



**The Constitution and Bylaws
of First Baptist Church of Avon Park, Florida Inc.
Avon Park, Florida**

Adopted by the Membership on January 18, 2026

PREAMBLE

Since it has pleased our Sovereign Lord, by His Holy Spirit, to call a certain number of his servants to unite here in 1913 under the name of First Baptist Church of Avon Park, Florida Inc., located in Avon Park, Florida for the worship of God and the advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the Members of First Baptist Church of Avon Park, Florida Inc. do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution and Bylaws as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant of this Church.

ARTICLE I. Name

This body shall be known as First Baptist Church of Avon Park, Florida Inc., located in Avon Park, Florida.

ARTICLE II. Purpose

First Baptist Church of Avon Park, Florida Inc. is a local church that seeks to glorify God by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ as described in the Holy Bible, equipping believers in Jesus Christ to live out this Gospel and to share it with others, gathering together regularly to worship God as well as sharing life together, and encouraging the spread of this Gospel throughout the world.

ARTICLE III. Membership

3.1 Requirements for Membership

Members of this church shall be believers in Jesus Christ; who give evidence of regeneration; who have been baptized as believers in obedience to Christ; who hold without mental reservation the doctrines of our Church as expressed in the Statement of Faith; and who promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Membership Covenant. This may include a new members' class and membership interview.

3.2. Admission to Membership

3.2.1. An Applicant shall be received as a Member of the Church upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of at least three-quarters of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

3.2.2. No Member of this Church shall retain membership in any other church.

3.3. Duties and Privileges of Membership

3.3.1. Members shall be expected to participate actively in the life of the Church by regularly attending its Lord's Day meetings; by faithfully observing its ordinances, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper; by submitting to its discipline and instruction; by attending its Members' Meetings; and by voting on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership, and on all other matters submitted to the congregation's vote.

3.3.2 No person who is not a Member shall serve in the ministries or offices of the Church, without express consent of the Elders.

3.4. Termination of Membership

Termination of membership in this church occurs: (a) when the Church, at a duly convened Members' Meeting, approves the voluntary resignation of a Member; (b) upon the death of the Member; or (c) as an act of church discipline as described in Part 3.5, when three-quarters of the Members present and voting at a duly called Member's Meeting vote to terminate the membership of the Member.

3.5. Church Discipline

3.5.1. Any Member consistently neglectful of his or her Scriptural duties as embodied in the Statement of Faith, Membership Covenant, or this Constitution and Bylaws, or who is otherwise guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the Church, shall be subject to the admonition of the Elders and the discipline of the Church. Any such action shall be done in accordance with Matthew 18.15-17, 1 Corinthians 5.1-5, and 2 Corinthians 2.6-9.

3.5.2. Church discipline can include admonition by the Elders or congregation, suspension from participation in the Lord's Supper for a definite period, removal from office, and/or dismissal from membership. See Matthew 18.15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3.14-15; 1 Timothy 5.19- 20; 1 Corinthians 5.4-5.

3.5.3. If private efforts to bring about the Member's repentance and reconciliation are unsuccessful, one or more Members or Elders shall bring the matter to the attention of the Elders. The Elders shall review and investigate the matter. After prayer and deliberation, the Elders may (a) dismiss the matter, (b) take disciplinary action (other than termination of membership, which may only be effected by a vote of the congregation), or (c) submit the matter to the Members at a duly convened Members' Meeting for a decision.

3.5.4. A Member shall be removed from membership as a matter of church discipline upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent approval of at least three-quarters of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

3.5.5. If the Members vote to discipline the Member, it may be announced to the Members to carry out the Biblical admonition to bring about repentance and restoration of the disciplined Member. Members who have been dismissed from membership by the Church may be restored to full membership privileges according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2.7-9 when the Elders and the Members judge their conduct to be in accordance with the Statement of Faith, Membership Covenant, and Biblical repentance, as outlined in Article 3.2.1.

3.5.6. The Church shall have authority to refuse a Member's voluntary resignation from membership for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, to protect that Member from following false teaching, or for any other reason the Church deems necessary or prudent. In these instances, the Church

has the right and responsibility to bring any disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make final determination as to the person's membership status in connection with that process.

