

Fellowship Baptist Church Handbook & Bylaws

FOUNDATION, FUNDAMENTALS AND FORMATION

I.

Fellowship Baptist Church (FBC) is a local body of believers patterned after New Testament churches (nowhere in the Bible is a building referred to as a church).

While we can learn by personal Bible study, serve God through non-church organizations, etc., God desires that every Christian select and actively participate in a Biblical local church (Hebrews 10:25).

There are certain fundamental elements common to New Testament churches, which serve as our examples. The lifecycle of the local church, as illustrated in Acts 2:41-47, involves evangelism, salvation, baptism, membership, doctrinal teaching, fellowship, communion, love and prayer.

Basic functions of the local church are to: (1) give opportunities to serve one another as God enables each believer [Ephesians 4:11-12], (2) worship [Acts 2:42-47], (3) observe the Lord's Supper (also called communion and "breaking of bread") and (4) proclaim the good news (gospel) of forgiveness of sin through faith in Christ. New Testament churches also received [Acts 2:41; 9:26], disciplined [Matthew 18:15-17] and edified members [I Thessalonians 5:11] and conducted business [Acts 6:1-7]. While called by various names, the offices of Pastor and Deacons were common to New Testament churches.

II.

It is much more important to be a Christian, to know Christ as personal Savior, than to be a member of a particular church. However, it is also important to be baptized and a member of a church that closely follows Biblical teachings.

FBC holds certain beliefs characteristic of Baptist churches. While other churches hold some of these beliefs, they do not hold or interpret them all as we do. Generally, only Baptist, or baptistic churches with other names, hold all the beliefs we do. Being a saved member of a Baptist church says you want to be identified with a church that believes and practices truth associated with Baptists.

There are several beliefs, taken together, that are distinctive of Baptist churches:

The Bible is the only Divinely inspired and reliable authority for church direction in doctrine, organization and function. Other creeds, experiences, traditions, "revelations" and other non-biblical sources of authority should not be used in place of or in addition to the Bible.

Each local church governs itself with accountability only to the Lord (Acts 6:1-7, 15:1-35), i.e. it makes decisions and conducts business without control of any ruling person or denominational group.

While Christ, the Great High Priest, is our Mediator with God the Father, all Christians have the great privilege, equal with one another before God, of individual prayer, without having to depend on another person to communicate with God for us (1 Peter 2:9, 1 Timothy 2:1).

Only two Biblical ceremonies are commanded in the New Testament, the ordinances of baptism by immersion (Matthew 28:18 - 20; Romans 6:1-6) and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

Individuals need to trust Christ as personal Savior, be baptized as evidence of that inner change, and become active in a local church (Acts 2:41-42), in that order.

Those who have trusted Christ as personal Savior can never lose their salvation, but are eternally secure in God's care (John 3:16, John 5:24, Romans 8:38-39, I John 5:10-13).

While churches have other boards, committees and offices to help carry on the work, the Bible establishes only two permanent local church offices: a pastor called of God to teach, lead and set an example, and deacons to assist the Pastor and help minister to others (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

III. Fellowship Baptist Church

A. Nature

FBC is an independent fundamental Baptist church that conforms closely to the New Testament church characteristics and Baptist distinctives. It is a friendly, family-oriented church that stresses prayer and Bible study. We care about people and commonly refer to our congregation as "church family." FBC seeks to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) through a strong missions ministry.

While FBC is not formally affiliated with other churches, we welcome fellowship and cooperation of churches of like faith, and support missionaries through various missionary boards aligned with our doctrinal stand.

B. History

What we now call Fellowship Baptist Church formally began as Boulevard Heights Baptist Church; named after its location on the D.C.-Maryland border. Formally constituted on January 25, 1942, the church enjoyed growth under a number of pastors. The church became independent of the Southern Baptist Convention, and eventually voted to move to Upper Marlboro in 1972. The church adopted the new name, Fellowship Baptist Church, and met at the James Madison Middle School while their new facility was being built. They occupied the building in 1975 and began to reach out to its "Jerusalem and Judea."

Pastor David Owczarski came in October 1992, and challenged us to reach our Jerusalem for Christ. The church has grown in membership, and in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. We doubled the physical facility with the addition of an Educational/Fellowship Building in 1995/6, and built a new auditorium in 2005/6 to support the needs of our growing church family!

Along with community outreach, the church supports missionary projects around the world. We believe the best days of ministry lie ahead as we seek to win the lost, and equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

C. Membership

Fellowship Baptist Church welcomes everyone to worship in our services. We urge all believers to become members of a local church where they may use their gifts to serve the Lord.

