



First Baptist Church of Wallace

408 West Main Street, Wallace, North Carolina 28466 -- 910-285-2534 --
www.WallaceFirstBaptist.org

April 14, 2023

Dear Church family,

The following changes to our church's By-Laws will be presented at our Spring Business Conference on Sunday, May 7, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. in the church sanctuary.

1. **The statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (attached)** addresses what God's word has to say about these current issues. While other churches and denominations have become affirming of societal changes in our views on these issues, the committee formed at our Fall 2022 Conference has gone back to God's word to clarify, for those wondering where OUR church stands, what God's unchanging truth and plan is for these important issues.

If approved by the congregation, we would then propose to place these in our By-Laws as an addendum to our Statement of Beliefs, with this document immediately following our other doctrinal affirmations.

2. **Adding flexibility to our denominational ties:** As we watch denominational entities shift theologically, and as they get embroiled in controversy, we run the risk of having people judge us by the activities, statements, and failures of these outside groups. Currently, the Southern Baptist Convention is dealing with the problem of their hands-off stance toward numerous instances of sexual abuse by Southern Baptist ministers whose offenses were known to SBC leaders, while nothing was said and these leaders were able to continue to move from church to church, repeating their devastating behavior. Meanwhile, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which we currently support, has been seen as "moving to the left" on these issues. Their current (2000) statement on this issue says:

"... we believe that the foundation of a Christian sexual ethic is faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman and celibacy in singleness." The statement also says, "...the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship does not allow for the expenditure of funds for organizations or causes that condone, advocate or affirm homosexual practice. Neither does this CBF organizational value allow for the purposeful hiring of a staff person or the sending of a missionary who is a practicing homosexual."

But a 2018 hiring policy change allows the CBF to employ persons whose life might not conform to this statement as long as they are not in a ministry leadership position. A softening of their previous stance.

So in order to "future-proof" our denominational associations, to provide maximum flexibility, and to avoid having any denominational controversies damage our church's identity, we propose that all specific denominational ties be removed from our By-Laws, and that we support these groups only to the extent that they share our values and beliefs.

The current reading of our By-Laws is:

5. Affiliations:

First Baptist Church of Wallace has chosen to identify with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as our primary denominational network, and with the Eastern Baptist Association as our local cooperative missions network. We will join in voluntary cooperation with other churches, mission organizations, and Christian groups with whom we find affinity, to the extent that these increase our church's effectiveness and complement our church's purpose and identity.

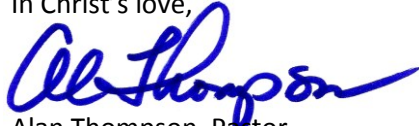
The new reading would simply eliminate the first sentence which lists specific denominational entities, and leave the more general statement that follows. So it would read as follows:

5. Affiliations:

We will join in voluntary cooperation with other churches, mission organizations, and Christian groups with whom we find affinity, to the extent that these increase our church's effectiveness and complement our church's purpose and identity.

These two changes are all the changes that will be proposed at our Spring Conference. If you have any questions, or need clarification, please contact Pastor Al Thompson (910-282-8095 or Alan.FBCW@gmail.com). We want everyone to be clear about these proposals when we gather for our Spring Conference.

In Christ's love,



Alan Thompson, Pastor

First Baptist Church of Wallace

Attached: Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality statement



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
WALLACE

MARRIAGE, GENDER, & SEXUALITY

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the **plan** of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, **pedophilia**, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matthew 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31).