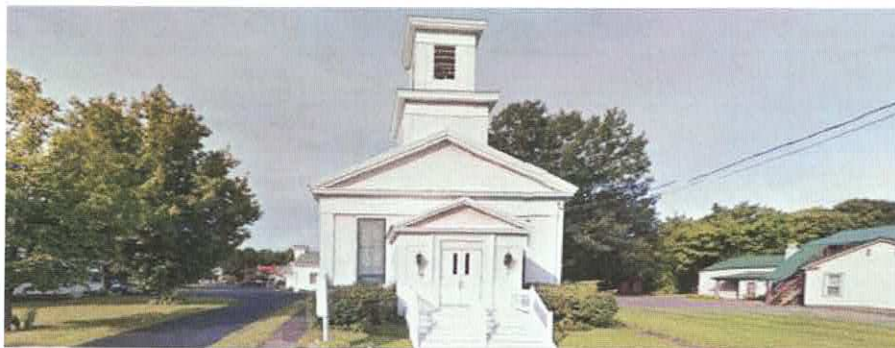


# Constitution

## First Baptist Church of Central Square



Updated January 2017

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### **Article 1 – Name**

The name of the church shall be the First Baptist Church of Central Square, New York.

### **Article 2 – Purpose**

The purpose of this Church shall be the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. It shall seek to attain this end through the public worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel, consistent Christian living by its members, personal evangelism, missionary endeavor, and Christian Education.

### **Article 3 – Polity**

Its government shall be vested in the body, which composes its membership. It shall reserve the opportunity to affiliate with other bodies as specified/required in by-laws:

A. Denominational:

1. The Iroquois Association of American Baptist Churches
2. The American Baptist Churches of New York State
3. American Baptist Churches in the United States of America

B. Interdenominational

1. The New York State Council of Churches

### **Article 4 – Covenant**

This church receives the Holy Bible as an all-sufficient basis of doctrines and practice. As a summary of principles for Christian conduct among its members, it adopts the following Church Covenant:

I believe that I, as an individual and as part of the body of the First Baptist Church of Central Square, have been led by God, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit to proclaim a solemn and joyful mutual Covenant. Individually being baptized and collectively being a vital part of this fellowship, we freely enter into this Covenant with one another.

We will, with God's help and being led by Jesus' teachings, walk together in Christian love. We will work faithfully to advance this fellowship in knowledge and spiritual practices of prayer, meditation, reading, and studying of the Bible; to endeavor to place this fellowship as a priority above all of our other interests; to maintain and support our worship and ordinances of Baptism and Communion; to contribute cheerfully and regularly using our God-given time, talents, and treasures towards ministry, mission, and outreach in our community and the world.

We will maintain family and personal devotions and will study God's word through scripture while sharing and interpreting it with each other and our families. We will be engaging with the world so we may know its challenges. We will reflect in our commitment to God in all we say and do, and will enthusiastically advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

As individuals, we will watch over each other in Christian love; will remember each other in prayer; will seek to help each other when concerns arise; and openly share each other's joys and celebrations. We will be slow to find fault, but if advanced, will always seek reconciliation as our Savior, Jesus Christ has instructed us.

In support of this Covenant, we, as the loving Christian family of the First Baptist Church of Central Square, promise to support, care for, pray with, and encourage each other and all with whom we come in contact.

(Article 4 – Covenant continued...)

I will, if I move from this place, seek a Christian fellowship with which I can become united and carry out the spirit of this Covenant.

I enter into this Covenant so that I may become the new person that Christ calls me to be. May God's love and the grace of Jesus Christ be with us always!

## **Article 5 – Membership**

### **Section 1 – Membership**

Baptists believe that membership in the Church is based on individual personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Persons may join this Church upon recommendation of the Council and a vote of the Church, and receive the Hand of Christian Fellowship through one of the following methods.

