

# **Constitution and By-Laws Of First Baptist Church, Ewing, Virginia**

## ***CONSTITUTION***

### **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of First Baptist Church of Ewing, Virginia, in order to preserve the principles of our faith and to promote the peace, harmony, and edification of the Body of Christ, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

### **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this church shall be “First Baptist Church, Ewing, Virginia.”

### **ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by making disciples of Jesus Christ through evangelism and missions, teaching and equipping them for ministry, and by engaging together in Christ-centered fellowship and worship.

To this end we are committed to proclaiming God’s perfect Law and his glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and to defending the “faith once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

### **ARTICLE III: ARTICLES OF FAITH**

In order to fully express our faith to the world and to demonstrate our commitment to the biblical heritage passed down to us by our Baptist forefathers, we do hereby adopt as our confession of faith the *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.

*The Baptist Faith and Message* 2000 shall be subscribed to and accepted voluntarily by members as they offer themselves for membership, and by pastors and deacons on the occasions of their ordinations and/or appointments to office. This document is a summary of those things most surely believed among us. We accept it as an assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

### **ARTICLE IV: CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of 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 pledge, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We pledge also to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk discreetly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our obligations, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossiping, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from all appearance of evil; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We pledge further 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 in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We pledge moreover to unite as soon as possible with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word when we remove from this place.

## **ARTICLE V: CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

### *Section 1. Church Authority.*

Jesus Christ is Lord and Head of this church. His will as expressed in the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, is the sole authority in matters of faith and practice.

### *Section 2. Church Polity.*

The government of this church is vested in the body of members who compose the church and as further defined in the By-Laws. The church is subject to no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation in accordance with *The Baptist Faith and Message*, Article XIV.

## **ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution and its By-Laws may be amended at any business meeting provided the proposed changes are made available in writing to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the aforesaid business meeting. An amendment may be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at the business meeting.

# ***BY-LAWS***

## **ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP**

### *Section 1. Qualifications*

The membership of this church shall consist only of those who have given a credible profession of faith in Christ Jesus as Lord. Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized by immersion<sup>1</sup> as a believer, and who subscribes to and accepts voluntarily the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, the church covenant, the aims, and the government of this church, shall be eligible for membership. However, due to differing ages, degrees of maturity and intellectual ability, each candidate shall be tenderly, lovingly, and carefully nurtured in his understanding of these membership qualifications.

### *Section 2. Reception of Members*

#### **A. Methods of Application**

Any person meeting the requirements set forth in Section 1 of this Article may apply for membership in one of the following ways as appropriate:

1. *By Profession of Faith and Baptism.* This method is appropriate for those who have been recently converted to faith in Christ and/or have never been scripturally baptized.

2. *By Letter of Recommendation.* Those who are members in good standing (i.e., not under church discipline) of other churches of like faith and order<sup>2</sup> may be received upon the written recommendation of that church.

3. *By Statement of Faith.* This method is appropriate for those who have been baptized by immersion in another church of like faith and order, but whose churches have lost the records of their membership, and for those who were excommunicated from (or are otherwise not in good standing with) a church of like faith and order, but have since repented of the sin which led to their dismissal, and whose reconciliation with that church is not practicable (for reason to be validated by the Pastors). Such a person may be received by making a public statement of his faith in Christ, his baptism, and his agreement to the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* and the covenant and government of this church.

#### **B. Method of Reception**

When a person requests church membership, a pastor of the church shall meet with the applicant as soon as possible. The applicant shall be examined concerning his Christian experience and doctrinal beliefs. He shall be provided a copy of the church's Constitution and By-Laws and *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, and these documents shall be thoroughly discussed. The applicant must complete a membership class (or an alternative curriculum of study to be determined by the Pastors). When the Pastors concur that the applicant meets the requirements for church membership, the applicant shall be baptized (if necessary) and recommended to the church for membership at a regular worship service. At the next regular business meeting, the church may receive the applicant as a member by a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting. Each new member's name shall be added to the roster of active members maintained by the church clerk.

#### *Section 4. Termination of Membership*

Under certain circumstances, the church may terminate the membership of a member. Termination may take place in one of the following ways:

##### **A. By Death**

When a member of the church is removed by the Lord through physical death, his name shall be transferred to the file of former members.

