

**THE BOW LAKE FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION
AND BY-LAWS**

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MISSION STATEMENT

Bow Lake Free Will Baptist Church is a community of Spirit led believers committed to love, share and obey God's Word with grateful hearts and reach the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

VISION STATEMENT

Bow Lake Free Will Baptist Church seeks to glorify God through worship, outreach, fellowship, teaching, and service.

CHURCH COVENANT

Having accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we affirm our desire to follow Him. We recommit our lives to carry out God's will for us as His corporate body, seeking always to continue His mission of justice, mercy, and love for all people.

We pledge ourselves to strive continuously for Christian growth through prayer, study of God's word, and worship together. It is also our desire to share each other's joys and endeavors and to bear each other's burdens and sorrows with tenderness and sympathy.

As members of this community of faith, we will seek to support our Church and its mission through the giving of our resources and of ourselves. We will not neglect our responsibilities to carry His message into the world nor turn away another in need.

Remaining open always to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will strive to live in the light of our Lord who has called us out of the darkness and set before us a new vision.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be The Bow Lake Free Will Baptist Church.

ARTICLE II- PURPOSE

The purpose of the Bow Lake Free Will Baptist Church is to advance the Kingdom of God through community worship, Christian education and support of Christian missions.

ARTICLE III - POLITY

The government of this Church shall be vested in its membership. While this Church reserves to itself the management of its ecclesiastical and secular affairs, it shall maintain affiliation and cooperation with the Southeastern Baptist Association, the American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire, and the American Baptist Churches USA.

ARTICLE IV - DOCTRINE

This Church accepts the Old and the New Testaments as the authoritative basis of Christian doctrine and practice.

ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Admission

The members of this Church shall be such persons as confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior and promise to share in the spirit of the Church Covenant. Persons who have made a profession of faith may be received into active church membership by any of the following methods, subject in each case to the recommendation of the Diaconate and vote of The Church:

- a. Baptism by immersion unless prevented by physical disability.
- b. Letter of transfer from another church of like faith.
- c. Restoration to active membership after having been inactive.
- d. By virtue of the office, the Pastor and all eligible members of his/her family will become members at the time of their installation.

All applications for membership shall first be considered by the Pastor and Diaconate, who shall satisfy themselves of the Christian character and purpose of the candidate after completion of a membership class as determined by the diaconate and the Pastor, and the diaconate shall report their recommendations to the church. The diaconate may present its recommendation(s) to add one or more candidates as members of the Church to the Church at two successive Sunday Church services. At a Sunday Church service at least one Sunday after the diaconate has presented such recommendation(s), if a quorum (as defined in Article VII, Section 2.A herein) is present at said Church service, the Moderator (or his or her designee), taking each candidate in turn, shall, if an appropriate motion is brought and seconded by the membership of the Church, administer a voice vote on a motion to add said candidate as a member of the Church. At any time from the beginning of said Church service until the Moderator (or his or her designee) announces the results of the vote, the Moderator (or his or her designee) and/or the Pastor may cancel the vote, and the candidate may withdraw his or her candidacy. If a candidate receives a majority of the votes, as determined by the Moderator, (or his or her designee) said candidate shall thenceforth be a member of the Church.

Section 2. Dismission

Names shall be removed from the membership list by death, resignation, and transfer to another church or removal by vote of the Church.

Section 3. Membership List

The membership list shall classify members as being active or inactive. The Pastor, Diaconate, and Church Clerk shall review the membership list annually, consult with the treasurer, and report to the Church Council annually. Those not attending church gatherings on a regular basis or otherwise supporting the church may be placed on an inactive list by the Church Council and will be notified in writing at the last known address of this action by the Diaconate. When there has been no reply to church contact attempts for three years, names may be dropped from the membership list by vote of the church. It is possible for a person to remain on the inactive list indefinitely. Only active members may vote. All members must notify the Church Clerk in writing of any change in residential address.

ARTICLE VI- PASTOR, OFFICERS, CHURCH COUNCIL, AND COMMITTEES

Section 1. Pastor

The Pastor's duties shall be:

- A. To perform all the scriptural obligations of the office.
- B. To preach the services for public worship.
- C. To abide by the rules and by-laws of the church and Pastor's contract, as it/they may be amended from time to time.
- D. To serve as a member of the Church Council and as an *ex-officio* member of all Committees.
- E. To report at the Annual Meeting and as required by the Church Council.
- F. To consider such other duties as the Church Council may suggest.
- G. To coordinate the work of any and all staff members and lay leaders.

