and that each nominee under consideration can fulfill duties of the office before placement upon the final ballot.
3. To search for members that are in good standing in the congregation that meet the qualifications to serve as Lay Elders, Mercy Deacons, and Administrative Deacons and who are willing to serve as such.
4. To work with the Elders to develop and annually review the procedure to be used in the selection process of Lay Elders and Deacons.
5. To ensure that the procedures used in the selection process follow the appropriate general guidelines listed in the office of Elders and the office of Deacons sections below.

6. To develop a final ballot of nominees to the Elders. Considerations for placement upon the final ballot shall be given to the following:
 - a. Persons who, under conviction of God to minister in a specific area, make it known to the committee of their desire to hold office.
 - b. Persons whose name is recommended for office by a member of the church to the committee.
 - c. As the Lord may direct the committee.

Terms of Office:

1. A Committee member shall serve on the committee for one (1) year.
2. A member may serve on the committee as many consecutive terms that they wish but must be re-elected by the congregation each year.

Selection of Committee members:

1. At least three (3) members in good standing that are not currently an Elder or Deacon will be elected by the congregation to serve.
2. In addition to the above members, the Elders may choose up to three (3) current Elders to serve on the committee. A current Elder should not be the chairman of committee.

ARTICLE 6 OFFICERS

The Office of Elders

Biblical Teaching on Elders Section:

General Teaching on Elders:

1. The Scriptures clearly speak of two distinct offices (Phil. 1:1; 1 Timothy 3):
 - a. Elders
 - b. Deacons
2. Elders are plural and church is singular (Acts 14:23; 15:4; 20:17; Phil. 1:1).
3. There are three titles given to describe the office of elder:
 - a. Elder: *Presbuteros* (Adjective)/*Presbuterion* (Noun)/*Presbeuo* (Verb)
 - b. Bishop: *Episkope* (Noun)/ *Epikopos* (Noun)/*Episkopeo* (Verb)
 - c. Pastor/Shepherd: *Poimaino* (Verb)/*Poimen* (Noun)
4. All three titles are used interchangeably.
 - a. Titus 1:5-7 uses elder and overseer (bishop) interchangeably.
 - b. 1 Peter 5:1-2 and Acts 20:17-28 uses all three titles.
 - i. Elder conveys the maturity of the person.
 - ii. Overseer describes their role to govern.

- iii. Pastor/Shepherd describes their role as teachers of sound doctrine and protectors from false doctrine.
5. Elders served alongside the Apostles (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, and 22).
 6. Qualifications for the office of Elder.
 - a. The work of the Holy Spirit in their life (Acts 6:3; 20:28).
 - b. Their character (1 Tim. 3).
 - c. Their ability to handle God's Word (Titus 1).
 7. Appointing elders should be done carefully and without compromise (1 Tim. 5:21-22).
 8. Elders were involved in overseeing finances (Acts 11:30).
 9. There seems to be a distinction between ruling elders and elders who primarily give themselves to the teaching of God's Word (1 Tim. 5:17).
 10. Scripture justifies a paid position for elders... especially teaching elders (1 Tim 5:17-18).
 11. Accusations against elders should not be entertained unless there are multiple witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).

The Biblical Priority of an Elder:

1. The Ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).
2. The Ministry of Prayer (Acts 6:4).
3. Lead the church by modeling an authentic faith in Christ (1 Peter 5:3).
4. Lead the church without lording over the church (1 Peter 5:3).

Biblical Duties of an Elder:

1. Keep watch over themselves (Acts 20:28).
2. Keep watch over the people in their local church (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9).
 - a. Encourage the church through sound teaching (Titus 1:9).
 - b. Refute false teaching (Titus 1:9).
3. Direct the affairs of the local church (1 Tim 3:4-5; 5:17).
4. Devote themselves to prayer for the church (Acts 6:4; James 5:14).
5. Administer the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14).

