

Constitution of Forest Baptist Church

Article I - Organization

1. This church shall be known as **Forest Baptist Church**. It shall be affiliated with the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, supporting where possible its programme, co-operating to the fullest possible extent with its officers, and naming delegates to its annual assemblies.
2. The regular officers of this church shall be Elders, Deacons, Trustees, Clerk, and Treasurer. Such officers must be members of this church in good standing.
3. The affairs of the spiritual welfare of the church shall be the responsibility of the elders of the congregation. The Council of Elders will be composed of scripturally qualified men who are qualified to exercise this office. The qualifications are in three areas: i. moral and spiritual character, ii. ability, iii. Spirit-given motivation. (1 Timothy 3:1-3:7; 14-15; Titus 1:5-9). The temporal matters of the congregation shall be the responsibility of the deacons. The final responsibility for decisions shall rest with the elders.

Article II - Membership

1. Any person giving evidence of repentance, professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and adopting the church's Statement of Faith, and its practice as expressed in its constitution, may, upon believer's baptism by immersion, be received into its membership.
2. Candidates for membership shall be interviewed by at least two elders for examination as to Christian experience and their understanding of and adherence to the church's Statement of Faith and Covenant as well as their purpose in joining. If recommended by the interviewing elders to the Council of Elders, such individuals shall be received into church membership.
3. Members from other churches holding the same faith and order may be received into membership by letters of recommendation or dismissal. The process shall be the same as that indicated in Article II. 2.
4. Other immersed believers who, in consequence of any peculiar circumstances, have no letter of transfer may be received "by experience". The process shall be the same as that indicated in Article II. 2.
5. Members age 16 and older shall have responsibility for voting at church meetings.
6. Excluded members may be restored to membership through restorative action by the Council of Elders.
7. The membership roll of the church shall be reviewed annually by the Council of Elders for the purpose of maintaining an accurate record of active, non-active and non-resident members, and any person having joined another church shall be deleted. Members who have not joined another church shall be contacted by the Council of Elders and an attempt shall be made to restore such members to active participation.

8. In cases where church discipline must be exercised for any cause, the directions of the Word of God are to be observed. (cf. Matt.18:15-17; 1 Cor.5:11-13)

9. Members in good standing may, at their own request to the council of elders, be transferred by regular letter of transfer to another Baptist Church, or letter of commendation to another Christian body.

Article III - Ordinances

1. The ordinance of believer's baptism shall be administered to candidates who have professed faith in Jesus Christ and given evidence of a personal Christian experience, upon satisfactory interview with two elders.

2. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once a month and this ordinance shall be open to all those who love Jesus Christ. The elders will normally preside at the Table of the Lord.

Article IV - The Structure and Organization of the church

Any committee, group, organization or ministry operating within the facilities of Forest Baptist Church or under the name of Forest Baptist Church or under its umbrella as an affiliated ministry shall be responsible to the Council of Elders of the church

1. The Council of Elders

The Council of Elders is to exercise oversight over the welfare of the congregation.

There shall be a plurality (at least 3) of Elders. An elder shall be appointed for as long as he remains qualified, gifted and is willing to serve. Leaves of absence and sabbatical rests can enable an elder to be non-active from the Council of Elders for a period of time.

Elders will be appointed by the Council of Elders as they and the congregation recognize gifted and qualified men.

The Council of Elders shall give pastoral leadership to the congregation. In this regard they are to protect, feed, and lead the flock and to help meet the church's Spiritual needs. (1 Peter 5:2)

The Council of Elders will be jointly responsible to lead and teach the congregation, exhibit unity, show humble brotherly love and demonstrate a shared leadership structure. Although all the elders will share equal authority and responsibility for leadership of the church, all elders are not equal in their giftedness, biblical knowledge, leadership ability, experience and dedication.

The Council of Elders will model servant leadership. They will shepherd the flock with a servant spirit, however they will function with the authority of those who are called to lead and exercise oversight.

The Council of Elders will advance the general interest of the church both temporal and spiritual, oversee the ordinances, public worship and teaching ministries of the church and generally speaking be those who are devoted to the Ministry of the Word and of Prayer.

The Council of Elders will determine what meetings and ministries may function within the church facilities or under the name of the church. They will review all applications for believer's baptism and church membership and act according to the instructions under Article II.