The Pastor shall be elected to serve for an indefinite period. His/her term of office shall be ended only after at least 60 days written notice given to the Pastor by the Church, or to the church by the Pastor, or by mutual consent.

Section 2. Officers and Committees

A. General Provisions

- 1) All officers and Church Council members must be active members of the Church. Any committee may invite non-members to participate on a committee, but that non-member will have no vote.
- 2) All officers and committees must submit written budget proposal for the coming year to the Trustees on or before September 15th.
- 3) Permanent committees may be established as deemed necessary by the Church Council, to be submitted for approval by the membership at the next scheduled business meeting. The Church Council may establish *ad hoc*, non-permanent committees from time to time, as deemed necessary by the Church Council.
- 4) All officers and committees shall be required to report in writing to the Church Secretary on or before January 15.
- 5) Unless otherwise provided for in this Constitution, all terms of office shall begin immediately following the annual meeting, running to the next annual meeting.

- 6) The church fiscal year shall run from January first through December thirty-first.
- 7) Unless otherwise noted in these by-laws, officers will be elected annually for a term of two years and may continue to serve at the pleasure of the church. No two members of the same immediate family may serve as Moderator and Vice Moderator, Church Clerk and Assistant Clerk, or Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer simultaneously.
- 8) The following officers shall be elected in even-numbered years:
Moderator, Church Clerk, and Treasurer.
- 9) The following officers shall be elected in odd-numbered years:
Vice Moderator, Assistant Clerk, and Assistant Treasurer.

B. Officers

- 1) **The Moderator/Vice Moderator** shall preside at all business meetings of the church, and shall serve as the non-voting chairperson of the Church Council.
- 2) **The Church Clerk Shall:**
 - a. Keep a complete and accurate record of all business meetings and Church Council meetings.
 - b. Keep a record of all members and their status with dates and manner of admission and dismissal.
 - c. Keep a record of all baptisms and dedications.
 - d. Be responsible for the preparation of reports to the denominational offices, the posting of notices concerning meetings of the church, and such other matters as shall be appropriate to the office of clerk.
 - e. Procure and maintain annual state criminal background checks on the following positions: Pastor, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Sunday school/nursery staff. The Clerk shall confidentially submit the results of the background checks to the Diaconate for review and, if necessary, action by the Diaconate.
 - f. On or before September 15th, submit written budget proposals to the Trustees.
- 3) **The Assistant Clerk** shall assist the clerk and assume responsibilities in the absence of the clerk.
- 4) **The Treasurer** shall:

- a. Keep a faithful record of all monies received and expended by the Church and report at each Trustees committee, Church Council and regular business meetings. At all regular meetings, the Treasurer shall also report as to all funds and investments of the church. At all times, all collection monies shall be counted and recorded by, and in the presence of, at least two of the following persons – the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer and/or one or more members of the Trustees Committee, or, if necessary, an active member of the church, in the absence of the Treasurer and/or Assistant Treasurer. All persons counting collection monies shall provide their handwritten initials at the end of a written record of the monies collected signifying that such persons assisted in the counting of said monies.
- b. Disburse monies as approved by the Trustees and/or the membership.
- c. Keep a record of all trust funds and memorial funds of the Church.
- d. Be responsible for the disbursement of all special monies of the Church, including, without limitation, educational funds and benevolent funds, according to the direction of the Trustees Committee.
- e. Submit the books and records of the Church to an annual audit.
- f. On or before September 15th, submit written budget proposals to the Trustees.

5) **The Assistant Treasurer Shall:** assist the Treasurer and assume the responsibility of those duties in the absence of the Treasurer.

C. Committees and Permanent Standing Committees

1) The Church Council

The primary purpose of the Church Council is to enhance and improve communications between and among the Pastor, Church committees and Church officers. The Church Council shall consist of the following seven voting representatives: the Pastor and Chairperson of the Diaconate or his/her designee, Church Clerk, Chairperson of the Trustees or his/her designee, Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer, Chairperson of Christian Education Committee or his/her designee, and Chairperson of Christian Missions Committee or his/her designee. The Moderator, or his/her designee shall preside at all Church Council meetings and shall serve as the non-voting chairperson of the Church Council. All voting representatives shall be limited to one vote per motion presented for vote, regardless of whether any attendee represents more than one of the voting members of the Church Council at the meeting. The Church Clerk shall serve as the recorder of the minutes of the Church Council meetings. All Church Council meetings shall be open to all members of the Church, and all members shall be permitted to speak, and not vote, at all Church Council meetings. The Church Council:

- a. May recommend that any Church committee and/or Church officer consider any issue within the scope of the authority of said Church Committee and/or Church officer, and may request a report from said Church Committee and/or Church officer.