Biblical Qualifications/Characteristics of an Elder:

1. High Moral Character:

- a. Integrity (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7).
 - b. Self-Controlled (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).
 - c. Good reputation outside the church (1 Tim. 3:7).
 - d. Clearly demonstrates that he is a one-woman man (1 Tim. 3:2).
 - e. Not a drunkard (1 Tim. 3:2-3; Titus 1:7).
 - f. Not self-pleasing (Titus 1:7).
2. Humble Attitude:
- a. Respectful of others (1 Tim. 3:2).
 - b. Fair and Sensible, is not quick to take matters personally (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:8).
 - c. Peaceable (1 Tim. 3:3).
 - d. Model Servant Leadership/Not Lording Over (1 Peter 5:3).
 - e. Eager to Serve (Acts 20:35; 1 Peter 5:2).
 - f. Not quick tempered (Titus 1:7).
 - g. Generous to guests (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).
 - h. Not a quarrelsome person (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).
 - i. Not motivated by money (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).
 - j. Just (Titus 1:8).
3. Skills:
- a. Skilled in Teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9).
 - b. Able to refute false teaching (Titus 1:9).
 - c. Able to manage his own home well (1 Tim. 3:4).
4. Spiritual Life:
- a. Full of the Spirit (Acts 6:3).
 - b. Devout in the faith (Titus 1:8).
 - c. Loves what is good (Titus 1:8).
 - d. Not a recent convert (1 Tim. 3:6).

Practical Section:

FBC Lowell Duties of the Elders:

The Elders shall exercise general supervision over all interests of the Church. Specifically, they are to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28ff; 1 Peter 5:1-3), lead through example (1 Peter 5:3), teach and exhort (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9), refute those who contradict the truth (Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9); manage the Church of God (1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 5:7), and pray for the sick (James 5:14).

1. Shepherding the flock includes the following responsibilities:
 - a. Pray for the members of the Church;
 - b. Examine new members and recommend them for membership to the Church;
 - c. Counsel members over issues of doctrine;
 - d. Manage the membership roles.
2. Lead through example. The Elders are examples for the members.
3. Teach and exhort.

4. Pray for the sick.
5. Provide avenues for pastoral care, conflict resolution, discipline, and restoration.
6. Ensure that the church's teachings and practices reflect accurate biblical theology.
7. Manage the Church of God - The Elders are charged with the management of the church. This responsibility includes the following:
 - a. Set and oversee the vision and strategy of the church.
 - b. Provide oversight to the ministry of both the Administrative Deacons and the Mercy Deacons.
 - c. Oversee FBC Lowell Teams. Initiate new teams whenever they are needed. Approve any standing committees.
 - d. Oversee the ministry staff through the primary teaching elder (Lead pastor).
 - e. Evaluate and provide accountability to the primary teaching elder (Lead pastor).
 - f. Work with the nominating committee in developing a procedure for the selection of Lay Elders, Mercy Deacons, and Administrative Deacons and for when filling the remaining term due to any vacancy.
 - g. Bring the slate of new officers to the Church for affirmation.
 - h. Cooperate with all ministry teams in developing a responsible financial plan (budget) based on vision and strategy and present it to the congregation at the Annual Business Meeting.
 - i. Shepherd the development and maintenance of the *Policies and Procedure Manual*.
 - j. Provide leadership in the case of an unexpected or prolonged absence of the senior pastor.

Pastoral Elders:

1. All salaried pastors on staff at FBC Lowell will be considered an elder during the time of their employment and have an equal say among the group of elders.
2. See the *Calling and Dismissing a Pastor* section for the selection process of the Lead Pastor.
3. See the *Additional Pastoral or Ministry staff* section under additional Paid Staff for the selection process of all other paid Pastoral Staff.

Selection of Lay Elders:

1. The Lay Elders must meet the qualifications as outlined in the New Testament.

2. The Lay Elders shall consist of FBC Lowell members who have been a member in good standing for at least 3 year.
3. The number of Lay Elders will be based on the needs of the church.
4. Each Lay Elder shall be selected for a term of three (3) years.
5. The Lay Elders will be selected according to the following general guidelines:
 - a. The nominating committee will meet with the Elders to review the qualifications for elders.
 - b. The congregation shall be provided with teaching regarding the biblical qualifications for elders and their scriptural role.
 - c. With the biblical qualifications in mind, members of the congregation will be given two (2) weeks to submit prayerfully the names of members for consideration as elder.
 - d. The Elders will work with the nominating committee to develop and annually review a procedure for the selection of elders and for filling the remaining term due to any vacancy.
 - e. The names of the prospective elders shall be brought before the members of the Church, who will be given thirty (30) days to show cause why any one of the prospective elders would not be qualified to serve. Consistent with Matthew 18:15 and Matthew 5:24, any members with such "cause" must first express their concern to the prospective elder and then if necessary also express their concern to the elders for consideration.
 - f. At the end of the thirty (30) day period, the slate of prospective elders will be presented to the members of the church for affirmation by a 75% vote of the members present (A quorum shall be required.) The congregation will be affirming the entire slate of prospective elders not each prospective elder individually.