The Council of Elders will meet as often as is necessary to exercise effective oversight of the congregation.

The Council of Elders will maintain a joint biblical accountability and will have in place a mechanism by which elders may be disciplined and removed. Should the practices, attitudes, teachings or behaviour of any elder be of concern to the congregation or any of its members, the Scriptural requirement is for two independent witnesses to bring written charges against the elder, with the Council of Elders then being required to investigate such charges and act according to the standards of the Scriptures. (1 Timothy 5:19)

Remunerated Pastoral Elders shall fulfill all the regular requirements of the Council of Elders, and by virtue of their special calling will give leadership to:

- the public worship of the church
- administering the ordinances
- coordinating the pastoral care of the flock

And, with the other Elders, jointly seek the will of the Lord in overseeing the spiritual affairs of the congregation.

They will be full participating members of any committee, board or council to which they are appointed with full voting privileges, except where prohibited by law on matters which affect financial areas.

In the event of replacing or adding remunerated pastoral Elders to full or part time leadership, the Council of Elders will either become or appoint a Search Committee to seek out and recommend to the church qualified candidates.

The church will be given the opportunity to ratify the recommendation of the Council of Elders regarding the appointment of a pastoral Elder.

2. The Council of Deacons

The Council of Deacons will be composed of scripturally qualified members. (1 Timothy 3:8-13). It will **consist of the Finance Committee and the Property Committee**. The committees will meet jointly and separately, as required. The deacons will oversee the practical matters of financial and property administration, and will be accountable to the Council of Elders.

The Council of Deacons will bring matters of property and finance to the congregation directly at duly called church meetings. They will also have liaison with the Council of Elders through an elder appointed to each of the property and finance committees, and may request a meeting with the Council of Elders when required.

The **elected members** of the Council of Deacons **will be elected by the congregation** upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee. They shall be elected for a three year term, and will not be eligible for re-election when their terms expire until after an interval of at least one year. All other members of the Council of Deacons are appointed

by virtue of their office and the term limits pertaining to those appointments will determine length of service.

The Council of Deacons shall consist of two separate committees:

a. The Finance Committee shall consist of the treasurer, the assistant treasurer, one trustee, and two elected members.

It shall be the responsibility of the Finance Committee to:

- i.** Have general charge of the church's financial affairs, including the carrying into effect of all plans adopted by the church for its support.
- ii.** Approve all expenditures of the congregation.
- iii.** Bring to the congregation for approval all items beyond normal operating costs.

b. The Property Committee shall consist of two trustees and three elected members.

It shall be the responsibility of the Property Committee to:

- i.** Receive and make recommendations for all new equipment, and changes or improvements to the buildings or grounds
- ii.** Exercise due care for the maintenance of the Church Facilities [including parsonage], employing and supervising [through the chair] the work of the custodian
- iii.** Shall supervise the needed repairs of the buildings and equipment [other than the musical instruments] and in general oversee maintaining church property in a condition of comfort, practical effectiveness and esthetically pleasing. To this end the Property Committee will supervise the work of many members and adherents, rather than doing all of the work themselves.
- iv.** Work with the Trustees to make sure that the long term plan for church facility care is maintained and that plan brought to the church so that the congregation will know what expected major items will need to be dealt with over the upcoming years

3. The Board of Trustees

The Trustees shall hold all church property 'in trust' for the congregation and must act according to the direction given to them by the church.

The Board of Trustees shall be three in number, and shall keep the requirements of the Trust Deeds of the church, and the requirements of the law. Each trustee shall be elected for a three year term, and will not be eligible for re-election when their terms expire until after an interval of at least one year. The trustees will appoint one of their number to the Finance Committee and another to the Property Committee, and those two Trustees shall be deacons by virtue of their appointment.

The Trustees are to maintain proper insurance coverage on property and contents and to make sure that the facilities are maintained in proper condition. The Trustees shall be concerned with the long term care of the property. Matters needing attention will be brought to the property committee, or, if necessary, to the church.

4. The Nominating Committee

- i. Shall be appointed by the elders and consist of one elder and four other church members, to serve for the calendar year. The committee shall be ratified at the third quarterly business meeting.
- ii. Shall prepare and post a list of nominees for all offices and positions in the life of the congregation which are not elder-appointed to be filled at the annual business meeting. Each person nominated shall have consented to their nomination before the list is posted.