- b. Shall be empowered to take any action expressly reserved to the Church Council in the within bylaws.
- c. May take any action which does not interfere with the work and/or authority of any Church Committee and/or Church Officer, absent extenuating circumstances as determined by the Church Council.
- d. May, at its discretion, fill vacancies at any regular Church Council meeting, to be ratified by the membership at the next church business meeting.
- e. Shall appoint all members of the Nominating Committee in consultation with the Pastor.
- f. Shall review the inactive membership list annually.
- g. Shall receive and review a preliminary annual budget from the Trustees by October 15th.
- h. Shall submit a written report to the Trustees concerning the proposed annual budget by November 1st.

2) **The Diaconate:**

Whenever possible, there shall be a diaconate consisting of three men and three women who are members of the church. Preferably one man and one woman shall be elected each year for a term of three years. The Diaconate shall be responsible with the Pastor for the spiritual oversight of the church.

The members of the Diaconate shall:

- a. Cooperate with and assist the Pastor in his/her work.
- b. Be responsible for the preparation and conduct of the ordinance of the Lords Table.
- c. Assist the Pastor in the ordinance of Baptism.
- d. Consider all applications for church membership and letters of transfer.
- e. Be responsible, as set forth in Article V, Section 3, for updating the lists of active and inactive members.
- f. Assist in visitation of the church community, and the care of those in need.
- g. Fill the pulpit in the absence of the Pastor.
- h. Maintain a continuing list of prospective church members.
- i. Confidentially review and assess annual state criminal background checks.
- j. On or before September 15th, submit written budget proposals to the Trustees.

k. Establish such standing committees as is necessary to carry out responsibilities, including, without limitation, worship, hospitality, music and flowers. *See Section 3, supra.*

1. All Christian education programs are subject to review by the Diaconate.

Worship Committee: (Subcommittee of Diaconate, Permanent Standing Committee)

There shall be a Worship Committee consisting of the Pastor, one member of the Christian Education Committee, two members of the Diaconate, one member of the Flower Committee and one member of the Music Committee. It shall be the Worship Committee's responsibility to assist the Pastor in integrating and delivering the message, the music and the presentation.

The Flower Committee: (Subcommittee of Diaconate, Permanent Standing Committee)

There shall be a Flower Committee of at least two persons, at least one of whom is a member. They shall be responsible for flower arrangements for the services of worship and also for arranging for flowers to be sent to shut-ins of the church, for funerals and for other appropriate occasions.

The Music Committee: (Subcommittee of Diaconate, Permanent Standing Committee)

There shall be a Music Committee consisting of a minimum of three members of the church, including, without limitation, the Music Director, the Accompanist, and the Choir Director. Their terms of office shall be so arranged as to provide that one person is elected each year for a term of three years. The committee shall be responsible for the music program of the church.

3) The Trustees:

There shall be a Trustees Committee consisting of at least five but no more than seven at large members of the Church, plus church treasurer and/or assistant treasurer. The terms of those chosen from the Church at large shall be so arranged as to provide that at least one person is elected each year for a term of three years. The Trustees Committee shall make no expenditure over the sum of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00), in the absence of a vote of the membership approving same, except in the case of emergency or as otherwise set forth herein.

The Trustees Committee shall hold financial responsibility in a fiduciary capacity to the Church to include:

- a. Maintain, protect, preserve, care for, manage and adequately insure church properties.
- b. Determine the use of the church buildings other than for worship and educational services.
- c. As to the annual budget, and the Pastor's proposed compensation package, the Trustees will:
 1. Receive and review all committees' and officers' written budget proposals for the coming year on or before September 15th.

2. Submit a preliminary annual budget to the Church Council for review and discussion by September 30th.
3. Receive and review all written reports from the Church Council concerning the proposed annual budget by November 1st.
4. Publish a written proposed annual budget to the membership by the November business meeting.
5. Receive and review written reports from the Pastoral Relations Committee concerning the Pastor's proposed compensation package by October 1st.
6. Set the proposed Pastor's compensation package by November 1st.
7. Publish a proposed Pastor's compensation package to the membership at least two weeks before the November business meeting.
8. Submit the proposed Pastor's compensation package to the membership for approval at the November business meeting.

d. Authorize all operating costs and other charges as approved in accordance with the annual budget.

e. Have authority to use Church funds in the event of damage to Church property in an emergency or crisis situation. (*i.e.* storm damage, board up). In the event of the use of such funds under this provision, the Trustees Committee shall, within sixty days, justify the expenditure to the Church membership at a special business meeting.

f. Present to the membership, at a special business meeting, any proposed expenditure exceeding a cost of \$1,000.00 that is outside of the Church budget and that is of a non-emergency nature.

g. Conduct solicitations for Church financial support through grants where the Trustees deem appropriate.