##### **B. By Transfer**

When a member in good standing moves to another area and/or requests transfer for good cause to another church of like faith and order, a letter of recommendation shall be granted such persons by vote of the church, and his membership in this church shall be terminated.

##### **C. By Excommunication**

When a member has been disciplined by excommunication, his membership is thereby terminated until such time as he is restored to fellowship in accordance with Article II, Section 2.B.

### **ARTICLE II: CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

#### *Section 1. Purposes of Church Discipline*

Recognizing that the Redeemed of Christ continue to struggle with indwelling sin (Rom. 7:13-24; 1 John 1:7-9), and out of a love for Christ and a longing to be conformed more perfectly to his image (Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:18), it shall be the policy of this church to follow biblical principles of church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, Titus 2:15, Heb. 12:5-11, etc.).

#### *Section 2. Methods of Church Discipline*

When a brother or sister is perceived guilty of sin or heresy, the church shall follow the procedures laid down by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-20. When so required by biblical principle, the church shall invoke the following methods of discipline:

### **A. Suspension**

Suspension involves the temporary removal of all or some of the privileges of church membership (e.g., access to the Lord’s Table, voting in business meetings, etc.). There are two cases in which the membership privileges of a church member may be suspended:

1. If a member is habitually absent from the meetings of the church without good cause, the Pastors may recommend that his membership privileges be suspended until such time as he re-establishes his commitment to the church’s covenant and his submission to pastoral oversight. The church may suspend membership privileges by a majority vote at a duly called business meeting, and the name of the suspended member shall be removed from the roster of active members and placed on the roster of inactive members. Such suspension may be lifted upon the recommendation of the Pastors and the vote of the church.

2. If a member has publicly sinned, but shows hopeful signs of repentance, then severe discipline such as excommunication would be improper. Nevertheless, serious offenses may not be overlooked altogether. Therefore, upon the recommendation of the Pastors, the church may suspend for a designated time all or some of the membership privileges of such a member by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a duly called business meeting. Those who submit to such discipline are to be wholly forgiven and received as brethren.

### **B. Excommunication**

If the brother or sister persists unrepentant in serious sin or heresy, the Pastors shall recommend that such an unrepentant member be excommunicated from the fellowship of the church in the hope that such action may lead to godly repentance. Excommunication involves the termination of church membership and treatment of the excommunicated member as an unbeliever. The church may excommunicate a member by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called business meeting. When an excommunicated member gives evidence of repentance, he may be restored upon the recommendation of the Pastors and the vote of the church.

## **ARTICLE III: MEETINGS**

### *Section 1. Meetings for Worship and Edification*

Meetings for public worship and instruction shall be held as often as the Pastors may determine but shall always include a morning service on the Lord’s Day. The Lord’s Supper shall be administered at the discretion of the Pastors, but normally on the first Lord’s Day of each month during the morning service. Other meetings and ministries shall be scheduled according to the needs of the congregation and in accordance with God’s Word, such as mid-week prayer meetings, small group studies, biblical and theological classes, conferences, seminars, and outreach ministries.

### *Section 2. Business Meetings*

#### **A. Regular Business Meetings**

The church shall hold monthly business meetings for the reception of reports and the transaction of business. An annual budget shall be approved at the meeting held in August. At the meeting in May, a report on the church membership shall be made, including an account of the new members and those whose membership has been terminated.

#### **B. Special Business Meetings**

It may be necessary from time to time to hold business meetings for the transaction of business that cannot be postponed until a regular business meeting. The Pastors (or Deacons if there are no pastors) may call a special business meeting and shall announce the meeting and its purpose at a regular Sunday morning service at least one week prior to the meeting. In the event that the church has

no officers, any three members in good standing may call such a meeting. In very urgent circumstances, a special business meeting may be called with less than a week's notice, though a reasonable effort must be made to contact all church members to inform them of the meeting.

While calling special business meetings lies under the purview of the Pastors, one-fourth of the members in good standing may submit a written petition to require the Pastors (or Deacons if there are no Pastors) to call a special business meeting. Such petition must state the purpose of the meeting.

### **C. Voting and Quorum**

Any member in good standing shall have the right to vote at church business meetings. All decisions shall be made by a simple majority of those present and voting unless specifically stated otherwise in this Constitution and By-Laws. At any duly called business meeting, a quorum shall consist of seven members in good standing unless the church has less than twenty members (as listed on the roster of active members), in which case a quorum shall consist of those members in good standing present at the meeting.