3.5.7. If a Member departs from the Church while under church discipline and thereafter attends another church, the Elders may inform that church of the pending discipline along with the grounds for that action, seeking to encourage the brother or sister to repent and be restored to the Lord and to any people he or she have offended. The Elders may also warn the other church to be on guard against the individual's conduct or beliefs and any risk of harm that he or she might present to the other church. See Ephesians 4.1-6.

ARTICLE IV. Meetings

4.1. Worship Services

The Church shall meet together for public worship each Lord's Day morning, and at other times throughout the week as the Church may determine.

4.2. Members' Meetings

4.2.1. The Church shall hold a regular Members' Meeting at least every other month, which shall not be held in place of the regular Lord's Day morning meeting, but at some other time.

4.2.2. The Church shall hold Members' Meeting as deemed necessary by the Elders. The Church, duly assembled in a Members' Meeting, may be required to: elect officers; receive applicants into church membership; recognize termination of membership due to death or voluntary resignation; exercise church discipline; approve a church budget; hear reports from the Elders and, from time to time, the various Deacons; and to take any other action they deem necessary or desirable.

4.2.3. No Members' Meeting shall be held until the date, time, and place of such meeting shall be announced at every public meeting of the Church for two weeks immediately prior to the Members' Meeting in question.

4.2.4. An Elder designated by the majority of the Elders may preside as Moderator at all Members' Meetings, but shall have no vote, unless the Members be equally divided on a question.

4.2.5. Members' Meetings shall proceed according to Robert's Rules of Order, and the Members present shall constitute a quorum to do business. Motions shall be adopted upon the agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question, except on matters otherwise provided for in this constitution.

ARTICLE V. Government

5.1. Summary

The Church is an elder-led, deacon-served, congregational church according to the Scriptures. The biblical offices in the Church shall be Elders and Deacons, but final earthly authority is vested in the assembled congregation.

5.2. Elders

5.2.1. Oversight of the ministry, resources, and facilities of the Church shall be vested in the Elders, which should be comprised of not fewer than three men who satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3.1-7 and Titus 1.6-9. In accordance with 1 Timothy 2.12 and 3.2, women shall not serve as Elders.

5.2.2. Elders shall be selected as follows: the Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting present to the Church a list of nominees to the office of Elder. For a period of at least one month, the Church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders as soon as possible before the relevant Members' Meeting, who may on the bases of that advice remove names from the list of nominees. When a period of one month has elapsed, the Elders shall at the next regular Members' Meeting present a final list of nominees to the Church, who shall vote Yea or Nay on each of the nominees in turn. The Moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of at least three-quarters of the Members present and voting on his nomination shall be an Elder, whom the Church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.

5.2.3. At least once in every year, the Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting solicit from the congregation recommendations for the office of Elder, which recommendations shall be given to the Elders in private, and not publicly. The Elders shall give due consideration to any recommendation received.

5.2.4. Elders shall be reaffirmed by vote of the Church triennially, and having served two consecutive three-year terms, shall not be eligible for re-election for one year. Neither the preaching Elder nor a staff Elder shall be subject to a reaffirmation vote, nor to any term limit.

5.2.5. The Elders shall, in keeping with the principles set forth in the Scriptures, especially Acts 6.1-6; 1 Timothy 3.1-7; 5.17; Titus 1.5-9; James 5.14; and 1 Peter 5.1-4, undertake the responsibility of shepherding God's flock by devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. They shall have particular authority to plan and oversee worship services; to oversee the ordinances, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper; to examine and instruct prospective Members; to oversee the process of church discipline; to examine and recommend candidates for all offices and positions; to oversee the work of the Deacons and all other agents of the Church; and to hire, oversee, evaluate the performance of, and when necessary terminate paid Church staff; and to take any other action which shall be necessary and proper for faithfully overseeing and shepherding the Church.

5.2.6. Meetings of the Elders shall be conducted in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws and any procedures adopted by the Elders. Unless otherwise required by the Constitution and Bylaws or any procedures adopted by the Elders, the act of the majority of the Elders present at an Elders meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Elders. A quorum of Elders shall consist of three-quarters of the Elders of the Church.

