

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, INCORPORATED

BENNINGTON, VERMONT

BY-LAWS

Adopted

At a regularly called meeting of the Church on

December 15, 1959

Revised

January 29, 1967
November 18, 1973
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January 22, 1989
January 27, 1991
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BY-LAWS – FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BENNINGTON, VERMONT, INCORPORATED

ARTICLE I:	NAME	
ARTICLE II:	PURPOSE	
ARTICLE III:	DENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION	Section 1: Qualifications Section 2: Delegates ABC V/NH Section 3: Delegates to ABC USA
ARTICLE IV:	MEMBERSHIP	Section 1: Titles & Qualifications Section 2: Associate Membership Section 3: Transfer of Membership Section 4: Dismissal of Membership Section 5: Membership of Good Standing
ARTICLE V:	OFFICERS	Section 1: Titles & Qualifications Section 2: Term Section 3: Duties
ARTICLE VI:	BOARDS	Section 1: Titles & Qualifications Section 2: Term Section 3: Duties Section 4: Miscellaneous
ARTICLE VII:	COMMITTEES	Section 1: Titles & Qualifications Section 2: Term Section 3: Duties Section 4: Miscellaneous
ARTICLE VIII:	THE CABINET	Section 1: Members Section 2: Duties Section 3: Quorum
ARTICLE IX:	REMOVAL OF OFFICERS AND ELECTED PERSONNEL	
ARTICLE X:	CALLING A PASTOR	Section 1: Pulpit committee Section 2: Budget Section 3: Duties Section 4: Interim Pastor Section 5: Pastor
ARTICLE XI:	ELECTIONS	Section 1: Elections to be at Annual Meeting

ARTICLE XII: MEETINGS

- Section 1: Devotional Meetings
- Section 2: Business Meetings
- Section 3: Notice
- Section 4: Quorum
- Section 5: Qualified Voters

ARTICLE XIII: AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

- Section 1: Constitution and By-Laws
- Section 2: Meetings

ARTICLE XIV: THE CHURCH YEAR

ARTICLE XV: AMMENDMENTS

ARTICLE XVI: RULES OF ORDER

- Section 1: Robert's Rules of Order
- Section 2: Vote of Ex Officio Members

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BENNINGTON, VERMONT, INCORPORATED

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name shall be FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BENNINGTON, VERMONT, INCORPORATED.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

This church has been organized to carry on services of religious worship; to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to erect, own and preserve suitable buildings for Christian work; and to promote other projects as may be deemed necessary in connection therewith.

ARTICLE III: DENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION

Section 1: Qualifications

It shall be the policy of this church to be affiliated with and to support actively the American Baptist Churches of Vermont/New Hampshire and the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.

Section 2: Delegates to American Baptist Churches - Vermont/New Hampshire

- A. All Delegates shall be members in good standing.
- B. Delegates and alternates shall be appointed by the Cabinet to reflect the wishes of the congregation.

Section 3: Delegates to the Annual Meeting of the American Baptist Churches - USA

- A. All Delegates shall be members in good standing.
- B. Delegates and alternates shall be appointed by the Cabinet to reflect the wishes of the congregation.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Qualifications

Any person who wishes to follow the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ may become a member by vote of the church upon recommendation of the Board of Deacons following a confession of faith in Christ and after Baptism, or receipt of a letter from some other Christian church of like faith and order, or upon a personal statement of Christian experience. A vote to accept new members may be taken at any worship service.

Section 2: Associate Membership

Members of other Christian churches desiring to cooperate with this church in advancing the kingdom of our Lord shall be eligible for associate membership and shall be received by vote of the church upon recommendation of the Board of Deacons. Their church letters shall be received as evidence of their Christian experience. They shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of membership except such as affect the polity of the church. The provision of this section allows for dual membership.

Section 3: Transfer of Membership

Any member who desires to unite with some other church shall be granted a letter of transfer by vote of the church at any worship service upon recommendation of the Deacons. Any person having been granted a letter shall cease to be a member of this church upon notification of having been received by the other church.