## **ARTICLE IV: OFFICERS**

### *Section 1. General Statement*

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of his church. However, he has ordained that the governance of local churches is to be carried out by qualified men who are called by the Holy Spirit to minister in special offices. These offices are those of Pastor (or Elder)<sup>3</sup> and Deacon. The Lord's appointment to these offices is recognized by the inward conviction of the individual called and by the approval of the church as it observes the possession of those gifts and scriptural qualifications required. Those occupying the offices of Pastor and Deacon shall be members of this church and shall subscribe to the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

### *Section 2. Pastors*

#### **A. Function**

1. The Pastors shall have under their direction the welfare and oversight of the church, serving as guardians and shepherds of the flock over which God has made them overseers (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Heb. 13:17). Their oversight of the church involves administering and supervising the programs and ministries of the church, tending to the pastoral care and spiritual growth of each member of the congregation, devotion to prayer, and the regular and systematic preaching and teaching of the Word of God in the church's public meetings. In all matters, the Pastors are to conduct themselves as servant-leaders, "not lording it over those entrusted to [them] but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3).

2. It is also the function of the Pastors to oversee and (under normal circumstances) administer the ordinances of the church, to moderate at business meetings, and to supervise the work of the deacons and hired church staff (e.g., church secretary, janitor, etc.).

#### **B. Plurality of Pastors**

1. It is the teaching of Scripture that the local church should have a plurality of Pastors. Therefore, it shall be the practice of this church to establish and maintain, if at all feasible, such a plurality of Pastors. The Bible does not specify, however, the exact number of Pastors a church should have, and thus the church should be guided by its recognition among the congregation of those qualified and called by the Holy Spirit.

2. All Pastors are equal in spiritual authority and are alike responsible to God for the general oversight of the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from Pastor to Pastor, this diversity shall not undermine real parity among the Pastors. Therefore, all decisions

concerning the oversight of the church shall normally be made by the unanimous consent of the Pastors. If, after much prayer and discussion, such unanimity cannot be found on a given issue, and a majority of the Pastors are in agreement (or one Pastor in the event that there are only two), the matter may be brought before the congregation for resolution. In such cases, the church may decide on a course of action by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called business meeting.

3. The Pastors shall normally meet weekly for carrying out their oversight responsibilities.

#### **C. Qualifications**

Anyone desiring the office of Pastor must evidence to the church the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

#### **D. Financial Support of Pastors**

1. According to the Scriptures, Pastors should be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church, and the direction of Christ her Head. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this church to financially support at least one Pastor so that he may devote himself, as far as possible, to the preaching and teaching of the Word and the pastoral oversight of the church, using as its criteria the recognition of special ability in ruling and excellence in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17).

2. While it is recognized that some Pastors may receive little or no financial remuneration, the Pastors may recommend to the church that additional Pastors be fully or partially supported according to these Pastors' gifts, the extent of their ministries, and the capability of the church.

3. Financial support of any Pastor must be approved by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting.

#### **E. Regular Pulpit Ministry**

1. In the event that the church has no Pastor who is capable of or willing to fulfill a regular pulpit ministry, the church shall establish a *Pastoral Search Committee*. The Pastoral Search Committee shall have at least three members consisting of the Pastors of the church and, if needed to bring the number up to three, other church members in good standing elected by the members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting.

2. When the Pastoral Search Committee has found a suitable candidate for the regular pulpit ministry, and after the congregation has been given sufficient opportunity to become acquainted with his qualifications, the Pastoral Search Committee shall recommend to the church that he be admitted to the Eldership and installed in the regular pulpit ministry of the church. The church may accept the recommendation by no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting.

3. The determination as to whether an existing Pastor is capable of fulfilling a regular pulpit ministry shall be made by the church by no fewer than a three-fourths majority of the regular members present and voting by ballot at a duly called business meeting. In making this determination, the church shall consider the Pastor's willingness to fulfill this ministry, his fitness for this ministry, the extent of his training, and the church's ability to remunerate him according to his needs.

4. If a candidate for the regular pulpit ministry has not been previously ordained, the Pastoral Search Committee, prior to recommending him to the church, shall establish a *council of ordination* in accordance with paragraph F.2.b below. This council shall consist of Pastors from other churches of

like faith and order chosen by the Pastoral Search Committee. In the event of his recommendation to and election by the church, the candidate shall be ordained in accordance with paragraph F.2.d below.

