

**THE**  
**BYLAWS**  
**OF THE**  
**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**OF**  
**FITCHBURG, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Originally Adopted in 1853**

**Current Revision Adopted January, 2018**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Article 1: Incorporation</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Article 2: Purpose</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Article 3: Church Covenant</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Article 4: Organization</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Article 5: Membership</b>	<b>Pages 4-6</b>
<b>Article 6: The Pastor</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Article 7: Officers of the Church</b>	<b>Pages 6-8</b>
<b>Article 8: Deacons, Committees, and Delegates</b>	<b>Pages 8-14</b>
<b>Article 9: Auxiliary Organizations</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>Article 10: Voter Qualifications and Meetings</b>	<b>Pages 15</b>
<b>Article 11: Amendments</b>	<b>Page 15-16</b>
<b>Appendix: Behavioral Covenant</b>	<b>Page 16</b>

## **ARTICLE 1: INCORPORATION**

The First Baptist Church of Fitchburg located at 1400 John Fitch Highway, Fitchburg, MA, was organized on November 3, 1833, and incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg, Inc. on February 27, 1891.

## **ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE**

The purpose of our church is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to administer the ordinances of the New Testament, to foster the spiritual growth of our members, to honor our Baptist heritage of soul freedom, and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ by word, deed, and mission in our community and throughout the world.

## **ARTICLE 3: CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and upon profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we now enter into Covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We promise, as the Lord shall enable us, to strive daily to live according to the spirit and teachings of Christ, and to do all in our power to create a spiritual atmosphere within the Church, which will lead others to come into fellowship with God and into saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

As a fellowship of Christians, we promise, by the help of God, to nurture Christian growth in our homes, and to minister to the spiritual and material needs of one another. We further promise to strive for the advancement of our church in worships, in Christian Education, in service, and in fellowship; to observe its ordinances; to attend its services as faithfully as possible; to contribute regularly to its local and missionary enterprises; to unite with another church when living away; and by personal and by personal and group example, to commend the Christian way of life to all.

May the blessings of God our Father, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, and the Holy Spirit our Helper and Guide ever rest upon us.

Adopted by the Church Congregation  
June 21, 1979

## ARTICLE 4: ORGANIZATION

### Section 1: Government

The government of this church is vested in its active members. It controls the admission, disciplining, and dismissal of its members according to its understanding of the Word of God and the guidelines stated within these bylaws.

### Section 2: Relationship

Our understanding of Christian truth is in essential agreement with the beliefs of American Baptist Churches. This church recognizes the value of united denominational actions and mutual cooperation among Baptist churches. For these reasons, this church seeks wholeheartedly to cooperate and maintain fellowship with the Central Massachusetts Baptist Association, the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, and the American Baptist Churches, USA. It will cooperate with the local, state, National, and World Council of Churches.

## ARTICLE 5: MEMBERSHIP

### Section 1: Qualifications

**A. By Salvation and Baptism**--Any person professing faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, accepting the views of faith and practices held by this church, assenting to its Church Covenant, and being baptized by immersion\* may be admitted into membership.

\*Baptism belongs to the church, not the individual believer. It is the church that determines the mode of baptism, not the individual. "Baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him/her in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing him/herself to Christ and his people, thereby uniting a believer to the church and marking off him/her from the world." All instances of baptism in the scriptures indicate a complete immersion or "dipping" of the entire person and originates in Moses washing of the priests in preparation for service and continued through Judaism as the ceremonial cleansing before copying scripture or joining in the service of the synagogue, which required 24 cu.ft. of water(enough for complete immersion). Relaxing the requirement of baptism by immersion causes the church to lose its identity as the body of Christ and turns it into another "good" human institution.

**B. By Letter of Transfer**--Any person who is a member of another American Baptist church, who professes faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, having been previously baptized by immersion, accepting the views of faith and practices held by this church, and assenting to its Church Covenant may be admitted to membership upon receipt of a letter of transfer from a former church.

