

Declaration of Faith and Constitution
Meridian First Baptist Church
Meridian, Idaho

PREAMBLE

Relying upon the faith we have in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and identifying with the teachings and the distinctives of fundamental Baptists namely:

1. The eternal deity of Jesus Christ [Sec. II B];
2. The Bible, God's inerrant standard of faith and practice [Sec. I];
3. Regenerated membership [Sec. IV A & B; V B & C];
4. Believer's baptism by immersion [Sec. IV C-1];
5. Positional, progressive and perfect sanctification [Sec. VII B-3];
6. The Individual Liberty of Man [Sec. VII D];
7. Eternal security of the believer [Sec. II C; Sec. VI A];
8. Establishment of the church and civil government [Sec. IV D];
9. Autonomy of the local church [Sec. IV B].

We thus join together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ and establish for our government, plan of worship and service, the following Declaration of Faith, Constitution, and by-laws.

DECLARATION OF FAITH

We, as New Testament believers, enthusiastically accept the historic Baptist belief that a scriptural local church is to be composed only of people who believe and have been baptized as a testimony of their personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ deserves love and obedience from each of the members of this church. We believe that any habit, practice, association, or affection, which hinders spiritual growth and an ever-deepening knowledge of the Lord Jesus, should be laid aside. We desire our testimony to be used in directing lost souls to Christ.

When you become a member of this church you enter into a fellowship which exists foremost to glorify our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we commit to honor Christ with our lives

through obedience to His written Word: thus allowing all areas of ministry to conform to His Word, and believers to be transformed into His likeness.

SECTION I - THE SCRIPTURES (Bibliology)

A. Inspiration

The Bible in its original manuscripts, is plenary (completely) and verbally (the very words) inspired by God, and is the infallible (errorless) and authoritative Word of God given to man. (Psalm 19:7-11; John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:19-21)

B. Interpretation

Since the Bible was written by many authors over a long period of time, the most accurate and comprehensive method of interpretation is the literal-historical-grammatical method. In order to be consistent with scriptural intent and meaning this is the method this Church shall use to interpret the Scriptures. (Proverbs 30:5,6; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

SECTION II - THE TRINITY (Theology)

There is one true God who is spirit and as such is infinite, intelligent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, immutable, perfect, holy, and righteous. God exists eternally in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three Persons are equal in deity, essence, power, sovereignty, and majesty, yet perform distinct, but harmonious functions. God is the creator and sustainer of all things (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Matthew 28:19, 20; John 10:30)

A. God the Father

God the Father has eternally existed as a distinct person of the Trinity, yet shares in the same essence with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He is sovereign over all creation and His purpose for all creation is to display His glory, person, and name. Therefore He does what He pleases, when and how He pleases. (I Samuel 2:2; Psalms 29:2; Isaiah 14:24-27; 29:15,16; 43:6,7; 46:8-10; 55:8,9; Romans 9; Daniel 4:34,35; Revelation 4:11)

B. God the Son, Jesus Christ

God the Son has eternally existed as a distinct person of the Trinity, yet shares in the same essence with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He is the creator, sustainer of all creation, the LORD (Jehovah of the Old Testament along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies). In the redemptive plan, even though He was still God, He took upon Himself the form of man by being supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. In this way, He became, and is today, the perfect substitutionary sacrifice for man and the only payment for the penalty of sin. After His death on the cross, He rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us. He is always, completely God and completely man, and will physically return to rule and reign on the earth in keeping with His promises. The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus is LORD, Yahweh (Jehovah), without sin and without the possibility of sinning. Jesus is the Savior, Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah (the One who will establish the Theocratic Kingdom on earth at the time of His second advent). When the word “Christ” (Messiah) is used in the New Testament it is a reference to His work, position, and title as the “Anointed One”, the God/Man Ruler and the King who has all power and authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus is His given name. (Luke 1:26-35; John 1:14; Acts 2:22-36; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 1:15-22; Hebrews 1:1-4; 7:25; Revelation 4:11; Matthew 28:14; Luke 2:21; John 20:31; Philippians 2:6; Hebrews 4:15; I John 3:5)

C. God the Holy Spirit

God the Holy Spirit has eternally existed as a distinct person of the Trinity, yet shares in the same essence with God the Father and God the Son. He was active in the creation of this world along with God the Father and God the Son. In the Old Testament, He came upon men selectively to empower them for service. In the New Testament, following the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost to institute the church and to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. He came to indwell all believers making them spiritually alive, setting them apart for purity, and sealing them as God's eternally secure possessions. Today the Holy Spirit: is the helper to the believer: comforts the believer; bears testimony of the truth of Scriptures to the believer, leads the believer through life. He teaches the believer the truths of God's Word, helping and strengthening believers to live Christ-like lives. At the moment we put our faith in Christ the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the Church, which is the Body of Christ, and gives spiritual gifts to be used in service for our Lord and the Church. The gifts of the Spirit are identified in I Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. Because of the completed revelation of the Bible, certain sign gifts that were used to authenticate an apostle's message from God have ceased to be needed and have come to an

end. (e.g. I Corinthians 13). (Genesis 1:2, 26; John 3:5-8; 14:16-18; 16:7-14; Acts 2:16-18; 5:3, 4; I Corinthians 6:11; 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 1:3-14; II Peter 1:20-21)