- A. Baptism: Upon confession of the faith and public confession of faith through baptism by immersion. An applicant for membership who has never been baptized will be baptized by immersion upon confession of their faith. If for health reasons, the person is unable to be immersed, then another method will be utilized by a vote of the Council.
- B. Letter of Transfer: Upon receipt of letter of transfer from a church stating that the person has been baptized.
- C. Christian Experience: Any applicant who makes confession of faith in Christ and who; although perhaps unable to obtain a letter of transfer or give written proof of baptism, verifies from personal experience that they have undergone a Christian Baptism.

### **Sections 2 – Inactive Membership**

Upon failure to participate in the service of worship or financial support of the Church without valid excuse for a period of one year, a member shall be transferred to an Inactive Roll, and notified by letter from the Council.

### **Section 3 – Dismissal**

Membership may be terminated by a vote of the Council and notification of the Clerk by one of the following methods:

- A. By Letter: By letter stating (1) that the person is a member in good standing, and (2) the method by which they joined the Church. Such a letter shall be sent to the Pastor or Clerk of the requesting church. If a member of good standing requests a letter of transfer to any church, it shall be granted, stating that the person is a member in good standing at the time the letter is written.
- B. By Death: Upon the death of a member, the Clerk shall remove the name of the deceased from the membership roll, specifying the date of death.
- C. Dismissal: (1) Upon the request of a member, (2) After spending one year on the Inactive Roll, the member shall be notified by mail that they have three months to declare an interest in remaining a member by attending/giving. If they do not respond, they can be moved to the list of former members by majority vote of the Council.

## **Article 6 – The Council**

The Council shall:

1. Initiate, develop, and approve the daily policies and procedures for effective operation of the church.
2. Transact most of the business of the church through ministry areas and the committees. Provide administrative direction and oversight of various standing committees needed to fulfill the obligations of the Council.
3. Consist of Pastor, Chair and Vice Chair Persons, Clerk, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary, Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, (3) Christian Education Facilitators, and (3) Three Trustee Facilitators, (3) Diaconate Facilitators.
4. Be facilitated by the Chair.
5. Form committees as needed.
6. The Council may not buy, sell, mortgage, or in any way encumber the real estate of the church except as directed by a vote of the church congregation.
7. Ensure the constitution is reviewed every three years.
8. Ensure the Faith Proposal is presented to congregation.
9. Administer changes within the ministry areas and committees.
10. Ensure Council meetings minutes are published in the Witness monthly.
11. Approve use of the church from outside sources.
12. Set contracts for new pastors with input from the Pulpit Committee and Ministry Enhancement Committee (Pastoral Relations).
13. Finalize proposed contracts for all employees.
14. Meet every month except July and August. Special meetings may be called if necessary.

The Chair may call a Council meeting at any time. The Chair must notify the Clerk at least a week in advance, and the Clerk will notify all other members of the Council. The chair of every board and every committee must submit a report to the Council every regular meeting.

## **Article 7 – the Pastor and the Officers**

### **Section 1 – General**

- A. The officers of this Church, all of whom shall be members of the Church shall be: Pastor, Chair and Vice Chair Persons, Clerk, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary, Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, (3) Christian Education Facilitators, and (3) Three Trustee Facilitators, (3) Diaconate Facilitators.
- B. No member may hold two offices at the same time (see Article 7 – Section 1A for list of officers).
- C. All officers will be members of the Church Council. At least one member of the facilitating groups must be present at Council Meetings. At least six council members must be present to establish a quorum for voting purposes.
- D. All officers with the exception of the Pastor shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of one year, not to exceed two consecutive years. The Church Council upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee may fill vacancies occurring during the year for the unexpired term.
- E. Each officer shall submit a written report of his/her office immediately following the close of the fiscal year to be included in the Annual Report.
- F. Each officer shall deliver immediately to their successor all books and records pertaining to their office.