**C. By Experience**--Any person who is not a member of another American Baptist church but has professed faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, been baptized by immersion, accepted the views on faith and practices held by this church, and assented to its Church Covenant may be admitted to membership.

## **Section 2: Reception of Members**

Persons who are qualified to become members may be received into membership having been counseled by the Pastor and recommended to the Board of Deacons, and by affirmation of the church through the Right Hand of Fellowship.

## **Section 3: Responsibilities of Members**

Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual responsibilities essential to the Christian way of life, to regularly attend the services of this church, to give regularly to its support and missions, and to share in its organized work. Members are expected to attend congregational meetings as duly announced and scheduled.

## **Section 4: Dismissal of Members**

Members in this church may be terminated upon recommendation of the Pastor and the Board of Deacons.

**A. By Letter--**Any member may be dismissed to unite with another church upon a letter of request. All church letters of transfer shall be sent by the Clerk of this church to the Pastor or Clerk of the church designated by the member.

**B. By Request--**If any member wishes to withdraw from this church, the Board of Deacons shall consider and act upon this request.

## **Section 5: Status of Members**

When a member has been inactive for a period of one year without showing interest by attending services, communicating with the church, or contributing to its support, the Board of Deacons may transfer that person's name to the inactive membership list. Consideration for such action shall only be made after a reasonable number of calls have been made to encourage and assist in a renewal of Covenant responsibilities by the Pastor. This procedure shall have no application if the absence, delinquency, or arrearage is excused by the Pastor and the Board of Deacons for any reasonable cause.

**A. Inactive Membership List--**Persons whose names are on the inactive membership list shall not be counted or reported as members, shall not have part in church business meetings, and shall not hold any office.

**B. Restoration of Inactive Members--**Any person whose name is on the inactive membership list and who renews relationship with the church, and fulfills Covenant responsibilities may be restored to active membership by recommendation of the Pastor and by vote of the Board of Deacons.

**C. Review of Membership--**The Deacons shall review the membership list once a year prior to the annual meeting and report on the membership list to church members at the annual meeting in January of each year.

**D. Associate Membership**--Any person who desires to cooperate in the ministries of this church while retaining membership in another church may become an associate member upon recommendation of the Pastor and the Board of Deacons. Associate members have all the rights and privileges in the conduct and fellowship of this church, including membership on appointed committees. However, they may not vote on motions affecting the disposition of church property or alienation from the American Baptist Churches, USA, and they may not hold any elected church office.

## **ARTICLE 6: THE PASTOR**

### **Section 1: The Call**

Upon the recommendation of the Pulpit (Search) Committee, a Pastor, who shall be an American Baptist, shall be called for an indefinite period. The call shall require a three-quarters vote of the active members of the church present at a meeting called for that purpose. For such a meeting, fifty percent of the active membership shall constitute a quorum. The election shall be by secret ballot. Absentee ballots shall be made available to any active members who are away at school, in the military service, hospitalized, homebound, or in a nursing home or rehabilitation facility. It is the responsibility of the absentee voter to ensure that his/her vote is received by the Church Clerk prior to the date of the special meeting. At least two weeks prior to the date of such a meeting, notice of the intention to vote on the calling of a Pastor shall have been mailed by the Church Clerk to the current address of every active member of record.

### **Section 2: Termination of Service**

Either party (the Pastor or the congregation) wishing to terminate the pastor-church relationship shall give at least one month's notice in writing. At a special meeting called for this purpose, a majority of the active members present shall be sufficient to accept the Pastor's resignation. A three-fourths vote of the active members shall be necessary for dismissal of the Pastor. For such a meeting, fifty percent of the active membership shall constitute a quorum. The Pastor's severance agreement shall be negotiated by the Board of Deacons.

