

**DECLARATION OF FAITH
CHURCH COVENANT
CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
of the
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH INC., MIDDLETON, IDAHO**

PREAMBLE

Reposing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, believing in the teaching and the practices of the Baptists and those great distinctive principles for which they have ever stood, namely:

1. The Lordship of Jesus Christ;
2. The Bible, the standard of faith and practice;
3. Regenerated membership;
4. Believer's baptism by immersion;
5. Progressive sanctification;
6. Soul liberty;
7. 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 Declaration of Faith, Covenant, Constitution and By-Laws (and we, April 28th, 2024 hereby revoke all previous constitutions and By-laws, and action contrary to this Constitution and By-laws).

DECLARATION OF FAITH

We, as New Testament **b**aptist, believe in the historical Baptist belief that a **S**criptural 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 faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

We believe in the **SCRIPTURES** of the **OLD** and **NEW TESTAMENTS** as verbally inspired of God (**plenary**), **inerrant in the original writings**, of final authority in faith and life. (Mk. 12:26, 36; Rom. 15:4; II Tim. 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21)

We believe in the Trinity. We believe in the one God who eternally exists in three, **coequal, co-eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.** (Deut. 6:4; Matt 28:19-20; Jn 1:1-4; II Cor. 13:14.

We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also that spiritual death, which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and are sinners in thought, word, deed, and motive (Gen. 1:26; 2:17; Ps. 14:1-4; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 3:1-19; Eph. 2:1-3).

We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary and is true God and true man. (Jn. 1:1-2, 14; Lk. 1:35; I Peter 1:3-5)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood. (Lev. 17:11; Is. 64:6; Rom. 5:6-8; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:4-9; I Peter 1:18-19, 23; Rom. 3:24-25; I Peter 1:3-5)

We believe in the physical and bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24:39-42).

We believe in the personal, visible, bodily return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (I Thes. 4:13-18; Zach. 14:4-11; Rev. 20:6; Jn. 14:1-3; I Cor. 15:51; Titus 2:11-14)

We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit and thereby become the children of God. (Jn. 5:24-25; 17:23; Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8-10; II Tim. 1:12; I Jn. 5:13)

We believe in the eternal preservation and everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the eternal conscious punishment of the lost. (Rom. 8:1; Mk. 9:43-48; Rev. 20:15; 22:2-5, 11)

We believe it is the grace of God that saves, and teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and to zealously walk in good works. (Rom. 6:11-13; 8:2, 12-13; Eph. 2:10, 4:22-24; I Peter 1:14-16; Titus 2:11-14)

We believe that the Ordinances of the gospel are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in Christ "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: and symbolizes the regeneration and the union of the believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of His love in which we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:5; 3:23; Acts 8:36-38; Rom. 6:4; Acts 2:41-42; I Cor. 11:23-29)

We believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six, literal, 24-hour days (Gen. 1-2, Ex. 20:11).

We believe that God in His creative work has declared that which is sacred, that which is a reflection of His nature, including the sacredness of mankind, the distinctiveness of biological male and female, created in His image, and the establishment of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. We hold to the Biblical Truth that each person is fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14) and that God created us all in His own image, both male and female (Genesis 1:27) reflecting the image and nature of God in humanity. The reality of being male or female, defined as gender or sex, is determined biologically at conception, and is not a choice. We are called to express ourselves consistent with our God-given gender, the image of God in us, His creation. Therefore:

We teach that marriage was given by God as part of His common grace, and that it has no meaning other than as He has provided (Gen. 2:18-24).

We teach that marriage is subject to the curse of the Fall, but that believers, living in obedience to the Scripture and under the control of the Holy Spirit, can grow to experience peaceful, productive, and fulfilled marriage as intended by God (Gen. 3:16; 1 Peter 3:7).

We teach that the marriages of believers are to illustrate the loving relationship of Christ and His church, with the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the Church and the wife responding to her husband's loving leadership as the Church responds to Christ (Eph. 5:18-33).

We teach that, as believers' marriages are to illustrate Christ's relationship with His church, believers should choose to marry those who share their faith and regenerate life (2 Cor. 6:14).

We teach that the term "marriage" has only one meaning, and that marriage is sanctioned by God and joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in scripture (Gen. 2:23-24).

We teach that marriage is always a public, formal, and officially recognized covenant between a man and a woman. We teach that without such a covenant, prolonged conjugal cohabitation does not of itself establish marriage (John 4:18). We teach that where no such covenant exists between a cohabiting couple prior to coming to faith in Christ, family units should be preserved to the extent possible and, if otherwise appropriate, solemnization encouraged. We teach that where a valid marriage has been established prior to coming to faith in Christ, the couple should remain married (1 Cor. 7:24).