Section 4: Dismissal from Membership

Any member submitting a written request to the Board of Deacons to be dismissed from membership shall be granted a letter of dismissal by the church on recommendation by that board.

Section 5: Members of Good Standing

A member shall be considered to be in good standing if on the active membership roll prepared by the Board of Deacons with the Pastor.

ARTICLE V: OFFICERS

Section 1: Titles and Qualifications

The officers shall be members in good standing and shall be a Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, an Assistant Treasurer, a Financial Secretary, a Church School Superintendent, a Building Superintendent and a Historian.

Section 2: Term

Term of office shall be for one year or until successors are elected, and they shall assume office immediately following the annual meeting.

Section 3: Duties

A. Moderator

The moderator shall preside at all business meetings of the Church. In the absence of the Moderator at a meeting at which he/she should preside then the Clerk shall call the meeting to order and a Moderator pro-tem shall be elected from the floor. He/she shall serve as Chairperson of the Cabinet.

B. Clerk

The clerk shall

- 1) Keep accurate minutes of the business proceedings of the church;
- 2) With the assistance of the Pastor and the office secretary, keep a complete roll of the members of the church and issue letters of transfer as authorized by the church;
- 3) Assist in preparing denominational and other reports that may be requested and perform all other duties prescribed by custom and/or Vermont law and federal law;
- 4) Serve as Clerk of the Cabinet and the Board of Trustees of which he/she is an ex officio member; and
- 5) Deliver immediately to his/her successor all books and records pertaining to his/her office.

C. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall:

- 1) Be the custodian of all monies received by the church, except the Deacons' Fellowship Fund;
- 2) Pay by check all bills that have been approved by the Board of Trustees, of which he/she an ex officio member;
- 3) Pay the Benevolence amounts as submitted by the Financial Secretary and approved by the Board of Missions.
- 4) Present to the church at its annual meeting, or more often if so requested, a full financial report including receipts and disbursements, securities and trust holdings and the actual financial condition of the church;
- 5) Present his/her books to be audited at the close of the fiscal year, or more often if so requested by the church; and
- 6) Deliver immediately to his/her successor all books and records pertaining to his/her office.

D. Assistant Treasurer

The Assistant Treasurer shall

- 1) Undertake those assignments given him/her by the Board of Trustees.

E. Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall

- 1) Keep a confidential account for each person showing pledges and contributions made to each fund, except Deacon's Fellowship Fund;
- 2) Provide offering envelopes and render statements to each member; including the Deacon's Fellowship Fund.
- 3) Receive from the tellers a record of all church income;
- 4) Serve as an ex officio member of the Boards of Trustees; and provide a monthly record of income to the Board of Trustees as requested.
- 5) Provide a monthly record of Benevolence Income to the Board of Missions in accordance with its current budgeted items and goals.
- 6) Submit to the Church Treasurer, for payment, a monthly report of all Benevolence Income in accordance with the Board of Mission's current budgeted items and goals.
- 7) Deliver immediately to his/her successor all books and records pertaining to his/her office.

F. Church School Superintendent

The Church School Superintendent shall

- 1) In cooperation with the Board of Christian Education, be responsible for the organization, supervision and administration of the church school; and
- 2) Serve as an ex officio member of the Board of Christian Education.

G. Building Superintendent

The Building Superintendent shall

- 1) Be responsible to the board of Trustees;
- 2) Inform them of the condition of church properties, advising and recommending repairs and improvements; and
- 3) Undertake assignments given him/her by the board.

H. Historian

The Historian shall be responsible for organizing and maintaining all items of historical value.

ARTICLE VI: BOARDS

Section 1: Titles and Qualifications

A. A Board of Deacons of at least six elected members and

B. A Board of Trustees, a Board of Christian Education and a Board of Missions, each of at least three but not more than six elected members.

All Board members shall be members of the church in good standing.