4) The Auditing Committee: There shall be an Auditing Committee of two qualified persons nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the members. It shall be their responsibility to audit the books and records of the Church maintained by the Treasurer and to issue a written report to the Church prior to the annual meeting.

5) The Christian Education:

Four active members will be elected to the Christian Education Committee for a three year term. The terms of those chosen from the Church at large shall be so arranged as to provide that at least one person is elected each year for a term of three years. In addition, a Diaconate representative, the Sunday School superintendent, the assistant Sunday School Superintendent, all Sunday School teachers, and the Pastor will comprise the Christian Education committee.

The Sunday School Superintendent shall be elected by the Church to be the executive head of all departments and phases of the Sunday School and shall follow the general direction and policies of the Christian Education Committee, make recommendations for the Sunday school programs, and submit an annual written budget proposal to the Christian Education Committee by September 15th. The superintendent is elected for a term of three years.

The Assistant Sunday School Superintendent shall assist the superintendent and, in the absence of the Superintendent, shall assume his/her duties.

The Christian Education Committee shall:

- a. Assess the Christian educational needs of the Church.
- b. Set educational goals and objectives for the Church community.
- c. All Christian education programs shall be subject to review by the Pastor and Diaconate.
- d. On September 15th, submit a written educational budget proposal to the Trustees Committee.

6) The Committee for Christian Missions:

There shall be a committee for Christian Missions consisting of four to six active members of the Church, whose terms of office shall be so arranged as to provide that two active members shall be elected each year for a term of two years. The committee shall be responsible for:

- a. The promotion and maintenance of a missionary interest throughout the Church,
- b. For special missionary programs and activities,
- c. For the promotion of the special annual missionary offerings of the American Baptist Churches, and
- d. On or before September 15th, submit written budget proposals to the Trustees.

7) The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC): (Permanent Standing Committee)

Three active Church members will be elected to the Pastoral Relations Committee. The terms shall be arranged so that one person is elected each year for a three year term. The duties of the Committee are to:

- a. To meet with the Pastor at least two times per year.
- b. Focus on building strong relationships between and among the Pastor, the membership, and the community.
- c. Act as a liaison between the Pastor and the membership.
- d. Conduct annual evaluations of the Pastor.
- e. By October 1st, after meeting with the Pastor to discuss the Pastor's compensation package for the upcoming year, make written recommendations to the Trustees regarding Pastor's compensation package.

- f. Discuss continuing education with the Pastor.
- g. Hear complaints and concerns regarding Church ministry.
- h. Report to Church Council as necessary.

8) The Nominating Committee: (Permanent Standing Committee)

There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of three members, whose terms shall be arranged as to provide that at least one person is appointed each year for a term of three years. The Church Council shall appoint all members of the Nominating Committee. It shall be the Nominating Committee's responsibility to present, after consultation with the Pastor, a list of nominees, all of whom are members, for Church Offices and Committees to the church. The committee shall ascertain the willingness and qualifications of each nominee to serve if elected. The list of nominees shall be posted two weeks prior to the annual February meeting of the Church. It shall be considered proper to make nominations from the floor at the annual meeting. At no time shall the Nominating Committee nominate any individual for any position which would result in that individual holding two or more seats on the Church Council.

The Nominating Committee shall present to the Church Council the names of the nominees for the office to be filled.

In the event that the Nominating Committee is unable to find a qualified candidate to accept a designated position as described within the by-laws, the Committee may recommend that an outgoing member of the Committee in question remain in office until a qualified replacement can be found either before or at the next Church meeting.

A person appointed to the Nominating Committee cannot serve more than three consecutive years.

No two members of the same immediate family may serve on the same Committee simultaneously, whenever possible.

9) The Pastoral Search Committee: (Permanent Standing Committee)

When it is necessary to call a Pastor, a Pastoral Search Committee of at least five active members shall be nominated by the Church Council and elected by the membership of the Church. They shall investigate the merits of each applicant under consideration in regard to his/her personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability in determining his/her fitness as Pastor.