## **F. Ordination of Pastors**

### *1. General Statement*

Entrance into the pastoral ministry begins with a call from the Holy Spirit and culminates in the ordination to the office of Pastor through the laying on of hands by the Eldership. The Lord's appointment of an individual to this office is recognized by the church by means of his possession of the gifts and qualifications required by Scripture.

### *2. Procedure of Appointment*

The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to hold this office involves four steps: application, examination, election, and ordination.

a. *Application.* Because the Eldership is an office to which a man is specially called by the Holy Spirit, a candidate for ordination must have a sense of divine calling to the office and a desire for ordination. Thus, the initiative in beginning the ordination process lies with the man who believes he is called. Though the church may ask a man to prayerfully consider the Eldership, he must in any case make application to the Elders of the church, informing them of his desire and requesting candidacy to ordination. If there are no Pastors to whom he can apply, he must await the church's fulfillment of the requirements of subsection E above.

b. *Examination.* When a man applies for ordination, the Pastors shall begin a process of examination, reviewing the candidate's qualifications for the office and guiding him, if necessary, through an appropriate course of study and training. When and if a candidate appears qualified and prepared for the office of Pastor, the Pastors, with the assistance of other churches of like faith and order, shall conduct an oral examination of the candidate to test his biblical, theological, and practical knowledge. If the candidate passes this examination, the Pastors shall recommend to the church that he be ordained to the Eldership.

c. *Election.* At a duly called business meeting, and upon the recommendation of the Pastors, the congregation shall discuss the qualifications of the candidate. After such discussion, the church will vote by ballot and may express its recognition of the candidate's call by no less than a three-fourths majority of the regular members present and voting.

d. *Ordination.* As soon as possible after a candidate's election, at a worship service, the Pastor(s)-elect shall be ordained in accordance with the traditions of Baptist churches.

e. If a man who has been previously ordained as a Pastor in a church of like faith and order applies for entrance into the Eldership, the requirements of paragraph 2.d. above shall not apply. He must nevertheless be examined in accordance with paragraph 2.b. above (except that the involvement of other churches need not be required) and elected by the church in accordance with paragraph 2.c above.

## *Section 3. Deacons*

### **A. Function**

1. Deacons are primarily responsible, under the direction of the Pastors, for administering the secular, business, and benevolent concerns of the church. They shall also assist the Pastors in the performance of pastoral ministries by providing spiritual and physical comfort to the sick and distressed. Further, the deacons shall be responsible for the care and maintenance of the properties of the church.

2. With regard to business affairs, the deacons shall have the following specific duties:

a. To propose each year a *Finance Committee* to be approved by the Eldership and the congregation. The Finance Committee shall be comprised of at least one deacon, the Church Treasurer, and two other members of the church. The Finance Committee shall prepare a church budget for the next church year and submit it to the Pastors for approval. When approved by the Pastors, the proposed budget shall be distributed to the congregation at least two weeks before the August business meeting. The Finance Committee shall perform other duties as prescribed by financial policies adopted by the church.

b. To propose a *Church Treasurer* and *Assistant Treasurer* to be approved by the Eldership and the congregation. It shall be the duties of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer to collect and deposit all financial receipts, to keep a record of each church member's contributions to the church, and to disburse funds in accordance with the church budget. The Treasurer shall also keep a record of all financial transactions and shall make a financial report at each monthly business meeting.

c. To propose a *Church Clerk* to be approved by the Eldership and the congregation. It shall be the duties of the Clerk to keep the minutes of all church business meetings, to give a report of the minutes at each regular business meeting, to keep an accurate record of the church membership (including rosters of both active and inactive members and those whose membership has been terminated), and to maintain all official reports and correspondences of the congregation.

d. To recommend hired staff persons (e.g., church secretary, janitor, etc.) in accordance with budgetary allowances and to be approved by the Eldership and the congregation. Such staff may be dismissed by the deacons with the approval of the Eldership.

3. The Deacons shall meet as often as necessary for carrying out their responsibilities, but no less than once per month.

#### **B. Qualifications**

Anyone elected to the office of Deacon must evidence to the church the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications set forth in Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

#### **C. Lack of Deacons**

In the event that the church has no Deacons, the Pastors shall insure that the responsibilities of the Deaconate are met.