## **Section 2 – The Pastor**

- A. Duties: The Pastor shall preach the Gospel; administer the ordinances, watch over the membership; have in their charge the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the stated services of public worship. The Pastor shall be ex-officio non-voting member of all boards and committees of the Church and its auxiliary organizations. The Pastor shall undertake a systematic program of calling upon the Church Family.
- B. Calling the Pastor: When the pastor resigns or the pastorate is vacant, a Pulpit Committee shall be formed immediately and take the necessary steps to secure a Pastor in consultation with the Associate Executive Field Minister and/or the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Church of New York State. The call of the Pastor will be presented at a special business meeting following the guidelines in Article 11: Section 3.
- C. Termination of the Pastor: The Pastorate may be terminated with at least 60 days written notice from the Church. The Pastor may resign with at least 60 days written notice to the Church. Termination of the office by the Church shall be voted on at a special business meeting following the guidelines in Article 11: Section 3.

## **Section 3 – Chair Person**

### The Chair shall:

- 1. Be elected at an Annual Meeting to serve for a two-year term.
- 2. Preside at all congregational business meetings of the church and at all meetings of the Council.
- 3. Be responsible for insuring reports are submitted by all who need to for the Annual Report.
- 4. Give legal notice in advance of all meetings where such is required by Constitution.
- 5. Not be eligible to vote in any church meetings unless to break a tie.

### The Vice Chair shall:

- 1. Be elected at an Annual Meeting to serve for a two-year training term and then assume the position the Chair for two years after that.
- 2. Preside at all congregational business meetings of the church and at all meetings of the Council in conjunction with, and in the absence of the chair.
- 3. Be responsible for insuring reports are submitted by all who need to for the Annual Report in conjunction with, and in the absence of the chair.

A. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair will act.

B. In the absence of both the Chair and Vice Chair, the Trustee Facilitator will act.

## **Section 4 – Clerk**

### The Clerk shall:

- 1. Be elected at an Annual Meeting to serve for a two-year term.
- 2. Keep an accurate record of minutes at all Council meetings, including special business meetings, and submit them to be published in the Witness after review by the Chair.
- 3. Keep an accurate record of all membership rolls, including names and addresses of members with dates of admission and dismissal.
- 4. Keep records in the church at all times.
- 5. Prepare all statistical reports requested by regional and state entities.
- 6. Perform other duties as the Pastor and Council may direct.

## **Section 5 – Treasurer**

### The Treasurer shall:

1. Be elected at an Annual Meeting to serve for a three-year term.
2. Keep an accurate record of all receipts and disbursement.
3. Have custody of all monies of the church.
4. Keep separate accounts of all funds raised or contributed for particular purposes. No funds shall be disbursed except for the purpose for which they were raised or contributed.
5. Have custody of all valuable financial documents.
6. Present to the church at each annual meeting, an itemized report of receipts and disbursements showing the actual financial condition of the church.
7. Make a report each month to the Trustee Facilitators at regular meetings.
8. Make a quarterly report of the financial condition of the church for the congregation that will be posted in the Witness and on the back of the bulletin.
9. Be bonded.

### The Assistant Treasurer shall:

1. Be elected at an Annual Meeting to serve for a three-year term.
2. Act in the absence of the Treasurer.
3. Not be limited to serving on facilitating groups or committees or act as the chair.
4. Be bonded.

## **Section 6 – Financial Secretary**

### The Financial Secretary shall:

1. Be elected at an annual meeting to serve for a three-year term.
2. Keep records of all pledges made, collect all monies contributed, keep accurate accounting, and make deposits promptly.
3. Send annual statements of accounts to contributors and prepare quarterly statements of accounts for contributors.
4. Prepare monthly reports to the Council.
5. Prepare a report for the annual meeting.
6. Keep all records of income/transactions in strict confidence.
7. At the request of the Diaconate Facilitators, the financial secretary may inform the board whether an individual has been contributing to the church.
8. Be bonded.

### The Assistant Financial Secretary shall:

1. Be elected at an Annual Meeting to serve for a three-year term.
2. Act in the absence of the Financial Secretary.
3. Not be limited to serving on facilitating groups or committees or act as the chair.
4. Be bonded.