Church membership is a privilege and responsibility not to be taken for granted. It affords believers the opportunity to faithfully serve the Lord. This service helps to edify His body and allows believers to minister to other members of that local body.

Those desiring membership may make known their leading of the Lord to be united with FBC, either by a public profession in the service or personally to a pastor or deacon. They will be given our Handbook & Bylaws and Constitution which includes our "Declaration of Faith and Covenant" to examine. At an appropriate time, they will be interviewed by a pastor and/or deacons. This gives the person the opportunity to ask any questions they might have concerning matters of doctrine or any other questions about the church. It also allows those interviewing to be assured of their acceptance of our doctrinal position. A person must have accepted Christ as Savior and obediently followed Him in baptism.

SAVED, SATISFIED AND SERVING

Serving is one of the greatest challenges in the life of a believer. How many make a real effort to serve without expecting anything in return? Yet mature Christians are marked by such willingness.

I. Attitudes

If Christ came to earth to minister to others (Mark 10:45), and did so with diligence and real compassion, how much more should we be servants? Philippians 2:2-8 says we are to follow His example, putting others before ourselves. Paul also considered himself a servant (2 Corinthians 4:5). Our desire should be to serve Christ (John 12:26), each other (Galatians 5:13) and our leaders (Hebrews 13:17).

We should serve dutifully (Luke 17:10), having been set free from sin to serve righteousness (Romans 6:18-19), from Satan to serve God (I Peter 2:16), and from self to serve others (Galatians 5:13). God uses Christians to supply needs of others and promises to richly bless in return (Luke 6:38, Philippians 4:19).

II. Actions

A. Provisions

God never asks us to do anything without providing the resources (including people) for the job. He has given each local church the people it needs for the work He wants done. We each have equally important jobs, whether large or small (1 Corinthians 12).

Many of FBC's ministries are established by the congregation as a whole, and the church appoints or elects persons to handle the ministries. Much work is appropriately handled, however, by initiative of individuals as the Lord directs.

Each of us must be faithful if FBC is to be successful in God's mission for us. While there are blessings in faithfulness (Proverbs 28:20; Matthew 24:45-47), it is essentially a matter of obedience (1Corinthians 4:2).

In relation to the Pastor(s), members should be submissive, humble, committed, and supportive. They should also search the scriptures daily for understanding and guidance, and pray for church leaders, each other and the work of the church.

We thank the Lord for those who are faithful in His work, and for His unfailing faithfulness (Psalms 92:1-2; Lamentations 3:23). By our availability and His ability, may we each be found faithful, letting our thanksgiving translate into thanks-living.

B. Process

FBC Constitution, Article V, summarizes what the church expects for most positions in the church, i.e., provides job descriptions and special qualifications or provisions for these jobs. Since the congregation has certain expectations for these functions, it is appropriate that the duties be understood, agreed and documented for reference by those affected or interested.

Unless otherwise specified in the Constitution or this Handbook, the number of persons nominated to serve on committees is left to the judgment of the Pastor if the committee is appointed or to the Nominating Committee if such a committee is elected.

All officers and teachers are elected annually at the July Business Meeting, accounting for nominations of the Nominating committee and others, and serve for a term of one year beginning in September with the following exceptions:

1. *Deacons are elected for staggered terms as provided in the Constitution.*
2. Members of the Nominating Committee are appointed by the Pastor at the March Business Meeting. The Sunday School/Adult Bible Fellowship Director is appointed at the May Business Meeting to provide for his participation as an additional member of the Nominating Committee.
3. The Pulpit Committee, if needed, will be determined as provided in the Constitution.
4. Nursery and Vacation Bible School workers are selected by the Nursery Committee and Director of VBS, respectively.
5. Members of the Missions Committee are elected for staggered terms. A member cannot succeed himself or herself without at least a year break in service. (This helps ensure continuity and fresh ideas).
6. Paid employees will be employed by church vote, usually by recommendation of the Deacons.

7. Miscellaneous committees or project officers may be authorized by the church and appointed by the Pastor at any time.

C. Particulars

The Nominating Committee will nominate officers and teachers for the following ministries:

Note: The Committee will nominate chairmen of the committees shown, except that those with an asterisk (*) will select their own person to chair after consultation with the Pastor.

COMMITTEES

***Deacons *Missions * Trustees**

Ordinance Flower Hospitality Library Audio Audit Nursery Finance

OTHERS

Ushers Historians Vacation Bible School Director (s)

Ladies Bible Study Coordinators Music Church Clerk

Junior Church AWANA Youth

Financial Secretary Treasurer Patch the Pirate

PLANS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

I. Membership

While we welcome all to worship with us at FBC, church membership is required of all who serve. Exceptions may be made by the Pastors or by the Music Director.