A member of the Pastoral Search Committee shall serve on the Church Council through the search process, and shall give a status report at each such meeting.

When suitable applicants are identified the committee will recommend them to the Church members for consideration. Each applicant will be invited to meet with the Church membership separately.

At any time during the course of the search process, the Church Council may, by a majority vote, call a special meeting of the membership to vote upon whether to cease the Pastoral Search Committee's search for a new Pastor.

The Pastoral Search Committee and Trustees shall prepare a contract with the Pastor to establish salary, benefits, manner of payment, and all other agreements needed.

The Call of the Pastor shall come before the Church at a special or business meeting. Provided there is a quorum, a vote of three-fourths of the members qualified to vote shall be necessary to extend a call. The vote will be by ballot.

Section 3: Other

A. **Secretary.** The Secretary shall perform all administrative duties as required by the Church, under the supervision of the Pastor. The Secretary shall be the center of communication for the Church. The Secretary shall not publish any church communication without the approval of the Pastor.

B. **Webmaster.** The Webmaster shall maintain the website and shall keep the website up to date, subject to the approval of the Pastor. Before posting any personal information, the Webmaster shall consult with the Diaconate. The Webmaster and Diaconate may establish policies as necessary to ensure the privacy of the church, its members and others, where appropriate.

ARTICLE VII- MEETINGS

Section 1. All Meetings

Only members in good standing may vote. At all meetings, votes may submitted by members on paper and/or electronically via electronic mail to the Church Clerk, and shall be valid if (1) they are received at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting, and (2) the language of the motion remains as originally presented in the notice at the time of the vote.

Section 2. Business Meetings

A. Voting at any business meeting requires a quorum. A quorum is defined as fifteen members of the church, and in good standing. A majority of such members present and voting at any business meeting shall be sufficient to decide any business presented. Unless otherwise provided, a simple majority is required to approve any motion.

B. At least three business meetings will be held each year. The annual meeting will be held immediately after church, on the third Sunday in February, the second meeting being held on the third Sunday in May, and the fall meeting on the second Sunday in November. Notice of the meetings must be given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays and posted on the church bulletin board by the Church clerk at least 14 days prior to these meetings.

C. The purpose of the annual meeting will be to receive written reports of all officers and committees of the church; for the election of officers and committees for the ensuing year; and for the transaction of all business as is proper to come before the meeting.

D. The November meeting will include but not be limited to establishing the Pastor's benefits and compensation package for the next fiscal year. The Pastor's compensation and benefits will require a written ballot vote.

E. If, for any reason, a meeting may not be held on a scheduled Sunday, the meeting shall postponed to the following Sunday.

F. All business meetings will follow Robert's Rules of Order, but the order of business may be changed at any time by a 2/3 vote.

Section 3. Special Meetings

A. Meetings of the church may be called by the Church Council or upon written request of at least seven members of the church to the Church Council regarding any matter. Said request shall be announced from the pulpit at least two Sundays prior to the meeting and shall specify the business to be brought before the meeting. No business shall be acted upon which is not stated in the call for the meeting.

B. The Trustees and/or the Church Council must call a special meeting regarding all matters:

1. Affecting the relationship of this Church with the Southeastern Baptist Association, the American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire, and the American Baptist Churches of the USA and its bodies, or
2. Concerning major disbursements, or
3. Pertaining to the sale, purchasing or mortgaging of property, or
4. The Calling of a new Pastor, or
5. Dismissal of the Pastor shall be voted at a special or business meeting. Provided there is a quorum, a vote by ballot of three-fourths of the members qualified to vote shall make said termination of office valid.
6. As to any such special meeting:
 - a. Notice of all meetings must be given from the pulpit by the Moderator on two successive Sundays and posted on the church bulletin board and on the Church website by the church clerk at least 14 days prior to these meetings.
 - c. A quorum must be present at the special meeting. A quorum is defined as fifteen members of the church who are in good standing.
 - d. There must be a 2/3 vote of those present and voting.
 - e. The vote must be taken by a written ballot.

ARTICLE VIII- AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended at any business or special meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, provided that a quorum is present, and that notice of said amendment stating the proposed change shall have been given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays and posted on the church bulletin board by the Church Clerk at least fourteen days prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE IX - RATIFICATION

This Constitution shall become effective immediately upon its acceptance by two-thirds of those members present and voting, provided that there is a quorum present and voting.

Revised May 1995

Revised May 2001

Revised May 2007

Revised February 2009

Revised May, 2017

Revised November, 2017

Revised November 2019 (Article V, Section 1).