## **Section 7 – Sunday School Superintendent**

### The Sunday School Superintendent shall:

1. Be elected at an annual meeting to serve for a two-year term.
2. Work in conjunction with the Christian Education Facilitators.
3. Be responsible for appointing and the training of teachers, substitutes, and youth volunteers for Christian Education Curriculum and programs.
4. Complete Child Abuse training.

(Section 7 – Sunday School Superintendent continued...)

Assistant Sunday School Superintendent shall:

1. Be elected at an annual meeting to serve for a two-year term.
2. Act in the absence of the Sunday School Superintendent.
3. Work in conjunction with the Christian Education Facilitators.
4. Complete Child Abuse training.

## **Article 8 – Ministry Areas/Facilitators**

### **Section 1 – General Facilitators**

1. There will be three Facilitators per ministry area, only one new Facilitator can be elected a year. They will be elected at an annual meeting to serve for a two-year term.
2. All facilitators must be active members of the church, unless approved by Council.
3. Any vacancies will be filled by the Council for the remainder of the year with input from the Nominating Committee.
4. All ministry areas should be established by February 1<sup>st</sup> and they should appoint a chair, secretary, and other officers as is deemed necessary. Each ministry area must meet monthly except during July and August. Special meetings may be called when requested by pastor or facilitators. All ministry areas must take minutes at all meetings. The chair of each board shall submit a written report to the council chair each year to be included in the annual report.

### **Section 2 – Christian Education Facilitators**

Christian Education Facilitators:

1. There will be three Christian Education Facilitators a year , only one new Christian Education Facilitator can be elected a year. They will be elected at an annual meeting to serve for a two-year term.
2. Christian Education Facilitators, in conjunction with the Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent shall:
  - a. Exercise supervision over Christian Education Program.
  - b. Choose curriculum for the Christian Education Programs.
  - c. Monitor and evaluate the participation and effectiveness of the Christian Education Programs.
  - d. Educate the congregation on special mission and set monetary goals for it.
  - e. Prepare the yearly Christian Education Budget for submission to the Council for the Faith Proposal.
3. Ensure all individuals working with children have completed Child Abuse training.

### **Section 3 – Trustee Facilitators**

1. There will be three Trustee Facilitators, only one new Trustee Facilitator can be elected a year. They will be elected at an annual meeting to serve for a two-year term. According to NY Religious Corporate Law that the Baptist Corporate Law follows, Trustee Boards must have members equal to the division of three.

Trustee Facilitators shall:

2. Exercise supervision of all financial matters, including the arranging of an annual audit of the records of the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer.
3. Be authorized to approve payment of all bills. Any bills and statements should be directed to the Trustee Facilitators mailbox.
4. Attend to all legal transactions of the church. They are subject to control and direction by the church body.



(Section 3 – Trustee Facilitators continued...)

5. Employ and recommend compensation of all employees of the church, except the Pastor. The Trustee Facilitators will present the proposed contract to the Council for approval.
6. Prepare and submit a budget showing estimated income and proposed expenditures at the annual meeting.
7. Exercise proper care and maintenance of all physical property of the church.
8. Keep all properties adequately insured.
9. With input from all committees, prepare a Faith Proposal in mid-October in preparation for Pledge Sunday in November.
10. Be responsible for the bonding of persons where stated.

#### **Section 4 – Diaconate Facilitators**

1. There will be three Diaconate Facilitators, only one new Diaconate Facilitator can be elected a year. They will be elected at an annual meeting to serve for a two-year term.
2. Diaconate Facilitators shall:
  - a. Elect one of them to be treasurer.
  - b. Research and recommend to church council candidates for interim pastor.
3. Diaconate Facilitators shall, in conjunction with the pastor:
  - a. Process all applications for church membership.
  - b. Process all requests for letters of transfers.
  - c. Make provisions for Supply Pastors in case of absence.
  - d. Care for members, prospective members, and those in need, by visiting, referring to appropriate agencies, and using deacon funds of the church as necessary.
  - e. Prepare and administer the ordinances of Communion and Baptism.
  - f. Revise the church roll annually and compile an active and inactive roll.

