

CONSTITUTION
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BIGFORK, MONTANA
AS OF JANUARY 31, 2023

PREAMBLE:

Reposing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and holding the historical Baptist belief that a scriptural church is a democracy of believers meeting in some local place, sovereign and autonomous in deciding matters of church policy and affiliation, and composed only of persons who profess to have been born again and have been immersed in water upon their confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and believing in those great distinctive principles for which Baptists have ever stood, namely:

1. The Lordship of Jesus Christ.
2. The Bible, the only standard of faith and practice.
3. Regenerated church membership.
4. Believer's baptism (immersion).
5. Progressive sanctification.
6. Soul liberty.
7. Autonomy of the local church (congregational government).
8. Separation of Church and State.

We therefore band ourselves together as a body of immersed believers in Jesus Christ and adopt, ordain and establish for our government and plan of worship and service the following constitution and bylaws.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church shall be First Baptist Church of Bigfork located at Bigfork, Montana, and is incorporated under the laws of the State of Montana.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this church shall be to carry out the command of our Lord Jesus Christ who has made the church to be His earthly body. We shall do this by:

1. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25).
2. Observing His ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:18-20; I Corinthians 11:26).
3. Edifying His people in all spiritual grace (Ephesians 4:11-16).
4. Witnessing for Him in our community and to the fullest possible extent throughout the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20).
5. The preaching of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to win

people to a personal faith in Him as Savior (Romans 1:15-17; Romans 10:11-17).

6. Maintaining a separated position, particularly in opposing all forms of apostasy such as modernism, liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, or unbelief by any other name, and refusing both moral and material support to any person, organization, or movement which is not true to God's eternal, infallible, and Holy Word (II John 9; I Timothy 3:15; Jude 3 & 4; II Corinthians 6:17; Galatians 1:16).

ARTICLE III: ARTICLES OF FAITH

1. OF THE SCRIPTURES:

We believe that the Holy Bible as originally written was verbally inspired and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore, has truth without any admixture of error for its matter. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:19-21).

2. OF THE TRUE GOD:

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, the Maker and supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (Exodus 20:2-3; I Corinthians 8:6; Revelation 4:11; I John 5:7).

3. OF 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; that He was active in creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the Agent in the new birth; that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer (John 14:16-17; Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Genesis 1:1-3; John 16:8-11; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5-6; Ephesians 1:13-14; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Luke 14:49; Romans 8:14, 16, 26, 27).

4. OF THE DEVIL, OR SATAN:

We believe in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, and the author of all the powers of darkness, and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire (Matthew 4:1-3; II Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:10).

5. OF CREATION:

We accept the Genesis account of creation and believe that man came

by direct creation of God and not by evolution (Genesis 1-2; Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:3).

6. OF THE FALL OF MAN:

We believe that man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not only by constraint, but of choice; and, therefore, under just condemnation without defense or excuse (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 1:18, 32).

7. OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH:

We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God, the Son (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 1:4).

8. OF THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN:

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin, honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust; Christ, the Lord, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate and an all-sufficient Savior (Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; John 3:16; Matthew 18:11; Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:14; Isaiah 53:4-7; Romans 3:25; I John 4:10; I Corinthians 15:3; II Corinthians 5:21).

9. OF GRACE IN THE NEW CREATION:

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life (John 3:3; II Corinthians 5:17; I John 5:1; John 3:6-8; Acts 16:30-33; II Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1; II Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:13).

10. OF JUSTIFICATION:

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification:

- a. That justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life, on principles of righteousness.
- b. That it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done; but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, His righteousness is imputed to us (Acts 13:39; Isaiah 53:11; Zechariah 13:1; Romans 8:1; Romans 5:1,9).

11. OF FAITH AND SALVATION:

We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation (Acts 16:31).

12. OF THE LOCAL CHURCH:

We believe that a **local** church is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are pastors, deacons and trustees, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We believe the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; on all matters of membership, of polity, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final (Acts 2:41-42; I Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17-28; I Timothy 3:1-7; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23-24; Acts 15:13-18).

13. OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER:

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation. We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He come, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination (Acts 8:26-39; John 3:23; Romans 6:3-5; Matthew 3:16; Colossians 2:12; I Corinthians 11:23-28).

14. OF THE SECURITY OF THE SAINTS:

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6; John 10:28-29; Romans 8:35-39; Jude 1).

15. OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED:

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified

in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost (Malachi 3:18; Genesis 18:23; Romans 6:17-18; I John 5:19; Romans 6:23; Proverbs 14:32; Luke 16:25; Matthew 25:34-41; John 8:21).

16. OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT:

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming Prince of the kings of the earth (Romans 13:1-7; II Samuel 23:3; Exodus 18:21-22; Acts 23:5; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:29; Acts 4:19-20; Daniel 3:17-18).