5 The Clerk

The clerk shall be elected annually. He/she shall keep a fair record of the proceedings of the church, conduct all necessary correspondence, and take responsibility for the careful preservation of all church records.

6. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be elected annually and will be a deacon in the Council of Deacons. He/she shall receive from the Stewards a weekly record of all monies received and deposited and pay for all approved expenditures as authorized by the Finance Committee. He/she shall keep an accurate book of accounts and present monthly financial reports in an insert form to the congregation, quarterly reports to the congregation at the quarterly meetings and an annual audited financial statement to the church at the annual meeting, as well as any other statements that may be required by the church from time to time.. An annual audit of all church financial records shall be conducted during January, by auditors selected by the church at the Annual Meeting. The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected annually and will also be a deacon in the Council of Deacons. He/she will serve as helper to the Treasurer in the fulfillment of the duties listed above.

7. The General Superintendent of the Sunday School

The General Superintendent of the Sunday School shall be elected annually by the Sunday School and approved by the elders. The Sunday School Superintendent will be responsible for the general oversight and direction of the Sunday School, its programmes, teachers and officers. The Sunday School Superintendent shall report directly to the Council of Elders.

8. The AWANA Commander

The AWANA Commander shall be appointed by consensus of the AWANA leadership and approved by the elders. The AWANA Commander shall be responsible for the general oversight and direction of the AWANA programme, its teachers and officers. The AWANA Commander shall report directly to the Council of Elders.

9. The Audit Committee

Shall consist of three members, elected at each annual or subsequent business meeting. It shall be their duty to audit all the church books and report their findings to the church.

10. The Communion Committee

- i. Shall consist of four church members to be elected annually for a one year term

ii. Shall prepare the elements for all communion services, clean up following the service and maintain the communion ware in good repair.

11. The Hospitality Committee

- i. Shall consist of three church members to be elected annually for a one year term.
- ii. Shall arrange for the hospitality needs for guest speakers, missionary guests and musicians including both accommodation and meals.

12. The Missions Committee

Shall be composed of at least two people elected annually. It shall be the responsibility of the Missions Committee to:

- i. Keep before the congregation for prayer, education, understanding and financial support, the reports of our partners in Missions through various means as well as missionaries and mission enterprises in which this congregation has interest and involvement..
- ii. Screen and recommend to the Council of Elders missionaries or mission agencies who wish to have exposure to the church
- iii. Act as the initial clearinghouse for those from this church who would be involved in short or long term mission projects who wish to have church approval or support for their endeavour and to recommend to the Council of Elders approval of those projects and people when they are satisfied with all aspects of the project.
- iv. Meet as often as necessary to fulfill this mandate.

13. The Music Committee

Shall consist of three church members elected annually.

It shall be the responsibility of the Music Committee to:

- i. Organize the instrumentalist schedule for Sunday Morning and Evening Worship
- ii. Plan and organize ministries of music for the Sunday services.
- iii. Care for and maintain the church-owned instruments
- iv. Work with the Council of Elders regarding any special music requirements for special services beyond the normal Sunday Schedule
- v. Recommend to the congregation via the Council of Elders new hymnbooks, chorus books or other media for the displaying of songs to the congregation.
- vi. Repair music books when necessary
- vii. Recommend the purchase of new instruments when required.
- vii. Develop and supervise regular or seasonal choirs.

14. The Service Club

- i. Shall be formed at the direction of the Baptist Women.

ii. Shall be responsible for the coordination of refreshments at church lunches and suppers, wedding and funeral receptions, and at any other function as assigned by the elders.

15. The Stewardship Committee

i. Shall consist of at least six members, elected annually for a one year term.

ii. Always with two people or more, they shall retrieve the offerings from the sanctuary, open the offering envelopes, accurately count the money, record the donations on tally sheets, deposit the offering in the bank and submit a jointly-signed statement of the bank deposit slip of the total offering to the treasurer. These records shall be submitted for audit each year.