## **ARTICLE 7: OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH**

**Section 1: Officers**-- The officers of this church shall include the following:

The Pastor

The Moderator

The Clerk/The Assistant Clerk

The Treasurer/TheAssistant Treasurer

The Board of Deacons, who will chair these committees except for the Deacon-at-Large—

Christian Education

Caring

Stewardship

Deacon-at-Large

Community Outreach and Missions

Property

Worship

**Section 2: Election of Officers**--Except for the Pastor, the Moderator, the Clerk, and the Treasurer, the officers shall be elected for a two-year term. They shall be eligible for re-election to a second term. Subsequent additional terms shall only be filled by the incumbent if, after reasonable effort, no other suitable candidate is available. The clerk and treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting and shall serve indefinitely with the approval of the congregation. The Moderator shall be elected to a four-year term and may be re-elected at the annual meeting. All officers, except the Pastor, shall be elected and/or re-elected by majority vote at the annual meeting of the church, and shall take office at the close of the meeting at which they were elected. Vacancies in office may be filled at any regular church meeting with notice having been given of such intention at the previous Sunday service.

**Section 3: Responsibilities of the Officers**--

**A. The Pastor**--The Pastor shall be the leader of this church. The pastor shall preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, be in charge of the spiritual welfare and discipleship of the congregation, and perform other such duties as set forth in the pastoral covenant. The Pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the Board of Deacons and all committees.

**B. The Moderator**--The Moderator shall be the chairperson of the Board of Deacons; shall preside at meetings of the church and the Board of Deacons; shall advise newly elected officers of their duties; and shall be responsible for the proper transfer of records and equipment between successors in office during their tenure and at its close.

**C. The Clerk**--The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of all meetings of the entire church body and of the Board of Deacons' meetings; shall maintain accurate membership rolls and a complete list of all church letters of admission and dismissal; and shall perform other such appropriate duties as the Pastor and/or Board of Deacons may direct. The Assistant Clerk, who is elected by the church, may be called upon to perform the duties of the Clerk if he/she is temporarily incapacitated.

**D. The Treasurer**--The Treasurer, with the cooperation and direction of the Board of Deacons shall:

1. Receive from the Financial Secretary weekly income reports and evidence of all monies deposited in the church bank account.
2. Keep an accurate record of all pledges and offerings (monies deposited by the Financial Secretary) and disbursements (expenditures and other financial obligations of the church in accordance with the adopted budget or upon special authorization of the Board of Deacons).
3. Be empowered to execute all bonds, notes, deeds, and other instruments in the name of and on behalf of the church, as directed by the vote of the church or the Board of Deacons.
4. Submit a written report on all monies received and expended each month at the Board of Deacons' meeting.
5. Report at congregational business meetings: the annual meeting, the Pentecost Sunday meeting, and the Rally Sunday(second Sunday in September) meeting on all monies received and expended during the year.
6. The **Assistant Treasurer**, who is elected by the church, shall have the authority to act as Treasurer if the Treasurer is temporarily incapacitated.

7. **The Financial Secretary**—The Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Board of Deacons. With the cooperation and direction of the Board of Deacons, the Financial Secretary shall:
1. Receive and record all pledges and monies from all sources for church purposes.
  2. Shall deposit the receipts to the credit of the church's bank account each week.
  3. Shall give a copy of the weekly income reports and the deposit slip to the Treasurer and file the original weekly income reports in the church financial files.
  4. Shall give a copy of the weekly income reports to the Pastor and the Deacon of Missions.
  5. Shall file the weekly offering envelopes and a copy of the weekly pledge report so that the pledges received can be credited to each person's giving record.

F. The church's insurance policy shall provide adequate coverage for any misconduct and/or misuse of the church's money by the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer and/or the Financial Secretary.

G. All officers and agents of the church shall be bonded.

## ARTICLE 8-DEACONS, COMMITTEES, AND DELEGATES

### Section 1: Elections

Members of the Board of Deacons and delegates who represent our church at American Baptist conventions, conferences, organizations, and meetings, shall be elected to two-year terms at the annual meeting. Deacons of all committees shall notify the Moderator of all resignations or vacancies occurring during the year. Resignations of delegates shall be submitted to the Moderator. Any Board member absent from three consecutive meetings without valid reasons may, acting on the recommendation of the Board, be removed and replaced according to Article 7, Section 2.