Section 2: Term

The term of office for members of the boards shall be three years. Each board will be divided into three groups so that one-third of its membership shall be elected each year. No member of a board who has served a full

term shall be eligible for re-election to that board for a period of one year following the expiration of his/her term. Board members shall assume office immediately following the annual meeting. Each board shall elect its chairperson and secretary, except the Church Clerk shall serve as secretary of the Board of Trustees, and shall meet regularly at a stated time.

Section 3: Duties

A. Board of Deacons

1) General

The board shall

- (a) Be responsible for the spiritual life of those associated with the church ;
- (b) Be responsible for the worship program of the church, assisting the Pastor in the serving of communion, in the ordinance of baptism, in the service of worship and in visiting and caring for the sick, needy and distressed members of our church community;
- (c) In cooperation with the Pastor, be responsible for providing the pulpit supply and the leadership of all worship services in his/her absence.
- (d) Consider, with the Pastor, all applications for church membership and all requests for letters of transfer and dismissal;
- (e) Promote the Christian outreach program of the church, including audio/video recording of the church service
- (f) Recruit ushers, greeters, those who receive the offering and Videographers; and provide for their instruction;
- (g) Have charge of maintaining the chancel areas in the sanctuary and chapel; and
- (h) Suggest the budget for the pastoral ministry of the church.

2) Fellowship Fund

The board shall have charge of the fellowship fund, and from this fund, through the Pastor, shall provide for the members of the church and the community who are in need. Whenever the fellowship fund exceeds \$500.00; the excess may be put to some charitable or other mission use.

B. Board of Trustees

The board shall

- 1) Hold in trust all church property, taking all measures necessary for its protection, upkeep and management;
- 2) Designate the bank where the funds of the church shall be deposited;
- 3) Approve the bills before they are paid by the treasurer;
- 4) Make provision for securing the funds required to meet the budget adopted by the church;
- 5) Suggest the budget for the church home and parsonage;
- 6) Be responsible for bonding of the treasurer and assistant treasurer; and
- 7) Perform all other duties that are imposed on it by the church and by Vermont law.

C. Board of Christian Education

The board shall

- 1) Organize, supervise and administer the educational program of the church, enlisting such lay leadership as is deemed necessary;

- 2) Cooperate with the Board of Missions and Stewardship in its educational program; and
- 3) Suggest the educational budget of the church

D. Board of Missions and Stewardship

The board shall

- 1) Keep the members and friends informed of the church's missionary activities at home and abroad
- 2) Cooperate with the Board of Christian Education in missionary and stewardship education; and
- 3) Suggest the missionary budget of the church

Section 4: Miscellaneous

- A. All boards shall cooperate with the Board of Trustees in securing the funds required to meet the budget of the church.
- B. The absence of a member of the board from three consecutive regularly called meetings of that board may be construed as resignation at the discretion of the cabinet.
- C. The pastor, or in his/her absence, the moderator shall convene and moderate the first meeting of each board.
- D. No person shall serve on more than one board simultaneously; and
- E. A quorum shall be a simple majority of the elected members.

ARTICLE VII: COMMITTEES

Section 1: Titles and Qualifications

There shall be the following committees made up of members of the church.

- A. A Tellers Committee of nine. A Nominating Committee of three. A Pastoral Relations Committee of three.
- B. There shall also be additional committees consisting of members and/or friends of the church: Music Committee of three and an Auditing Committee of three.

Section 2: Term

The term of office shall be for one year or until successors are elected, except for the Tellers Committee and Pastoral Relations Committee where one-third of the members are elected each year for a three-year term. The Tellers Committee members may succeed themselves. The Pastoral Relations Committee members can succeed themselves, but no more than two consecutive three year terms. Initially the terms for the Pastoral Relations Committee shall be for two, three and four years.

Section 3: Duties

A. Music Committee

The committee shall

- (1) Provide the church with an organist, a choir director, a choir and/or special music;
- (2) Purchase and preserve music for the use of the church; and
- (3) Suggest the budget for the music ministry of the church.