The Office of Deacon

Biblical Teaching on Deacons Section:

General Teaching on Deacons:

1. The Scriptures clearly speak of two distinct offices (Phil. 1:1; 1 Timothy 3):
 - a. Elders
 - b. Deacons
2. Deacon comes from the word *diakonos* meaning:
 - a. One who executes the command of another
 - b. The servant of a king
3. If the account of the seven, in Acts 6, is to serve as a model for the office of a deacon, then the following can be said about deacons.
 - a. They were selected by the congregation and presented to the apostles (Acts 6:3, 6).
 - b. They were selected for a specific task defined by the apostles (Acts 6:1-4).

- c. Their service freed the Apostles to concentrate on the ministry of the Word and Prayer (6:4).
- d. These men were to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3).

The Biblical Priority of a Deacon:

- 1. To serve (by nature of the name).
- 2. To free the Elders to concentrate on spiritual oversight of the church (Acts 6:3-4)

Biblical Duties of a Deacon:

The term "deacon" means "servant." They are chosen by the congregation to serve the mission of Jesus for His church under the oversight of the elders. The deacons are to serve specific and significant tasks of the church as identified by the elders (Acts 6:3-4).

Qualifications/Characteristics of a Deacon:

- 1. High Moral Character:
 - a. Worthy of Respect (1 Tim. 3:8)
 - b. Does not indulge in much wine (1 Tim. 3:8)
 - c. Financially honest with personal income (1 Tim. 3:8).
 - d. Blameless (1 Tim. 3:10).
 - e. Clearly demonstrates that he is a one-woman man (1 Tim. 3:12).
- 2. Humble Attitude:
 - a. Genuine in spirit (1 Tim. 3:8).
 - b. Full of wisdom (Acts 6:3).
- 3. Skill: Able to manage his own home well (1 Tim. 3:4).
- 4. Spiritual Life:
 - a. Full of the Spirit (Acts 6:3).
 - b. Holds to the foundations of Biblical Christianity (1 Tim. 3:9).

Deacons Terms of Office

- 1. The Deacons shall serve for a term of two (2) years with a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms of office. After two (2) terms they must take a minimum of one (1) year of sabbatical, after which they shall be eligible to run for the office of deacon.
- 2. Elected officers term commence at the start of the calendar year.
- 3. Elected Deacons terms' will be staggered to affect continuity of function.
- 4. No person shall hold more than one elected office at a time.

Duties of the Deacons

Under the oversight of the Elders, the Deacons shall consist of two distinct teams, Mercy Deacons, and Administrative Deacons. Each team shall choose a chairman from among themselves during its first meeting of the year. The two teams may, on occasion, find the need to meet together. However, the norm will be separate meetings due to the differences in focus.

1. Mercy Deacons Duties
 - a. Caring for the church family by providing for the temporal or emergent needs of the church family.
 - b. Dispense the benevolent fund, according to the written guidelines.
 - c. Prepare and help in the distribution of the elements of the Lord's Supper as well as care and custody of the equipment.
 - d. Aid candidates for baptism and have care and custody of the equipment used.
 - e. Visit the sick and shut-ins.
 - f. Other duties may be assigned by the Elders

2. Administrative Deacons Duties
 - a. Oversee the maintenance and care of all church property, including oversight of the janitorial service.
 - b. Act as trustees for FBC Lowell in all legal matters.
 - c. Appoint annually, a church treasurer who will be an ex-officio member of the Administrative Deacons.
 - d. Oversight of all offerings and bank accounts in conjunction with appointed church treasurer.
 - e. Coordination of church building use with Elders.
 - f. Appoint a clerk for the record of all congregational business.
 - g. Provide the manner and methods of securing funds for the current expenses and contingent expenses as required.
 - h. Respond to financial needs for non-budgeted expenditures, and communicate such matters to the Elders and congregation as soon as reasonably possible.
 - i. Oversee the details of the annual financial plan (budget) in cooperation with Elders.
 - j. Oversee fixed expenses, staff salaries, and benefits management.

Selection of Deacons:

1. The Deacons must meet the qualifications as outlined above.

2. The Deacons shall consist of FBC Lowell members who have been a member in good standing for at least 1 year and possessing the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-8.