5.2.7. In compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Florida, the Elders shall elect two non-staff Elders to serve as president and vice president of the corporation. The Church Clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation, and the Treasurer shall serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

5.2.8. Any two Members with reason to believe that an Elder, including the preaching Elder or a staff Elder, should be dismissed shall express such concern first to the Elders and thereafter to the congregation at any Members' Meeting. Dismissal of an Elder requires a Members' Meeting specifically called for that purpose and subsequent approval of at least three-quarters of the Members

present and voting on the question. Any such action shall be done in accordance with Matthew 18.15-17 and 1 Timothy 5.17-21.

5.3. Deacons

5.3.1. Particular service to the Church shall be provided by Deacons, the number of which shall vary as the Church has need, and who shall satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3.8-13. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6.1-6, Deacons shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority, but shall support the Elders' ministry of the Word, work to maintain the unity of the Church, and care for the physical needs of the Church.

5.3.2. Deacons shall be selected as follows: The Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting present to the Church a list of nominees to the office of Deacon. For a period of at least one month, the Church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders as soon as possible before the relevant Members' Meeting, who may on the bases of that advice remove names from the list of nominees. When a period of at least one month has elapsed, the Elders shall at the next regular Members' Meeting present a final list of nominees to the Church, who shall vote Yea or Nay on each of the nominees in turn. The Moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of a majority of the Members present and voting on his nomination shall be a Deacon, which the Church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.

5.3.3. At least once in every year, the Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting solicit from the congregation recommendations for new diaconate positions and for qualified persons to fill new or vacant positions, which recommendations shall be given to the Elders in private, and not publicly. The Elders shall give due consideration to any recommendation received.

5.3.4. Deacons shall be reaffirmed on the recommendation of the Elders and by a majority vote of the Church triennially, and having served two consecutive three-year terms, shall not be eligible for re-election for one year.

5.3.5. Subject to the direction and oversight of the Elders, Deacons serve the congregation by caring for Members, tending to the accommodations for public

worship, and assisting the Elders as needed. In addition, they may assist in the maintenance of properties, administer benevolence funds, and perform other duties prescribed by the Elders. The Deacons shall not meet together regularly as a deliberative body but may meet as needed to fulfill their assigned responsibilities. Each diaconate position shall serve a particular need of the Church and shall be created or dissolved upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent approval of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

5.3.6. Any two Members with reason to believe that a Deacon should be dismissed, shall express such concern first to the Elders and thereafter to the congregation at any Members' Meeting. A Deacon may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with Matthew 18.15-17.

5.3.7. In the event a diaconate position becomes vacant, the Elders may appoint a person to fill that position and assume its responsibilities, until such time as some person can be duly recognized by the Church as a Deacon.

5.4. Clerk

5.4.1. The Clerk shall record the minutes of all regular Members' Meetings of the Church; keep an accurate roll of the membership; and give reports as requested by the Elders.

5.4.2. The Clerk shall be selected to a renewable term of three years upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

5.4.3. The Clerk may be removed from office by recommendation of the Elders and by a majority vote of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

5.5. Treasurer

5.5.1. The Treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the Church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the Church. The Treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate

accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the Church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the Church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the Church. The Treasurer shall render to the Elders at least once in every year, or whenever they may require it, an account of all financial transactions and of the financial condition of the Church. The Treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the Church at regular Members' Meetings.

5.5.2. The Treasurer shall be selected to a renewable term of three years upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

5.5.3. No Elder or paid staff Member of the Church shall be eligible for the office of Treasurer. No Elder or paid staff Member of the Church may have administrative access to the Church's financial accounts and accounting software reserved to the Treasurer, as provided by the policies manual.

5.5.4. The Treasurer shall be removed from office upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

ARTICLE VI. Pastoral Staff

6.1 Lead Pastor

6.1.1. Primary responsibility for preaching and teaching the Scriptures in public meetings of the Church may be vested in a Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor shall be an Elder. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Article 5.2 and shall be recognized by the Church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching. His term of service shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation for Elders described in Article 5.2.4.

6.1.2. The Lead Pastor shall be elected according to the provisions of Article 6.3. He shall preach on the Lord's Day, oversee the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and perform such other duties, any of which may be delegated to the other Elders.