### **Article 9 – Committees of the Church**

#### **Section 1 – General**

1. The committees of the church shall be Auditing, Constitutional Review, Fundraising, Historical, Memorial, Ministry Enhancement, Music, Nominating, Pulpit, Sanctuary Arrangements, and Ushering.
2. The Memorial, Auditing, Pulpit, and Ministry Enhancement must be active members of the church. All other committee members must be active members of the church or have been attending regularly for one year, unless approved by Council.
3. Temporary committees may be arranged by the Council when the need arises.
4. All committees serve for one year at a time, elected at the annual meeting, except the Pastoral Relation committee.
5. All committees must submit a report to the council chair before the Annual Meeting.
6. All committees should be established by February 1<sup>st</sup> and they should appoint a chair, secretary, and other officers as it deemed necessary.
7. Each committee chair will deliver to their successor any important records or information.
8. Any vacancies will be filled by the Council for the remainder of the year with input from the Nominating Committee.

#### **Section 2 – Auditing**

The Auditing Committee shall:

1. Have at least two members.
2. Audit the financial records of the general funds of the church at least twice a year.
3. Submit a report for the Church Annual Meeting.
4. All audits will be reported to the Council.

### **Section 3 – Constitutional Review**

The Constitutional Review Committee shall:

1. Have between five and seven members of varying ages and backgrounds.
2. Review the constitution and ensure it correctly represents the goals and ideals of the church.
3. Present the revised constitution to the Council.

### **Section 4 – Fundraising**

The Fundraising Committee shall:

1. Have at least two members.
2. Explore and recommend additional fundraising methods to contribute to the general fund.
3. Submit all proposals to the Council for approval.

### **Section 5 – Historical**

The Historical Committee shall:

1. Have at least two members with input from the Clerk.
2. Keep copies of all bulletins, church newspapers (The Witness), Annual Reports, special announcements, and programs of the church in accessible ways.
3. Collect any books, documents, and papers of past years that have historical significance to the church.
4. Keep all documents on church property.
5. Prepare and maintain an inventory list with multiple copies, of all historically significant archives.
6. Prepare a history of the church for use at anniversary times and when requested.
7. Meet twice a year and whenever necessary.

### **Section 6 – Memorial**

The Memorial Committee shall:

1. Consist of at least three members.
2. Receive and record all memorial gifts, except for floral arrangements.
3. Consult with the family of the person for whom the memorial was given.
4. Meet at least once a quarter. The Secretary of the Memorial Committee will deposit all funds in the name of and to the credit of “Memorial Fund – First Baptist Church – Central Square.”

### **Section 7 – Ministry Enhancement Committee (Pastoral Relations)**

Ministry Enhancement Committee shall:

1. Foster communication between the congregation and the pastor with a focus of finding solutions to any concerns.
2. Have between three to five members of varying ages and backgrounds.
3. Maintain confidentiality.
4. Replace one member every two years.
5. Start a new committee when a new pastor is called. The new committee will have two members from the Pulpit Committee
6. Meet at least once a quarter and when needed.

### **Section 8 – Music**

The Music Committee shall:

1. Have at least two members and the choir director.
2. Be responsible for all musical instruments and bring to the attention of the Trustees any need for repairs and maintenance.
3. Be responsible for maintenance and recommendation of purchases of all sound equipment.
4. Consult with the Pastor in planning music for the worship services and special services.
5. Be responsible for hymnals, choir robes, sheet music, and DVD's/CD's.
6. Meet at least once a quarter.