A. New Members

The Deacons assist and evaluate those interested in membership, and attend to appropriate orientation, training or discipleship of prospective or new members. The Deacons hold special meetings as needed to ensure timely membership recommendations to the church.

B. Associate Members

An associate member (See FBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 3B.) may hold an elected or appointed position of service in the church subject to concurrence of the Deacons.

C. Filling Offices

Authority to appoint or nominate someone to a position of service in the church is a great responsibility, and should never be done without considered thought and prayer.

Work of the Nominating Committee is particularly awesome, in that it affects nearly every area of the Lord's work. Further, those offered appointments or nominations to positions of service should prayerfully consider their response. The following are some matters to consider in making these decisions:

- 1. The harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few.**
- 2. Every person has a place of service in the local church. The gift (s) of each person and the Lord's leading need to be considered so each person will be doing his or her part.**
- 3. It is better to focus attention on one or two areas of service and have them done well, than to spread attentions of an individual too thinly by diverse responsibilities; this is fair to neither the church, the individual nor their families. Major jobs need lots of time to be done faithfully, imaginatively and effectively.**
- 4. When asked to do a new or difficult job, one should remember it is God's ability and our availability that brings God glory, gets results and allows us to grow in faith and service.**
- 5. Appointments and nominations should be decided in ample time to allow intended work to be handled, and the Nominating Committee should seek to finish most of their work before summer vacations.**

II. Meetings and Functions

A. Chairmanship

If there is no designated chair when members of a committee are elected or appointed, the Pastor should call a meeting of the group at the earliest suitable time for election of officers and other preliminary business. Thereafter, the chairman or chairwoman will be responsible, in cooperation with the Pastor as appropriate, for calling meetings and developing agendas.

In keeping with Scriptural principles, men normally preside over groups or meetings involving men and women.

B. Calendar

Scheduling of meetings and all other activities that could affect other church-related functions must either be on the church calendar or coordinated with the Pastor.

The church year and the fiscal year begin in September. Besides routine and special activities on the calendar, certain annual due dates should be noted:

In January, the Deacons recommend updates to long range goals and objectives and send appropriate letters to all inactive members, and the Audit Committee reports to the church.

In March, the Nominating Committee is appointed.

In June, the Deacons either purge members from the inactive roles or move them to the active roles, notifying the affected members as appropriate.

In July, officers and teachers are elected (nominations should be published two weeks before the business meeting).

In August, annual reports and updating of historical documentation are due. Budget proposals are published and posted two weeks before the business meeting. Proposed budget is presented to membership for approval.

In September, the new Deacons begin review of long range goals and objectives.

III. Music

The music ministry should engender praise and thanksgiving to God (Ephesians 5:18-20) and fix the listener's attention on Christ above sound, rhythm, and beat or human experience. The type of music played or sung at home or church should be guarded, since carelessness in the type of music Christians listen to may lead to problems in other areas of life.

While some contemporary Christian music is good, much is experience centered or sounds like the world's music. Such music may be unscriptural, irreverent toward the Word or reflect lack of spiritual maturity of the authors. Contemporary music that fails to exalt Christ or conflicts with Scripture may not be sung in FBC services. All questionable music should be given to the Music Director for review.

Both sound and words of music used at FBC must be spiritual or sacred and consistent with Scripture; it must exalt Christ above human or Christian experience. Music known as "Christian rock" may never be used at any FBC service or function.

To help maintain a Christ-honoring music ministry, instruments used should be played to emphasize the message of the hymn. Rock music, reverberation and similar arrangements of songs or hymns may not be used.

Persons presenting special music must present the music to the Music Director for approval.

Similarly, the Music Director or Associate should appropriately discuss upcoming music with involved instrumentalists, and also coordinate music with speakers when practical to do so.

IV. Management

A. Property and Facilities

FBC property and facilities serve only two primary purposes: to provide (1) support for evangelism, education, worship and observance of ordinances, and (2) a place for fellowships consistent with FBC's theological stand. Use of the property and facilities is primarily limited to official functions sponsored by FBC.