3. The number of Deacons will be based on the needs of the church.

4. The Deacons will be selected according to the following general guidelines:
 - a. The nominating committee will meet with the Elders to review the qualifications for deacons.

- b. The congregation shall be provided with teaching regarding the biblical qualifications for deacons and their scriptural role.
- c. With the biblical qualifications in mind, members of the congregation will be given two (2) weeks to submit prayerfully the names of members for consideration as deacon.
- d. The Elders will work with the nominating committee to develop and annually review a procedure for the selection of deacons and for filling the remaining term due to any vacancy.
- e. The names of the prospective deacons shall be brought before the members of the Church, who will be given thirty (30) days to show cause why any one of the prospective deacons would not be qualified to serve. Consistent with Matthew 18:15 and Matthew 5:24, any members with such "cause" must first express their concern to the prospective deacon and then if necessary express their concern to the Elders for consideration.
- f. At the end of the thirty (30) day period, the slate of prospective deacon will be presented to the members of the church for affirmation by a 75% vote of the members present (A quorum shall be required). The congregation will be affirming each deacon individually.

ARTICLE 7 MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Reception of members:

1. Any person professing faith in Christ and giving evidence of being born again and adhering to the faith and practice held by this church as set forth in its Confession of Faith, may upon baptism by immersion and the recommendation of the Elders, be eligible for membership.
2. The church shall vote on reception of new members on the recommendation of the Elders. If there are five dissenting votes, the matter shall be referred to the Elders and the objection will be considered. If the objection is unfounded or unscriptural, it shall be overruled by the majority vote of the congregation.
3. No person may be a member of the church while he or she is a member of a Secret Society Organization or in opposition to our Confession of Faith.
4. Student Associate Memberships shall be provided for those temporarily residing in the area as a result of educational relationships. Those desiring such status shall be members in good standing of a Baptist church of like faith and practice, and must be received by vote of the church on the recommendation of the Elders.

5. Student Associate Members will retain membership in their home church and not have the right to vote or hold office in this church. They are expected to maintain the same standard of conduct as a full member.
6. Student Associate Memberships will terminate automatically when the student leaves the area, or it may be terminated earlier by the Elders.

Section 2. Duties of Members:

1. The duties of members to themselves are the acquisition of spiritual knowledge, constant progress in spirituality, following Peter's admonition to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
2. Members shall honor, esteem, and pray for their Pastor.
3. It is the duty of each member to cultivate and cherish brotherly love for all members of the church, and to show this love.
4. Toward those who are not members of the church, it is the duty of the members to be exact in fulfilling obligations and performing promises, and as ability may enable, to commend the Gospel of Christ unto them.
5. It is the duty of all members moving from this city and immediate vicinity to take letters of commendation to other Baptist churches of the same faith and order.
6. It is the duty of each member to uphold the church in tithes and offerings, (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:6), and in faithfulness to its services. Each member shall be at every business meeting when possible.
7. It is expected that members will practice separation in their personal life, separation from the world, and unto God.
8. All members in good standing, eighteen years of age or older, shall be eligible to vote and hold office.

Section 3. Discipline of Members:

1. The discipline of members will be according to Biblical exhortation. The Elders shall serve as the discipline committee.
 - a. The goal of discipline is restoration. (Gal. 6:1)
 - b. The method will be according to Matthew 18:15-17.
2. If a person has been absent from the church for a period of one year, he shall be visited by the Elders to discuss the problem. If a Pastor is on staff, a reasonable effort will be made for a Pastoral visit. If no valid reason can be given for the long absence and no intention of return is evident, that

member's name may be recommended for removal from the membership roll upon the recommendation of the Elders.

3. If a person is charged with conduct that injures or damages the testimony of the church, that same person shall meet with the Elders to see if said accusations are true. If the charges are found to be true, that person shall be lovingly admonished to return to conduct that reflects Biblical standards. If the accused refuses, that party's name may be dropped from the church roll upon the recommendation of the Elders.
4. The church congregation shall vote on the removal of members from the membership rolls upon the recommendation of the Elders.

ARTICLE 8 CALLING AND DISMISSING A LEAD PASTOR

Section 1. Calling a Lead Pastor:

1. The members of the pulpit committee will be determined by the Elders. They shall contact as many pulpit supplies as they deem necessary.
2. The pulpit committee will investigate potential candidates in matters of fellowship, education, and doctrine.
3. The pulpit committee will bring their recommendation to the Elders for their review and approval.
4. The church shall hear and vote on one candidate before hearing any others.
5. The vote will be taken by private written ballot.
6. A quorum must be present that is equal to 20% of the eligible membership.
7. Absentee ballots will be available upon request at the church office for members in good standing.
8. A 75% vote of absentee ballots and members present and eligible to vote shall constitute a call.
9. The Administrative Deacons will count the vote.