B. Auditing Committee

The committee shall audit the books of the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Tellers Committee and other accounts as may be required.

C. Nominating Committee

The committee shall

- (1) Present a slate at the annual meeting for all elected officers, board members and committee members except for the Nominating committee; and
- (2) Present a nomination to the Cabinet in the event a vacancy occurs in any elected position.

D. Tellers Committee

The committee shall

- (1) Receive all monies of the church and deposit them in the bank designated by the Board of Trustees;
- (2) Provide a record of all income for the Treasurer and Financial Secretary; and
- (3) Provide a record of the Fellowship Fund to the Treasurer of the Board of Deacons

E. Pastoral Relations Committee

The Committee shall

- (1) Foster constructive communication between the congregation and its pastoral leadership.
- (2) Implement the congregations' responsibility for its pastor's professional and personal well-being.
- (3) Report in generic terms to the Cabinet, maintaining its unique pastoral relationship focus.
- (4) Regularly schedule meetings at least 2 meetings per quarter, coinciding with annual review (8 per year).
- (5) Maintain absolute confidentiality.

Section 4: Miscellaneous

- A. The pastor, or in his/her absence, the moderator, shall convene and moderate the first meeting of each committee.
- B. A quorum shall be a simple majority of the elected members.

ARTICLE VIII; THE CABINET

Section 1: Members of the Cabinet

The Cabinet shall consist of the Pastor, the officers of the church, the chairpersons of the boards, the chairpersons of the standing committees, and the presidents of the auxiliary organization of the church and others upon invitation of the Moderator

Section 2: Duties

A. General

The cabinet shall

- (1) Make clear all questions of policy brought to it;
- (2) Refer specific issues to the group responsible for such matters;
- (3) Make recommendations to the church concerning questions which require church action;

- (4) Act on any resignations of officers, board members or committee members which may occur between annual meetings;
- (5) Fill vacancies on the basis of nominations from the Nominating Committee;
- (6) Seek to coordinate the work of all departments;
- (7) Prepare and present to the church an annual budget for all church expenses; and
- (8) Present a slate for the Nominating Committee at the annual meeting

Section 3: Quorum

A quorum shall be a simple majority of the members

ARTICLE IX: REMOVAL OF OFFICERS AND ELECTED PERSONNEL

The church shall have the power, for good and sufficient cause, to remove an officer, board member or committee member from the position which she/he holds at a duly warned Annual or Special Meeting. A two-thirds vote of those present, providing there is a quorum, shall be required.

ARTICLE X: CALLING A PASTOR

Section 1: Pulpit Committee

When it is necessary to call a pastor, the Cabinet shall

- A. Arrange for a Business Meeting at which it will present a slate of fifteen church members as candidates for the Pulpit Committee, three or more of whom shall be deacons, and all of whom must have agreed that if elected,
 - (1) He/she will give the time required
 - (2) He/she can and will travel as required; and
 - (3) His/her health will permit his/her undertaking such a responsibility.
- B. Oversee the election by written ballot of a representative Pulpit Committee of five members, at least one of whom shall be a Deacon.

Section 2: Budget

The church shall establish a budget for the Pulpit Committee at the time of its election.

Section 3: Duties

A. General

The Committee shall

- (1) Elect a chairperson and a clerk;
- (2) Keep all deliberations absolutely confidential
- (3) Report to the church from time to time concerning its activities, seeking such additional guidance as it may require.

(4) Notify the church members by letter when a candidate is to be presented. A report may be made at any regular service or at a business meeting without prior notice having been given.

B. Interim Pulpit Supply

The committee shall have the responsibility for pulpit supply during the interim. It shall, as soon as possible, and without further instructions from the church, make arrangements for the Interim Pastor; however, when possible, the committee should ask the church to approve its action.