### **Section 9 – Nominating**

The Nominating Committee shall:

1. Have at least three members in addition to the Pastor.
2. Replace at least one member each year with a new member.
3. The Council shall appoint the Nominating Committee, with an effort to include a member from each facilitating group.
4. Consult all potential nominees regarding specific positions available.
5. Prepare a list of all officers, ministry area facilitators, and committee members to be elected at the Annual Meeting.
6. Make proposed lists public to the church at least one month before the Annual Meeting.
7. Post a list of available positions for the following year by October.
8. Accept nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

### **Section 10 – Pulpit**

The Pulpit Committee shall:

1. Have five members of varying ages and backgrounds.
2. Be appointed by the Council immediately following a pastoral resignation or vacancy.
3. Consult with the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of New York State.
4. Recommend suitable candidates to the church for consideration.
5. Turn over important records to the church council.
6. Only two members of the Pulpit Committee will serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee when the new pastor is called.
7. Ensure the new pastor is informed of all terms of employment, which will be provided by the council.

### **Section 11 - Sanctuary Arrangements**

The Sanctuary Arrangement Committee shall:

1. Have at least three members.
2. Provide appropriate decorations in the sanctuary throughout the year and for special occasions and holidays.
3. Maintain candles, permanent decorations, altar cloths, and other decorative items.
4. Work in consultation with the Pastor.
5. Meet twice a year and when necessary.

### **Section 12 – Ushering**

The Ushering Committee Shall:

1. Have at least eight members.
2. Meet as necessary.
3. Usher at all regular and special services.
4. Volunteers from the congregation may serve when needed.

## **Article 10 – Elections**

### **Section 1 – Time**

General elections to fill all open positions will take place at the Annual Meeting.

### **Section 2 – Qualifications of Voters**

Only members who are eighteen years of age or older will be able to vote on financial matters. Any person who has attended the Church and contributed regularly during the preceding year can share and vote in business meetings concerning other matters.

### **Section 3 – Procedures**

The Nominating Committee will present a proposed list of names to fill each office at least one month before the Annual Meeting. Nominations from qualified voters may be accepted from the floor during the Annual Meeting. A majority of votes are necessary for the election of every officer.

### **Section 4 – Vacancies**

The Council, with recommendations from the nominating committee, will fill vacancies for the remainder of the term.

## **Article 11 – Meetings**

### **Section 1 – Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year shall be the calendar year.

### **Section 2 – Annual Meetings**

The Annual Business Meeting will on the third Sunday of January following the worship service. The purpose is to receive annual reports, elect all positions, adopt the church budget, and consider all other business of the church. The meeting can be moved to the following Sunday if necessary.

### **Section 3 – Special Business Meetings**

The Chair or Council may call Special Business Meetings. Members may request a meeting by speaking to the Chair. The meeting must be announced at least two Sunday Morning services preceding the meeting. Only topics on the original agenda will be discussed.

Purchasing, selling, or mortgaging any real estate of the church must be conducted at a special business meeting. A quorum must be present and will be approved by three-fourths vote.

### **Section 4 – Quorum**

A quorum for the transaction of business will be one-fourth of the qualified resident members on the Active Roll of the Church.

## **Article 12 – Amendments**

### **Section 1 – Amending the Constitution**

Upon recommendation of the Council, the constitution may be amended at a special business meeting. A quorum must be present and changes may only be made with three-fourths vote.

### **Section 2 – Review the Constitution**

The constitution will be reviewed every three years. The Council will appoint a Constitutional Review Committee.

## Glossary

**Resident Member** – a member who resides within a reasonable traveling distance to attend worship or church activities

**Nonresident Member** – A member who resides at a distance making it unfeasible to attend worship or church activities. Membership is maintained by contributing to the financial support of the church annually.

**Facilitators** – Formerly known as Trustees, Board of Christian Education, and Diaconate boards

**Council** – Also known as “Church Council,” formerly known as the Executive Committee

**Chair** – Formerly known as the Moderator

**Clerk** – Formerly known as the Church Clerk

**Ministry Enhancement Committee** – Formerly known as Pastoral Relation Committee

**Originally Adopted:**  
September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1961

**Previously Updated:**  
October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1964  
January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1967  
July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1967  
January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1972  
October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1973  
January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1976  
April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1983  
November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1991  
January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1998  
January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001  
January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
January 2017