### Section 2: Board of Deacons

**A. Membership:** This Board shall consist of the members as listed in Article 7, Section 1. A quorum for meetings shall be a majority of the officers and deacons.

**B. Responsibilities:** The Deacons are the spiritual and temporal leaders of the church. All matters affecting the regular work and policy of the church shall be subject to the supervision and direction of the Board of Deacons.

1. The Board of Deacons shall meet monthly(usually the second Sunday) to review the work of the standing committees. They shall be charged with the long-range planning and setting of church policy. {All church members are welcome to attend Diaconate meetings but shall have no vote at said meetings.}



2. Each Deacon shall be responsible for a regular monthly report at meetings of the Board of Deacons. In case of absence from a Deacons' meeting, a written report shall be prepared by the Deacon and presented by a member of that Deacon's committee, who may give the report, clarify it and address questions, but who shall have no vote at the Deacons meeting attended.

3. The Board of Deacons shall be spiritual leaders, sharing in shepherding the flock and having oversight of the church membership. They shall serve the Lord's Supper and prepare candidates for baptism. They shall meet with prospective members and recommend those who meet the stated requirements for membership as stated in Article 5, Section 1. They shall act on requests for transfer or dismissal of membership. They shall review the membership rolls for compliance with Article 5, Section 3.

4. The Board of Deacons shall function as trustees of the church. They shall receive and hold in trust all real estate and other properties of the church. They may authorize the church treasurer to make disbursements outside the budget not to exceed \$3,000.00. If the amount is over \$3,000.00, the congregation shall vote to approve higher disbursements. They shall submit a budget for the year for approval by the congregation at the annual church meeting in January. The board shall also coordinate use of the building and property by outside groups.

5. The Board of Deacons shall aid and advise the Pastor in the performance of pastoral duties and recommend to the church any changes in pastoral leadership. The Board of Deacons shall be responsible for appointing a Pulpit Search Committee when necessary, as set forth in Article 7, Section 12. When the Pastor is unexpectedly unavailable for worship service, the Board of Deacons shall secure a suitable replacement, with the advice of the pastor, if possible.

6. The Board of Deacons shall recommend to the church body any personnel needed to further the church's mission. They shall be responsible for the hiring or dismissal of all employees upon the recommendation of the appropriate committee.

7. The Board of Deacons shall submit a written report at the annual meeting. Each Deacon shall submit his/her report to the church office by December 31 for inclusion in the Annual Report.

8. The Board of Deacons shall appoint a Church Historian for the writing and safe-keeping of all historical records of the church.

9. The Board of Deacons may appoint any person or *ad hoc* committee to assist in the carrying out of their responsibilities..

10. Members of the church's committees shall be appointed by the Board of Deacons at their February meeting for a one-year term. Any committee member absent from three consecutive committee meetings without valid reason may be replaced by the Board of Deacons, acting on the advice of the committee. Vacancies shall be filled by the Board of Deacons for any unexpired term.

11. It is the responsibility of each Deacon to hold meetings of his/her standing committee a minimum of four times a year. It is also the responsibility of each deacon to advise his/her committee members of their responsibilities.

12. Each Deacon, with the assistance of his/her committee members, is responsible for submitting an estimated budget for his/her committee, preferably by November 1, to the Stewardship Committee so that it may present a complete budget for the following year to the Board of Deacons for review before the annual meeting. As funds become available, the Board of Deacons will vote on which budgeted items will be funded.

### **Section 3: Deacon of Christian Education**

The purpose of our Christian Education program is to further the body of Christ through the teachings of the Gospel, to encourage and nurture people of all ages on their own faith journeys, and to help each participant synthesize their Christian faith into all aspects of their life.