C. Procedure to Secure a Pastor

In taking steps necessary to secure a Pastor, the committee shall investigate the merits of all persons under consideration. When a suitable person is found, the committee shall recommend him/her to the church for its consideration at a regularly called meeting, provided the candidate has the recommendation of eighty percent of the committee. It shall present one candidate at a time. When a candidate is presented to the church, the committee shall give a summary of its activities and a report on the candidate's qualifications and history of service. Vote of the church on the call shall be by written ballot. To be engaged as the permanent minister, a candidate must receive an affirmative vote of at least 90% of those present.

D. Service of Recognition or Installation; Reception

When a pastor has been called, the Pulpit Committee shall, as soon as possible, arrange a service of recognition or installation to be followed by a reception.

E. Salary of Pastor

The committee shall, with the Board of Trustees, set the amount of salary and related benefits to be received by the pastor, subject to the approval of the church at the time of the call.

F. Final Report and Discharge.

After the Pastor has been installed, the committee shall file a complete record of its work at a regularly called business meeting at which time the committee shall be discharged.

Section 4: Interim Pastor

The Interim Pastor shall

- (a) Become a resident for the Interim;
- (b) Sign the Code of Ethics of the Minister's Council of American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.;
- (c) Agree that in accepting an assignment as Interim Pastor to eliminate himself/herself as a candidate for the permanent pastorate of the church; and
- (d) Receive the same amount of salary as received by the previous pastor.

Section 5: Pastor

A. Qualifications

The person selected to be Pastor shall

- 1) Be a Baptist;
- 2) Be a graduate of an accredited college and of a seminary accredited by the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.;
- 3) Sign the Code of ethics of the Minister's Council of the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.

B. Duties

The pastor shall preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, watch over the members, promote the spiritual interest of the church, and organize and direct its strength for the best possible service. He/she shall be an ex officio member of all boards and committees of the church.

C. The Call and Miscellaneous

The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period of time. The salary, and/or related benefits, fixed at the time of the call may be changed by the vote of the church at any regular business meeting. The pastor is entitled to an annual leave of the equivalent of one month with full salary.

ARTICLE XI: ELECTIONS

All officers, members of boards, and committees shall be elected at the annual meeting.

ARTICLE XII: MEETINGS

Section 1: Devotional Meetings

The church shall meet each Sunday to worship God and to hear the preaching of the Gospel. The church shall observe the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month or at such other times as the Pastor and the Board of Deacons may decide. Other meetings may be held at the request of any organization of the church.

Section 2: Business Meetings

A. Annual Meeting

The annual meeting shall be held on the fourth Sunday in January, unless another date is fixed by the Cabinet.

B. Special Meetings

Special Meetings may be called at any time by the Pastor, the Moderator, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the Cabinet in connection with the election of the Pulpit Committee, or the Clerk upon written request of ten members in good standing.

Section 3: Notice

Notice of any business meeting and its purpose shall be published in the church notices at least two consecutive weeks in advance of such meeting and shall be read from the pulpit at least two consecutive Sundays in advance of such meeting.

Section 4: Quorum

A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of fifteen qualified voters present at any duly called meeting.

Section 5: Qualified Voters

All members in good standing who have reached their eighteenth birthday are qualified voters. Associate members may not vote on such matters as affect the polity of the church.

ARTICLE XIII: AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1: Constitution and By-Laws

The constitution and by-laws of auxiliary organizations shall not conflict with the by-laws of the church.

Section 2: Meetings

Meetings of auxiliary organizations shall not conflict with meetings of the church.

ARTICLE XIV: THE CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE XV: AMENDMENTS

Amendments to these by-laws may be affected upon ratification at two duly called business meetings held at least thirty days apart, by a two-thirds vote of those present providing there is a quorum present and providing notice of the proposed change or changes has been published in the church and read from the pulpit as required.

ARTICLE XVI: RULES OF ORDER

Section 1: Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order newly revised shall govern the business proceedings of the church.

Section 2: Vote of Ex Officio Members

Conforming to Robert's Rules of Order, an ex officio member of the board or committee shall have the right to vote in board or committee action if he/she is not under the authority of the church, i.e., a paid employee.