6.2. Associate Pastors

6.2.1. The Church may select additional pastors whose relationship to the Lead Pastor is that of Associate. An Associate Pastor shall be an Elder. He shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Article 5.2 and shall be recognized by the Church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching and equipping. His term of service shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation for Elders set out in Article 5.2.4.

6.2.2. An Associate Pastor shall be elected according to the provisions of Article 6.3. He shall assist the Lead Pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the Constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the Elders.

6.3. Calling of Pastoral Staff

6.3.1. The process for calling of pastoral staff shall be carried out to fulfill the following principles: (1) substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process; (2) nominations should proceed with the recommendation of the Elders; (3) all candidates should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating a fellow Christian; and (4) the process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6.3.2. In the calling of any man to the position of Lead or Associate Pastor, the Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting present to the Church the name of one nominee to the position. The Church shall be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential pastoral staff and, before being asked to express its judgment, shall receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith, Membership Covenant, and this Constitution and Bylaws.

6.3.3. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as Lead or Associate Pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) shall be given during the worship service on the two consecutive Sundays following the nomination, prior to the vote at a Members' Meeting. If any Member believes the nominee to be unqualified, that

Member shall express such concern to the Elders. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the Elders shall at the next Members' Meeting present the nominee for pastoral staff to the Church, who shall vote Yea or Nay on his selection as such. The Moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and if the nominee receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the Members present and voting on the question, he shall be a Member of the Church, an Elder, and pastoral staff, whom the Church shall in due haste publicly recognize as such.

6.4. Support Staff

6.4.1. The Church may create, or dissolve paid support staff positions upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting. Support staff will serve under the supervision of the Lead Pastor and the other Elders. The Elders are responsible for developing ministry descriptions and lists of qualifications for each position. All staff members shall affirm and support the Statement of Faith, Membership Covenant, this Constitution and Bylaws, and shall exemplify godly character.

6.4.2. Support staff may be terminated upon recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

ARTICLE VII. Property

7.1.1. The Church's facilities may not be used in a manner contrary to the Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant outlined in the Church Constitution and Bylaws. Additionally, the Elders shall determine who may or may not use the Church facilities and may adopt policies for this purpose pursuant to Article XI.

7.1.2. Should a condition arise at any time in the future when for any reason the Church work cannot continue, the Church property may be sold to retire any debt, and the remaining proceeds then donated equally between the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Alternatively, the Church property may be donated in its entirety or in part to another Southern Baptist Church or missions entity of the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE VIII. Relationships and Affiliation

While this Church is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body it does work in friendly cooperation with the Churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, and other organizations of like faith and practice.

ARTICLE IX. Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18:15-20 and 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), the Church shall urge its Members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts unless obligated by law. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the Church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the Church, whether Christian or non-Christian and whether individuals or corporate entities. The Elders shall adopt policies and procedures to affect these aspirations.

ARTICLE X. Indemnification

10.1.1. If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was a director, officer, employee, or agent of the Church, the Church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if a majority of the Elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the Church, and (d) the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

10.1.2. With the unanimous decision of the Elders, the Church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the Church's best interest and not unlawful.

10.1.3. If a quorum of the Elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of Elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

ARTICLE XI. Policies and Procedures

The Elders and any of their designees shall be responsible for overseeing the development, maintenance and periodic review of policies and procedures for the day-to-day functions of the Church. On matters concerning capital assets and financial liability, the Elders may seek the advice and consent of the Church regarding those policies. Such policies and procedures shall be maintained in a Policies and Procedures Manual, which shall be available at the Church office for Members to review.

ARTICLE XII. Amendments

The Constitution and Bylaws, the Statement of Faith, and the Membership Covenant may be adopted or amended at any duly convened Members' Meeting of the Church by a vote of three-quarters of all Members voting on the matter, provided (a) the proposed amendment is presented at a previous Members' Meeting, and mailed or made available to the Members at least four weeks before the meeting to act on the amendment; and (b) the meeting to consider the proposed amendment is announced at all Sunday morning services on two consecutive Sundays before the vote is taken, one of which may be the same day as the meeting.