We teach that God hates divorce, permitting it only where there has been unrepentant sexual sin (Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:32, 19:9) or desertion by an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:12-15). We teach that remarriage is permitted to a faithful partner in appropriate circumstances.

We teach that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We teach that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (Heb. 13:4). We teach that any practice of sexual immorality is sinful, and as with all sin, is offensive to God (Lev. 18:1-30; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Rom. 1:18-28).

We teach that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of the Church. We teach that the faithful proclamation of the Scripture, including the call to repentance, does not constitute hate speech, or hateful and harassing behavior, but is instead a fundamental part of the Church's loving mission to the world (Matt. 28:16-20; 2 Cor. 5:11-20; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1-2).

We teach that God offers redemption and forgiveness to all who confess and forsake their sin, including sexual sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We teach that His forgiveness is total and complete (Ps. 103:11-12; 130:3-4; Is. 43:25, 44:22; John 5:24; Col. 2:13-14) and that God imputes the full righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21) to the believing sinner.

We teach that the forgiven sinner has been cleansed from the guilt of sin, set apart unto God, made holy, and justified before Him (1 Cor. 6:9-11). We teach that any man or woman who has received that forgiveness is "in Christ" and is a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

We declare that church facilities may be used for weddings and wedding related events only where at least one of the prospective spouses is a member in good standing of Middleton First Baptist Church. Church facilities are not otherwise available to the general public for that purpose.

We believe that the Bible affirms human government as established and affirmed by God. They have been instituted by God (Rom. 13:1); government is God's servant for our good (Rom. 13:4), that anyone who rebels against their government is in actuality rebelling against God (Rom. 13:2). We believe this even applies to wicked and corrupt governments, such as when God subjected Israel to the Babylonians and Romans of old (see especially Jer. 27:5-8; Dan. 4:17; Mark 12:17). Therefore, we deem it no light matter to disobey the government.

However, we also believe that Scripture gives Christians license, in rare and exceptional cases, to disobey government. For example, when the Sanhedrin forbade the apostles from preaching in Jesus' name, they responded, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20) and "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Put simply, when the government *contradicts* clear commands from God's Word, the church is obligated to obey Scripture rather than human government.

In the case of churches meeting, we believe that the local church is vital and imperative to the lives and conduct of individual Christians. Beginning with the fact that the New Testament word for church (ἐκκλησία) simply means *assembly*. God would have his people as part of a group, regularly meeting. More than that, the New Testament tells us that we must “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, *not neglecting to meet together*” (Heb. 10:24-25). In fact, it is dangerous for Christians to neglect the local body as our “adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (I Peter 5:8). One of the best defenses against our adversary is to remain with the flock and our shepherds, the elders and pastors of our churches (I Peter 5:1-4).

Finally, we believe that since it is so imperative and vital for Christians to regularly meet with their local church, that the decision to meet resides with the church itself, not with the state. In other words, since God commands us to meet and warns us of the danger of not meeting, we must continue to do so even in site of being forbidden by the government.

Therefore, we reserve the right to discern when we will meet. If the government issues a mandate that we cannot meet, we will take it into consideration. However, we will not blindly follow government issued suggestions or mandates to cease meeting. We believe that Scripture gives us the final word, rather than the government, in discerning when it’s safe and appropriate to meet as a church.

CHURCH COVENANT

What follows are the expectations that new members will publicly affirm:

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our 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 (Matt 28:18-20), we do now, in the presence of God, the angels, and this local assembly, most solemnly and joyfully make the following commitments to the members of Middleton First Baptist Church:

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25, Eph. 5:18), to walk together in Christian love (Eph. 5:2); to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and wellbeing (Gal. 6:10); to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines (Heb 10:24-25); 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 (2nd Cor 9:7, Php. 4:14-18, Matt 28:18-20).

We also engage to devote ourselves to the study of God's word, individually, as families, and corporately (Psalm 1:2, 1st Tim 4:13); to religiously educate our children (Deut. 6:7, Eph 6:4); to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances (2nd Cor 5:11-21); to walk wisely in the world (Eph 5:15-17); to be just in our dealings (Prov. 16:11), faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our behavior (Tit. 2:10) to avoid all slander and gossip (Eph. 5:31, Prov. 16:28), divisiveness (Tit. 3:10), and unrighteous anger (Eph. 4:26-27); to abstain from the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Saviour (Tit. 2:14, Eph. 2:10).

We further engage 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 (Prov. 19:11, 1st Cor. 13:5), but always ready for reconciliation, and to pursue it without delay (Matt 5:23-26).

We moreover engage that when we are parted from this church, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this commitment, and the principles of God's word (Heb 10:24-25).