16. The Ushers:

i. The chairman of the ushers shall be a church member and shall be elected annually for a one year term.

ii. The chair shall draw up a roster of ushers, sufficient to cover all of the regular services of the church

iii. The chair shall make sure that a count is made and recorded of the number of attendees of all regular Sunday Services

iv. The ushers shall welcome all worshippers, provide church bulletins and visitors cards, conduct people to their seats, see to the comfort and safety of all worshippers and officiate at the taking of the offering at all services.

v. The ushers shall be prepared to take the lead in dealing with medical emergencies and shall watch for aimless wandering outside of the sanctuary during services.

vi. The ushers shall have read and understand the abuse policy and shall be careful to watch that it is followed during the services when children leave the sanctuary.

Article V - Meetings of the Church

1. A quorum for a church business meeting shall be all members of voting age present which a meeting has been properly called, except in those cases indicated below.

2. The annual meeting of the church shall be held within seven weeks of the end of the calendar year, with the church fiscal year being January 1st to December 31st.

3. Regular business meetings of the church shall be held quarterly, or a minimum of three each year, at which time reports to the congregation from the Elders and Deacons shall be received and items of a financial nature voted upon by the congregation.

4. Special meetings -

(a) May be called for the transaction of business of the church, as may be directed by the Council of Elders.

(b) Involving important matters of policy may be called by the Council of Elders. Notice of such meetings shall be given from the pulpit at all services on two preceding Sundays.

(c) Special business meetings may also be called at any time through a petition signed by five members from five different families of the church, such meeting to be called within four weeks after the clerk of the church or Council of Elders has received the petition from the hands of two of the petitioners. Such a petition will only be received following the appeal directly to the Council of Elders about the matter and a meeting with the Council of Elders concerning the matter. The petition shall state the business to be considered at the meeting called for, and such meeting shall be announced in accordance with the procedure mentioned in the preceding paragraph and no other business shall be considered at that meeting.

(d). At any meeting where matters deemed by the Board of Elders to be of major importance are to be decided, a quorum will be forty per cent of the active resident membership 16 years of age and older with an affirmative vote of seventy-five per cent [75%] required for any motion to carry.

(e). Proxy votes are not accepted at any meetings

(f). The Church shall meet regularly at appointed times for Sunday Worship, and for mid-week services of prayer, praise, instruction in the Word of God or as determined from time to time by the Council of Elders of the church.

5. A **'Family Meeting'** may be called at any time by the Council of Elders in order that the congregation may be informed and share their concerns on a matter, however, there shall never in a 'family meeting' be a motion presented nor decisions made which are binding upon the church.

Article VI - Election of Officers & Committees

1. The Deacons, Trustees, Clerk and Treasurer shall be elected by majority vote after nomination at the annual meeting of the church.

2. Committee members shall be elected by majority vote, after nomination, at the annual meeting of the church. The first named on the Nominations Report is responsible to call the first meeting of the committee within one month following the annual meeting.

3. If vacancies occur in committees or offices, they shall be filled at the next ensuing quarterly meeting upon presentation of candidates by the Nominating Committee.

4. The chair of each board and committee shall be selected from the already elected members at the first meeting following appointment, by ballot.

Article VII - Representation in Association and Convention

Delegates shall be appointed to represent the church at meetings of the Association and Convention. Delegates shall co-operate with other delegates in plans for advancing the Kingdom of God; and shall report to the church the proceedings of such gatherings.

Article VIII - Financial Support

1. This church shall be supported as far as may be possible through the regular weekly giving of its members.
2. The missionary enterprises of this church and of the denomination shall be similarly supported.
3. A special offering in the church may be taken for such objectives and at such times as are authorized by the Finance Committee, the Council of Elders, or by majority vote of the church membership present at a service or meeting..

Article IX - Constitution Amendments

This constitution can only be amended by the procedure outlined hereunder:

1. The proposed amendment must be submitted to the clerk in writing and be signed by at least two other members from separate families.
2. The proposed amendment so submitted will be considered at the following regular church business meeting provided that it is received in sufficient time to advise all members. (Article V - Clause 4)
3. A proposed amendment will require the majority rule outlined by Article V, Clause 4, Paragraph d
4. Special meetings to discuss constitutional amendments will only be called in accordance with Article V, Clause 4, Paragraphs b or c.
5. Proposed amendments to this constitution cannot under any circumstances be tabled.