A. The Deacon of Christian Education and his/her committee shall exercise supervision over the total Christian Education program of the church. They shall have responsibility for the Safe Church Policy and its implementation, in collaboration and cooperation with the Board of Deacons. If the Moderator deems it necessary, CORI reports may be obtained and maintained in a safe and secured location, with only the Church Moderator having access to them.

B. The Deacon of Christian Education and his/her committee shall be responsible for recommending to the Board of Deacons a Church School Superintendent if they deem it necessary. The Church School Superintendent shall serve as a mentor and resource for all teachers, keeping them informed of educational opportunities, and shall work with the Deacon of Christian Education in the overall supervision of the Christian Education program.

C. The Deacon of Christian Education and his/her committee shall publicize, enroll, and monitor all Christian Education endeavors of the church. They shall work closely with the Church School Superintendent in supervising the Christian Education program, shall keep the church board informed of all challenges, opportunities, and happenings related to the program. The Deacon of Christian Education shall recruit and appoint teachers with the assistance of the Pastor, and ensure that all teachers and classes have the necessary curriculum and supplies needed to meet their classroom objectives.

D. The Deacon of Christian Education and his/her committee shall be responsible for planning and administering all educational programs, such as Church School, teen groups, Vacation Bible School, Junior Church, and all other educational programs.

E. The Deacon of Christian Education and his/her committee shall approve all curriculum materials and teaching aids.

#### **Section 4: Deacon of Missions**

It is every Christian's divine calling to bear witness to Jesus Christ. The Deacon of Missions and his/her committee shall encourage the support of both denominational and local missions and social outreach efforts as an avenue for Christian witness.

A. The Deacon of Missions and his/her committee shall plan and supervise all evangelistic efforts of the church. They shall provide information, encouragement, and challenge in the areas of social outreach.

B. The Deacon of Missions and his/her committee shall encourage and supervise the publicity of all church events.

C. The Deacon of Missions and his/her committee shall encourage interest and participation in the missions programs of American Baptist Churches/USA and the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, local missions, and foster the education of the congregation in missions, in active cooperation with the Christian Education and Worship Committees.

#### **Section 5: Deacon of Caring**

We recognize that following Christ calls us to actively care for one another and for the larger community around us. The Deacon of Caring and his/her committee shall be responsible for the caring and nurturance of those within our church, as well as selected outreach efforts to the larger community.

A. The Deacon of Caring and his/her committee shall be responsible for administering the Communion Fund with the assistance and discretion of the Pastor and/or this committee. This fund shall be used to assist those in need of help, as determined by the Pastor, the Moderator, and/or the Caring Deacon and his/her committee.

B. It shall be the responsibility of the Deacon of Caring and his/her committee to

1. Maintain an awareness of the overall health of the church so that those in need may be duly identified and assisted.
2. Encourage Christian caring throughout the congregation by its activities and outreach.

#### **Section 6: Deacon of Stewardship**

We recognize that the world we live in and all that we have is given to us by God in trust, and that God calls us to use these resources responsibly, generously, and creatively. The Deacon of Stewardship and his/her committee shall work to raise stewardship awareness throughout the church body, including but not solely limited to financial stewardship, all year.

A. The Deacon of Stewardship and his/her committee shall plan and present a stewardship drive each fall in connection with Pledge Sunday and shall also work throughout the year to raise awareness and inform all concerning our obligation to be faithful stewards.

B. The Deacon of Stewardship shall have the responsibility of recording all pledged amounts received as stated on the weekly giving sheet. He/She shall prepare and distribute quarterly giving reports to those who have pledged funds for the budgeted year so that they may know the status of their giving. He/She shall remind those who may be falling behind in their giving.

C. The Deacon of Stewardship and his/her committee shall, in active consultation with the Pastor and the Board of Deacons, prepare a planned budget for the church that reflects our goals, priorities, and responsibilities as a church of Jesus Christ. This Board-approved budget shall be presented at the annual meeting to the church.

D. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall be *ex-officio* members of the Stewardship Committee.

