

CONSTITUTION OF SECOND BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH CHESTERFIELD COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Article I: Name

This Church shall be known and designated as Second Branch Baptist Church, Chesterfield County, Virginia. Hereafter in this document it shall be called "this Church" or "the Church".

Article II: Ecclesiastical Principles

Section A. Introduction:

These statements of basic theological and ecclesiastical beliefs are based largely on a document entitled "Ecclesiastical Principles and Rules" adopted by this Church soon after its founding in 1791 -- exact date of adoption is unknown. Minor editorial changes have been made to enhance clarity although much of the original language has been preserved for historical significance.

Section B. Basis of Existence:

The articles of faith, the law of conduct, the principles of organization and discipline adopted by this church are those that are contained in the New Testament.

Section C. Bond of Union and Independence:

The union of the Church with other churches of our Lord Jesus Christ is based upon a common faith, a reciprocal love, and a mutual cooperation in extending the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This Church extends and receives fellowship, advice, and aid with other churches of like faith and beliefs.

This Church at all times shall freely cooperate with and participate in the enterprises of the Middle District Baptist Association, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, and the Southern Baptist Convention (or their successors).

Section D. Articles of Faith:

Each member of this Church believes that the Holy Scriptures explicitly and plainly teach:

that the Bible is the inspired Word of God (II Timothy 3:16);

that there is but one God, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19);

that all mankind is by nature sinful and depraved (Romans 3:23);

that the only method of Salvation is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who became man and made atonement for our sins by his sufferings and death (I John 1:9, 2:12);

that the regeneration of the soul is affected by the purpose and influence of the Holy Spirit through the truth (I John 5:6);

that repentance is sorrow for sin and abandonment of it (Acts 3:19, 26:20);

that faith is the hearty belief, reception, and trust of the soul of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for Salvation (John 14:6);

that believers are justified by Christ's obedience and sufferings (Romans 10:9-10);

that they are adopted as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty (Ephesians 1:5);

that sanctification, by the indwelling Spirit of God, subdues the love and reign of sin and promotes holiness of life and heart (John 14:26);

that good works must necessarily follow saving faith; (James 2:14-17, 26);

that this renewal of life and heart will persevere in holiness, being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 1:12-13);

that Baptism is required of all disciples of Jesus by the immersion of the believer in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20);

that a Gospel Church is a congregation of baptized believers, whose principal officers are Bishop (now commonly called Pastor) and Deacons (I Timothy 3:1-13);

that the Lord's Supper is an institution of Jesus Christ to be solemnly and devoutly observed (I Corinthians 11:23-26);

that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, to be kept sacred to pious purposes (Exodus 20:8-11, Matthew 12: 1-8, Hebrews 4:9);

that there will be a resurrection of all men, in which the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal (Romans 6:5, 23)

Article III: Membership

Section A: General:

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership:

1. Retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.
2. Reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and condition of membership.

Section B: Responsibilities of Members:

1. It is the responsibility of each member to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel of Christ within our community and cooperatively around the world and encourage others to unite with a church body and be involved in His Ministry.
2. It is the responsibility of each member to be faithful in worship service, Bible study, prayer, and meditation.
3. It is the responsibility of each member to be active in the support of the work of Christ and His church at Second Branch.
4. It is the responsibility of each member to contribute time, talent, resources, and finances to the ministry of the Church according to his or her ability and to support and pray for the ministerial staff.
5. It is the responsibility of each member to be present in order to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the Church in a business meeting.
6. It is the responsibility of each member to conduct themselves in a manner keeping with the principles set forth in the Articles of Faith.

Section C: Receipt of Members:

Persons may present themselves for membership in this Church at any regular or announced special worship service. They may be received into membership at the conclusion of that service by the confirming vote of those members present and voting. Should there be opposition expressed, the case is to be referred without discussion to the pastor and deacons for immediate review and recommendation to the Church. Members may be received in the following ways and subject to the following conditions:

1. By Profession of Faith:
Those presenting themselves upon profession of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord shall be baptized by immersion as soon as practical after which they shall be members of the Church.
2. By Letter:
Those presenting themselves by letter from another church of like faith and order shall become members of the Church upon receipt by the Church Clerk of a letter of dismissal from that church which furnishes satisfactory evidence of believer's baptism by immersion.
3. By Statement of Christian Experience:
Those presenting themselves shall become members of the Church on Statement of Christian experience in case a letter cannot be obtained from a sister church or in the case of persons coming from other Christian denominations. The ordinance of baptism shall be administered to anyone who has not been immersed as a believer.
4. The only exception to a believer's baptism by immersion would be those not immersed for reasons detrimental to their health.

Section D: Rights of Members:

1. Every member, 16 years of age and older, of the Church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the Church in a business meeting, provided the member is present or provision has been made for absentee balloting.
2. Every member of the Church is eligible for consideration by membership as candidates for elective offices in the Church as set forth in the Constitution and By-laws.
3. Every member of the Church may participate in the ordinances of the Church as administered by the Church.