Individuals or leaders, regardless of whether they are members of FBC, using FBC property or facilities for any function, shall enforce the following rules:

- 1. Property and facilities must be left as found and in good order.**
- 2. All lights must be turned off, windows closed, thermostats returned to night-time settings, doors locked and equipment cleaned and properly stored.**
- 3. Special needs must be made known to the custodians well in advance of the functions.**
- 4. Activities must be confined to specific areas of the buildings.**
- 5. Youth shall not be allowed to run within buildings.**
- 6. The sanctuary shall be entered in quietness and reverence, respecting it as a place of worship, and no food or drink is allowed to be consumed in the sanctuary other than the elements of the Lord's Supper at any time.**
- 7. Serving of food or refreshments is normally limited to the Fellowship Hall. Use of food in spaces other than the Fellowship Hall is discouraged, and may only be done with special permission of the Trustees with the following exception: use of refreshments may be provided in small quantities during Sunday School/Adult Bible Fellowship classes, Children's Church or at the Welcome Center provided special care is taken to prevent damage or staining and to clean up afterwards.**
- 8. Sufficient persons must be present to carefully protect what the Lord has provided.**
- 9. Only appropriate Christian conduct is permitted; dancing or any use of tobacco or alcoholic beverages is prohibited.**

Church organizations or individuals sponsoring activities not previously scheduled on the church calendar will clear the functions with custodians and Trustees and add them to the calendar in consultation with the Pastor.

B. Use for Other than Official FBC Functions

Use of church property or facilities for other than official functions sponsored by FBC, such as for funerals or other special occasions, shall be limited to churches, organizations or individuals of like faith and practice, and subject to approval by the Trustees with the following provisions:

- 1. If the Trustees determine that such an event warrants custodial services, a custodial fee will be charged, the amount of which will be set at the regular September meeting of the Trustees.**
- 2. The Trustees will provide in advance a copy of the above rules to appropriate persons in charge of such a function, and a Trustee will be present during the event to take any action necessary to enforce the rules. The person in charge of the organization using the premises, or their designee, shall also be present and see these rules are carried out.**

3. **The Trustees reserve the right to require an appropriate deposit be given to the church Treasurer in advance of property or facility use.**
4. **The sponsoring non-church organization or individual must submit the request for use of the property or facilities in writing to the Trustees.**

C. Weddings

In addition to the provisions of Section IV.A. above certain restrictions will apply to use of FBC property or facilities for weddings.

Weddings may be open where the entire congregation is invited, private where only relatives and friends are invited, or family where only immediate family members may be invited.

Any use of church premises for weddings is subject to concurrence (permission) of the Pastor, Deacons and Trustees.

Only when at least one of the candidates for marriage is a member of FBC and both candidates know the Lord as their personal Savior may the premises of FBC be used for weddings. Exceptions are subject to approval by the Pastor and Deacons.

Use of facilities will be in accordance with the Building Use Policy as approved by the Trustees.

Weddings should be arranged so as not to conflict with scheduled church services or functions.

In case of pregnancy (bride-to-be), only a family wedding will be permitted with no more than twelve total persons present, including the minister and any photographer, musician or others assisting with the wedding.

Permission for open weddings will normally be given only if the member(s) being married have faithfully attended services in recent months.

Outside ministers may be used subject to concurrence of the Pastor and Deacons.

D. Nursery

Nursery care is provided only by church members, and exclusively for children through two years of age (birth until third birthday), except that care may be provided for older special-needs children subject to the concurrence of the Nursery Committee.

Workers should arrive at the nursery about fifteen minutes ahead of the scheduled service, and parents should pick up their children promptly after the service.

Adults only (18 years or older) may work in the baby nursery. Teens (13 years or older) may work in the toddler nursery but only with an adult present.

V. Miscellaneous

A. Hospitality

The Hospitality Committee may be asked to provide food to members or faithful adherents by the Pastor or Chairman of the Deacons. This would normally be done only when there is a death in an immediate family. Other cases should be carefully considered by the Deacons in light of the precedent which may be set.

B. How Funds are Provided and Handled

Our ministry is supported by tithes, offerings or gifts. All receipts and all expenditures for services, equipment, supplies or other materials will be handled via the general account unless a special fund, such as a building fund or fund required by law, is established by church. Separate accounts will not normally be maintained by any organization of the church, except that short term funds may be collected by a designated person for such activities as a family or youth retreat, church fishing trip, father-son banquet, etc.

Expenditures will be in accordance with congregational desires, appropriate designations and recognized procedures of the business community.

C. Handling Copyright Material and Reports

To comply with Copyright laws, no printed materials protected by law shall be photocopied without appropriate written consent of the copyright owners.

Written reports will be presented to the congregation annually at the August church business meeting by the senior Pastor and each church organization represented on the lists under paragraph C. Particulars.

These reports should be submitted to the church secretary at least (18) days before the August meeting. Reports should be succinct, concentrating on accomplishments and growth of the organization, and related to any pertinent established long-range church goals. Verbal reports at the meeting will briefly mention highlights.