### **Section 7: Deacon of Property**

We recognize that the church is a holy place designed to reflect the glory of God as well as provide us a suitable physical setting for ministry and community programs and outreach.

A. The Deacon of Property and his/her committee shall be responsible for the care, maintenance, and upgrading of all church property and equipment. The Deacon of Property and his/her committee shall also oversee the work of any duly hired vendors and assure that all such work is completed in a satisfactory manner.

B. The Deacon of Property and his/her committee shall keep the congregation and the Pastor informed of foreseeable future maintenance and/or improvement needs of the church building and property so that the church may plan ahead as best possible for such related work and expenditures.

### **Section 8: Deacon of Worship**

The Deacon of Worship and his/her committee shall be responsible for helping to create worship celebrations that reflect the needs, joys, challenges, and devotion of this congregation of believers.

A. The Deacon of Worship and his/her committee shall assist the Pastor with the design and implementation of worship services; prepare the sanctuary for worship; appoint ushers and greeters; oversee the timely placement of seasonal decorations and/or flowers.

B. The Deacon of Worship and his/her committee shall advise and assist the Music/Choir Director in carrying out the musical program of the church, including providing substitutes when the organist/pianist is ill or on vacation and recommending an organist/pianist to the Board of Deacons in the event of a vacancy.

C. The Music/Choir Director and the organist shall be an *ex officio* member of the worship committee.

### **Section 9: Deacon-at-Large**

The Deacon-at-large shall be responsible for assisting other Deacons in the performance of their and their committee's duties when called upon for such assistance. The Deacon-at-Large shall attend Deacons' meetings and have a vote on matters before the Board at such meetings.

### **Section 10: Nominating Committee**

This shall be an *ad hoc* committee of three to five members with at least one member of this committee being a member of the Board of Deacons. It shall be appointed annually by the Board of Deacons at their February meeting. The Nominating Committee shall propose to the Board of Deacons candidates for Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Deacons, and Delegates. These nominations shall be made public two weeks before the annual church meeting. This committee may also convene to make nominations for elections at church meetings called to fill vacancies that may occur during the year or at any other church meeting.

### **Section 11: Auditing Committee**

This shall be an *ad hoc* committee of three or more members appointed by the Board of Deacons at its February meeting. It shall, prior to the annual meeting, examine the financial records of the church and report in writing at the annual meeting.

### **Section 12: Pastoral Relations Committee**

The purpose of this committee is to foster constructive communication between the congregation and its pastoral leadership, and to implement the congregation's responsibility for the Pastor's professional and personal well-being.

A. This committee shall consist of three or more members chosen by the Pastor and appointed by the Board of Deacons. It shall meet at least quarterly, and shall maintain confidentiality when requested to do so.

B. This committee shall be responsible for—

1. Undertaking an annual review of the church's ministry, and the Pastor's functioning within that ministry.
2. Being a channel through which the Pastor and congregation may responsibly exchange ideas, reactions, and comments.
3. Reviewing annually the church's responsibility for the Pastor's financial compensation and make recommendations concerning it to the Stewardship Committee.
4. Counseling with the Pastor regarding a program of the Pastor's continuing education.

### **Section 13: Pulpit Search Committee**

This committee shall be activated when the church is in need of a pastor. It shall consist of the current Pastoral Relations Committee, plus at least two members elected by the church.

A. In consultation with the designated TABCOM representative(s), this committee shall arrange for the services of an interim pastor if necessary.

B. This committee shall consult with the personnel services of the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts and/or the ABC/USA when searching for a permanent new pastor. Only candidates recommended by this committee shall be considered by the church.

C. This committee shall be responsible for developing written guidelines of church wants and needs to be presented to a candidate as part of the call to the church.

### **Section 14: Delegates**

A. As an American Baptist church, the membership controls its own business and ministry as the members decide. We believe we can make a much greater contribution to the cause of Christ by voluntarily joining ourselves into associations for fellowship, inspiration, and cooperative missionary endeavors.