Section 2. Dismissal of a Lead Pastor:

1. If a majority of the Elders feel the Pastor's ministry is finished, they may call for a special business meeting for the purpose of taking a vote of confidence. Notice of such a meeting shall be given on two Sundays immediately

preceding the meeting. At such a meeting, it shall be stated that a vote of confidence has been called for, but shall allow no public discussion of the matter and shall proceed to take a vote by secret ballot. A 75% vote of the members present shall be necessary to give a vote of confidence, which shall mean that the Pastor may continue his duties. Should the vote not be sustained, it shall thereby be due notice to the Pastor that his term of office shall cease at a time not more than two months hence. The Elders shall have the authority to terminate the Pastor's ministry at any time within the two month's period should they deem it to be for the best interest of the church. In such a case, the full two month's salary shall be paid. Any other financial considerations must be taken to the church for a vote.

2. In other cases, such as heresy, dereliction of duty, immorality an exit interview will be conducted and a severance package will be established by the Elders with the assistance of the Administrative Deacons. In such a case, not more than the two month's salary will be paid.

ARTICLE 9 MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH

Section 1. Stated Services: The church shall maintain regular services of spiritual education, prayer, fellowship, and worship for all ages. The Elders shall have the authority to establish the specific order and frequency of services.

Section 2. The Lord's Supper: The church shall observe the Lord's Supper on a regular basis determined by the Elders. It will be open to all born again believers in Jesus Christ.

Section 3. Business Meetings:

1. Quarterly Celebration Meetings: The Quarterly Meeting should be held before the end of April, July, and October.
2. Officer Election Meeting: The election of officers should be held the first week of December so that the new officers may prepare to take office on the first Sunday of January.
3. Annual Celebration Meeting: The Annual Meeting should take place by the end of January. Annual reports and the adoption of the budget will be included in this meeting. The election of the nominating committee will happen at this meeting.
4. Special Congregation Meetings: Special congregation meetings may be called by the Elders. Notice of such meetings will be in writing with the stated purpose of the meeting given at least 14 days before the meeting. No business other than the announced business will be discussed.

5. Roberts Rules of Order should govern church business meetings.
6. All meetings must have a quorum that is equal to 20% of the eligible membership, in order to execute business.
7. Absentee ballots for meetings will be available upon request at the church office for members in good standing.
8. The dates of the quarterly celebration meetings, annual celebration meetings, officer election meeting, and special congregation meetings may be adjusted by the Elders should current events of the church warrant it.

ARTICLE 10 FINANCES

Section 1. The church will be financed by tithes, offerings, and gifts. Other forms of fundraising may be allowed with the approval of the Elders.

Section 2. The church fiscal year is January 1 through December 31.

Section 3. The Administrative Deacons will submit their recommendation(s) for treasurer to the Elders for a one year appointment. The treasurer shall be responsible to oversee the counting and deposit of offerings, keeping accurate and confidential records of giving for members, providing a year-end report of all giving to all members, and providing monthly and quarterly financial statements.

ARTICLE 11 PAID STAFFING

Section 1. Additional Pastoral or Ministry staff: Additional ministry staff may be added, replaced, or terminated at the recommendation of the Elders. Their daily duties would be under the direction of the Lead Pastor. The Elders will recommend any required funding to the congregation for approval. Established salaries should be reviewed each year at budget time.

Section 2. Clerical Staff: Church secretary position(s) are responsible to the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor will hire or replace for this position(s) as required. The Administrative Deacons will recommend to the Elders for approval of any required funding for the position(s). Established wages should be reviewed each year at budget time.

Section 3. Custodial Staff: Church custodial staff position(s) are responsible to the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor will hire or replace for this position(s) as required. The Administrative Deacons will recommend to the Elders for approval of any required funding for the position(s). Established wages should be reviewed each year at budget time.

ARTICLE 12 AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

Section 1. The constitution may be amended by a 75% vote of the members present eligible to vote at an annual celebration meeting, a quarterly celebration meeting, or at a special meeting (A quorum shall be required.) The notice of a proposed constitutional change must be given to the congregation at least 14 days in advance.