Section E: Removal or Transfer of Members:

Members of the Church shall have their names removed from the Church roll in the following ways:

1. Upon their death.
2. Upon the request of another church of like faith and order for a letter of transfer.

3. Upon the request of the member (in which case no letter of transfer is given to the individual).
4. Upon exclusion by action of the Church. It is the practice of this Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist members in restoring them to fellowship with the Church. The pastoral staff and deacons are available for counsel and guidance, and will work to resolve the problem in accord with Matthew 18. If it becomes necessary for the Church to take action to exclude a member in order to maintain unity of the fellowship, a special business meeting will be called. A two-thirds vote of the members present is required before the Church may proceed to declare the person excluded from the membership of the Church.

Article IV: Officers

Section A: Introduction

The officers of the Church shall be members of the Church and shall be elected by a majority of the Church members present and voting. The officers of the Church shall be the pastor, ministerial staff, clerk, treasurer, deacons, trustees, and such officers as may be deemed necessary by the Church.

Section B: Ministerial Staff

1. When a pastor is to be selected:
 - a. He shall be recommended by a pastoral search committee.
 - b. He shall have preached at least one trial sermon at a regular or special worship service at the Church.
 - c. He shall be elected by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting of the Church especially called for that purpose. Such meeting shall occur at least five (5) days following its announcement in a regular morning worship service of the Church.
2. When other ministerial staff is selected:
 - a. They shall be interviewed and recommended to the Church by the Personnel Committee.

- b. They shall be elected by a majority vote of the members present at a Special Business Meeting called for that purpose. Such meeting shall occur at least five (5) days following its announcement in a regular morning worship service of the Church.
3. Any issues with ministerial staff shall be handled by the Personnel Committee's guidelines.
4. A ministerial staff member shall serve until the relationship is terminated by:
 - a. His request with thirty (30) days notice to the Church
 - b. Immediate dismissal upon mutual agreement between the ministerial staff member and the Personnel Committee
 - c. Recommendation of the Personnel Committee and the Board of Deacons and upon a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a special business meeting.

Section C: Deacons

1. A person shall be elected for a term of three (3) years and shall not succeed himself.
2. The members who serve as deacons shall be ordained as soon as possible after election.

Section D: Trustees

1. The trustees shall be elected for a term of five (5) years.
2. When appointed by the court, they shall officially represent the Church in all legal matters.
3. They shall perform only those duties vested in them by the Church.

Section E. Other Officers

1. All officers of the Church, Sunday School officers and teachers, Directors of Mission organizations, with the exception of the Ministerial staff, deacons, and trustees, shall be elected at the July business meeting.
2. Those elected shall begin their duties at the beginning of the church year.

Article V: Meetings

Section A: Worship Services

1. The Church shall have a regular stated time for worship.
2. Special worship services of the Church may be called by the pastor or in his absence, the associate pastor, or in his absence, a majority approval of the currently active deacons.
3. The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed the first Sunday of each quarter and on special occasions when desired.

Section B: Business Meetings

1. The yearly reports of committees and other organizations shall be given at the October business meeting.
2. Church business meetings shall be held quarterly on the third Wednesday in January, April, July, and October. The announcement of such meeting shall be made from the pulpit during all Sunday worship services, shall appear in the church bulletin, and shall be submitted electronically at least five days prior to the meeting.
3. Special business meetings of the church may be called by a majority approval of the currently active deacons or the pastor or, in his absence, the associate pastor. The announcement of such meeting shall be made from the pulpit during all Sunday worship services, shall appear in the church bulletin and shall be submitted electronically at least five days prior to the meeting.
4. Five percent (5%) of the resident adult church membership, 16 years of age and older, shall constitute a voting quorum and shall transact the business of the church. Based on the annual Church report, the number representing five percent (5%) of the resident voting membership will be announced by the Clerk at the October business meeting each year.
5. Parliamentary procedure - Robert's Rules of Order (latest rev.) shall be used as authority in all business meetings of the Church.

Article VI: Church Property

Section A: Property Management

1. The property of this Church shall be vested in the hands of the trustees under such arrangements as shall be effectually secure and legal.
2. The Building and Grounds Committee shall manage the Church property on a regular and timely basis.
3. The immediate management of the Church building and grounds shall be committed to the pastor who shall be privileged to allow or prohibit the use of same in accordance with Church policies.

Section B: Property Provision

If at any time a majority of the members of the Church shall depart from the principles embodied in the Articles of Faith of the Church, the property of the Church shall belong to the minority, however small, who adhere to the principles.

Article VII: Amendment

This constitution may be altered or amended, with the concurrence of two-thirds of members present at any quarterly or special business meeting called for this purpose. The amendment(s) presented shall be tabled for thirty (30) days before the Church shall vote.

Article VIII: Ratification

This Constitution, when adopted by the Church, shall supersede all previous Constitutions.

Amendment dates:

1921	1986	2003
1960	1995	2004
1980	2002	2005