#### **D. Ordination of Deacons**

##### *1. General Statement*

Entrance into the Deaconate begins with the nomination of a qualified man and culminates in the ordination to the office of Deacon through the laying on of hands by the Eldership and Deaconate. The Lord's appointment of an individual to this office is recognized by the church by means of his possession of the gifts and qualifications required by Scripture.

##### *2. Procedure of Appointment*

The recognition of those qualified to hold this office involves four steps: nomination, examination, election, and ordination.



a. *Nomination.* If the Pastors believe that the church needs additional Deacons, a nominating ballot shall be taken at a regular business meeting. On this ballot, each voting member may write the names of any male members that he believes are qualified for the Deaconate up to the number recommended by the Pastors. To be nominated, a man must be named on no less than 20% of the ballots cast.

b. *Examination.* The Pastors shall examine those men nominated for the Deaconate, reviewing each candidate's qualifications for the office and guiding him, if necessary, through an appropriate course of study and training. When and if a candidate appears qualified and prepared for the Deaconate, the Pastors shall recommend to the church that he be ordained to the Deaconate.

c. *Election.* At a duly called business meeting, and upon the recommendation of the Eldership, the congregation shall discuss the qualifications of the candidate. After such discussion, the church will vote by ballot and may express its recognition of the candidate's call by no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting.

d. *Ordination.* As soon as possible after a candidate's election, at a worship service, the Deacon(s)-elect shall be ordained in accordance with the traditions of Baptist churches.

e. If a man who has been previously ordained as a Deacon in a church of like faith and order applies for entrance into the Deaconate, the requirements of paragraph 2.d. above shall not apply. He must nevertheless be examined in accordance with paragraph 2.b. above and elected by the church in accordance with paragraph 2.c above.

#### *Section 4. Review and Removal of Officers*

Once appointed and ordained, each Pastor and Deacon shall be understood to hold his office in the church for life unless he resigns for good cause or is dismissed by the church due to his no longer meeting the qualifications for his office. Nevertheless, to ensure that church officers remain qualified, the following provisions are made.

A. The Pastors shall instruct the congregation in the biblical qualifications for officers no less than once every two years.

B. Any two members with reason to believe that an officer is no longer qualified for his office, shall express their concerns to the Pastors and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action should be done in accordance with the instruction of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

C. Any vote to dismiss a Pastor or Deacon must be taken by ballot at a duly called business meeting. The church may remove a Pastor or Deacon from office by a vote of the members present and voting and with the unanimous consent of the Pastors (not including a Pastor being considered for removal), or, without the unanimous consent of the Pastors, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.

#### **ARTICLE V: TRUSTEES**

In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," this church shall have an official *Board of Trustees*, which shall represent the church in legal matters. This Board shall consist of at least three church members in good standing (who are not Pastors) elected from the church at large. Members of the Board of Trustees shall be elected every three years at the August business meeting or as required to fill vacancies on the Board. The Board shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action.

## **ARTICLE VI: DISSOLUTION**

If First Baptist Church should ever be dissolved, all of its assets remaining after payment and satisfaction of all of its costs and indebtedness, including the expenses of such dissolution, shall be distributed to non-profit corporations affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention which are qualified for exemption under Section 501 C (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or any successor to said section.

The members of First Baptist Church, as defined in Article I of its By-Laws, who are members in good standing at the time of dissolution of said corporation, shall in a duly called business meeting designate the non-profit corporation(s) or organization(s) affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention to receive assets of the corporation upon dissolution. No assets of First Baptist Church shall be distributed to any member, officer, or trustee of this church.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions to the requirement for immersion may be made, at the discretion of the pastors, for those who cannot be immersed due to a physical disability, as long as the candidate affirms that immersion is the biblical norm for baptism.

<sup>2</sup> “Like faith and order” shall be understood to refer to a church that is “baptistic,” which means, minimally, that it (1) confesses the evangelical Christian faith preserved and professed in the Protestant Reformation, (2) adheres to congregationalism as its form of church government, and (3) practices believer’s baptism only. If there is doubt as to whether another church has a “like faith and order,” the determination shall be left to the discretion of the pastors.

<sup>3</sup> The New Testament uses three interchangeable terms to refer to the pastoral office: elder, pastor, and overseer (cf. Acts 14:23; 20:17-31; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). This constitution shall primarily refer to the men occupying this office collectively as “the eldership,” and to the individuals in the eldership as “pastors.”