17. OF THE RESURRECTION, PERSONAL, VISIBLE, PREMILLENNIAL RETURN OF CHRIST, AND RELATED EVENTS:

- a. We believe in the bodily resurrection (Matthew 28:6-7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; I Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6).
- b. The ascension (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19; Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 12:2).
- c. The high priesthood (Hebrews 8:6; I Timothy 2:5; I John 2:1; Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 5:9-10).
- d. The second coming (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16; James 5:8; Hebrews 9:28).
- e. The resurrection of the righteous dead (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:42-44, 52).
- f. The change of the living in Christ (I Corinthians 15:51-53; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20-21).
- g. The throne of David (Luke 1:32; Isaiah 9:6-7; Acts 2:29-30).
- h. The millennial reign (I Corinthians 15:25; Isaiah 32:1; Isaiah 11:4-5; Psalm 72:8; Revelation 20:6, 14).

18. OF THE CREATION OF MAN AND WOMAN:

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, and that these two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God.

19. OF MARRIAGE:

We believe that God created marriage to be exclusively the union of one man and one woman, and that intimate sexual activity is to occur exclusively within that union.

20. OF THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE:

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions,

including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps 139.)

ARTICLE IV: CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been immersed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We will strive therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christ and in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, in holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality, to sustain its worship; its two ordinances, immersion and the Lord's Supper; its discipline and doctrine; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the poor, and the spreading of the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ through all nations.

We will also strive to maintain personal and family devotions, to diligently study the Word of God, to educate our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, to seek the salvation of the lost, to live prudently and carefully both in the world and before our children and fellow Christians, to be just and honest in our dealings, to be careful with our tongues, to be careful in our personal lives and habits so as not to cause others to stumble or damage the testimony of Christ, and to seek to live our lives for the glory of God and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the spreading of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We will also strive to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy, feeling and courtesy in speech, to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the will of our Savior to secure it without delay (Galatians 6:1).

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we shall as soon as possible unite with some other church where the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is believed, loved, and preached.

ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

Any person who has accepted Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior and Lord, who shows evidence of the new life in Christ, who has in accordance with our Lord's command and example been baptized by immersion upon his confession of faith in Jesus Christ and who is in agreement with the faith and practices as stated in the Constitution shall be eligible for membership. Recommendation for membership shall be by the

Pastor and the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE VI: OFFICERS

The officers of this church are Pastor, Deacons, and Trustees; the bylaws shall determine their election, term and succession. The church shall elect and appoint to the various forms of service indicated by titles and as defined in the bylaws such other officers as deemed advisable.

ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS

Meetings for worship, prayer, praise, fellowship, business, and special purposes shall be held as set forth in the bylaws.

ARTICLE VIII: RELATIONSHIPS

Believing in the sovereignty of the local church as an autonomous body of believers under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, this church by official action shall determine the maintaining of fraternal fellowship and cooperation with churches of like faith and practice, or with organized groups of Baptists or inter-church relationships; when our stated purpose and statement of faith will not be compromised. To such groups this church may send statistical reports and may be represented in their meetings. No financial support is to be given to a work or workers whose doctrinal position is not in keeping with this Constitution.

ARTICLE IX: ORDINANCES

Section I. Baptism

Those professing to have taken Jesus Christ as personal Savior shall upon their request to the Pastor or some person authorized by the church, be immersed in water in accordance with the Scriptural teachings. Immersion shall be prerequisite to church membership.

Section II. Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper (Communion) shall be served to the assembled church by the pastor or some person designated by the church, and the deacons on the first Sunday of each month, and at the discretion of the deacons. Since it is the Lord's Table, none who are His shall be barred, but the Pastor shall frequently state the exhortation of I Corinthians 11 relating to Communion and shall explain the meaning of the ordinance.

ARTICLE X: FINANCES

Section I.

The fiscal year shall begin on January 1st and end on the following December 31st.

Section II.

No monies shall be raised by the church or an auxiliary organization except by free will giving.

Section III.

No financial obligation shall be placed upon the church either as a mortgage, note, or outstanding bill, or in any other form unless

arrangements are first made to meet the same or by a corporate act of the church.

ARTICLE XI: ALCOHOL/DRUG POLICY

There shall be no use of alcohol of any kind or any other recreational mind altering drugs at any Church function or in the Church facility.

ARTICLE XII: MARRIAGE POLICY

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, First Baptist Church of Bigfork will only recognize marriages between a natural biological man and a natural biological woman. Further, the pastor and staff of First Baptist Church of Bigfork shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman as defined above. Finally, the facilities and property of First Baptist Church of Bigfork shall only host weddings between one man and one woman as defined above.

ARTICLE XIII: FINAL AUTHORITY FOR MATTERS OF FAITH AND CONDUCT

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of First Baptist Church of Bigfork's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our pastor is First Baptist Church of Bigfork's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application. In the absence of the Pastor, the church Deacon Board will fill this role.

ARTICLE XIV: AMMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at the Annual Business Meeting of the church by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting, provided the proposed amendment or amendments shall have been presented to the membership at the previous quarterly Business Meeting.