B. Delegates shall be elected to the following groups, the number to be chosen as designated by the organization to which they are elected:

1. The American Baptist Churches, USA, when its biennial convention is held in New England.
2. The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts.
3. Any other groups or organizations that the church would designate as being of importance for church representation.

C. The expenses of delegates and the pastor to meetings of the above shall be met by the church.

## **ARTICLE 9—AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS**

The church regards all organizations formed from within the church membership for the purpose of carrying out any of its activities, such as Women's Circle, as integral parts of itself. Failure to work in harmony with the church shall be cause for disbanding such auxiliary organizations by a majority vote at any business meeting of the church. Any constitutions, bylaws, and future amendments created by such organizations shall be approved by the Board of Deacons and shall be in harmony with the Bylaws of the church.

## ARTICLE 10—VOTER QUALIFICATIONS AND MEETINGS

### Section 1: Voters

Active members shall be entitled to vote at all business meetings of the church. Voting by proxy is not permitted, although absentee ballots, as stated in Article 6, shall be permissible when calling a pastor. Members under the age of eighteen, however, may not vote on church matters.

### Section 2: Meetings

Circumstances permitting, the annual meeting of the church shall be held on the third Sunday of January. Other church business meetings shall take place on the third Sunday in May and on the third Sunday in September. The Church Clerk shall make a public announcement of the date of such meetings at least two weeks prior to each meeting.

### Section 3: Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Board of Deacons, or upon written request to the Board of Deacons by at least five members of the church. One week's notice for such a meeting shall be given by the Church Clerk.

### Section 4: Quorum

Except as otherwise stated, fifteen percent (15%) of the active membership shall constitute a quorum. When the sale or purchase of property is being considered, approval by at least fifty percent (50%) of the active members of the church shall be required for a decision.

### Section 5: Parliamentary Guide and Covenant of Behavior

The latest revision of Robert's Rules of Order shall be the guide at all meetings of the church and the Board of Deacons. However, the Rules of Order may be suspended by majority vote of the active members present at a given meeting for that session only. The Behavioral Covenant shall be provided to each person at the start of congregational business meetings and read aloud in unison by all in attendance. [See Appendix]

## ARTICLE 11—AMENDMENTS

### Section 1: Amending

These Bylaws may be amended by approval of at least a fifty percent (50%) vote of the active members to approve such amendments. Voting to amend the bylaws may take place at any meeting of the church, provided that notice of the amending vote shall be provided in writing by the Church Clerk at least two weeks prior to such a meeting.

**Section 2: Review**

These Bylaws shall be reviewed at least every five years after their adoption by an *ad hoc* committee appointed by the Board of Deacons for that purpose. Upon review by the Board of Deacons, a meeting of the church shall be held so that active members may vote to accept the revised Bylaws.

**Section 3: Taking Affect:**

These Bylaws shall become effective in January, 2018, and shall supersede all previous Bylaws.

**APPENDIX**

**BEHAVIORIAL COVENANT:**

**FOR RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY**

**[To be read aloud in unison at the start of all congregational meetings]**

We will communicate openly, honestly, and directly (using “I” language) about our concerns, feelings, and opinions.

We will respect and accept all persons as people of God.

We will practice the Golden Rule by treating other people as we would like to be treated.

We will respect the right of others to hold different views, although we may or may not agree.

We will use legitimate means and channels to pursue needs and interests.

We will separate people and relational issues from substantive issues.

We will take responsibility for the successful implementation of any actions decided.

We will communicate the merit of another person’s idea before addressing its weaknesses.

We will focus on persuasion and reason instead of coercion.

We will repeat what the other person has said to confirm that we have understood them, and ask them to do the same if we feel misunderstood. Specifically, we will try to reflect clearly the thoughts and feelings of the other person through our own words, tone of voice, body posture, and gestures. We will repeat the pattern to assure the person is being listened to and understood.

We will not jump to conclusions, affix blame, find fault, or criticize others in a destructive manner.