SECTION III - CREATION

God created all things in six, consecutive, 24-hour, days. All life, including man, was created by the special, formative acts of God and not from preexisting life forms. The Biblical creation account does not include any form of evolutionary activity. (Gen 1-2; 3:1-19, Ex. 20:11)

SECTION IV - THE CHURCH (Ecclesiology)

A. The Universal Church

There is one true church, a living organism called in Scripture the body and bride of Christ. The Church was a mystery in the time before Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, yet now has been revealed in the New Testament. The Church came into existence on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given. At this time the disciples became a part of the body of Christ. All who have been "born from above" by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are members of His body, of which He is the head. (Matthew 16:18; John 3:3-8, 36; Acts 2:1-13; I Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:25-30)

B. The Local Church

The local Church is comprised of those belonging to the universal Church who are baptized and associated together by faith. In keeping with the admonition of Scripture, they voluntarily fellowship together in order to observe the ordinances, preach Jesus Christ, worship, exercise their spiritual gifts, care for widows and orphans and teach the Word of God to equip the saints for ministry. The local church has the absolute right of self-government with dependence upon none, other than Jesus Christ. The New Testament describes congregational government as being elder led and deacon served. Qualified men are to be the primary leaders of the church. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:24, 25; Acts 13:1-3; II Corinthians 8:1-5, 19, 23; I Timothy 3:1-13, Philippians 1:1, II Corinthians 2:6, I Corinthians 5:4-5, James 1:27).

C. The Ordinances of the Local Church

Jesus Christ instituted the observances of baptism and communion (the Lord's Supper) as the two ordinances of the church. These ordinances are to be observed by born-again believers who understand their meaning and are walking with the Lord. The ordinances are an act of obedience but are not required for salvation.

Baptism

Scriptural baptism is by water immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is to be observed only once after conversion as an outward sign of the inward work of grace by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38; 8:12, 36, 37; 10:47; 16:33)

Communion

The Lord's Supper is to be observed regularly until He comes. The elements for the administration of the Lord's Table are unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of all that Christ did for us in His substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection. Observance of the Lord's Supper is for believers only and has no spiritual value for the unsaved. (Matthew 26:26-30; I Corinthians 11:23-34)

D. The Church and Civil Government

God established both the church and the civil government and He gave each its own distinct sphere of operation. The government's purposes are outlined in Romans 13:1-7 and the church's purposes in Ephesians 4. Neither should control the other nor should there be an alliance between the two. (I Timothy 2:1-3; I Peter 2:13-17)

SECTION V - MAN (Anthropology)

Human existence is wholly a result of divine creation. Every human being bears God's image without respect to ethnicity, race, gender, age, ability or location. Since we are created by God in His image, every person from conception to death possesses inherent dignity and intrinsic value—including preborn children, elderly individuals, the mentally and physically disabled, and others marginalized by society. Mankind is uniquely created to participate in relationships with God and other people. God created mankind, male and female, with dignity and purpose to serve Him. Each person is a complex unity of soul, spirit, and body with a will and ability to make choices.

The taking of innocent life by murder, abortion, euthanasia, genocide, and ethnic cleansing are heinous sins against God and his image bearers. All such sin is forgivable by the grace of God through repentance and faith in the gospel.

Personhood begins at conception, where gender is permanently defined. Deviation from God's plans for gender and sexuality is rebellion against God. The man and the woman are both created in God's image and likeness as equal persons but are formed for different roles in society, the family, and the church. (Gen. 1-2, 19; Neh. 9:6; Is. 44:24; Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 1:24-27; I Cor. 11:8; I Tim. 2:13; Heb. 11:3; Psalm 139:13-16)

A. The Purpose of Man

The primary purpose of man is to worship God and to glorify Him forever. (Isaiah 45:5-9,21; Ephesians 1:3-6,11, 12; 3:10,20, 21; I Peter 4:10, 11)

B. The Condition of Man

Man was created by God in his image, in a state of innocence. As a result of the temptation of Satan, Adam voluntarily sinned and fell from his innocent state. Because of this act of disobedience, all people are sinners by nature and choice; and are totally depraved. Therefore man, unless redeemed, is condemned eternally to a literal Hell. (Genesis 3:1-7; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:9-19,23; 8:5-8; II Thessalonians 1:7-9)

C. The Redemption of Man

The only hope for mankind in his lost condition is the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. This sacrifice of His body and blood satisfied God's demand for the payment required for the penalty of man's sin. Christ's life, death, and resurrection were not merely an example for us to follow. He acted as our only substitute and received the penalty for sin that we deserved. (Leviticus 17:11; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22; I Peter 2:24; 3:18)

D. The Individual Liberty of Man

Every person will stand individually responsible for the proper interpretation and application of everything the Bible teaches. Every person must give an answer to God individually and therefore no other person, and no church can act as their conscience. Each person has the responsibility to interpret the Scripture for themselves and to answer to God for the way in which each person does so. Each person as a believer has the Holy Spirit to guide and enable them,

apart from any other ministry of man or of the church. (Acts 3:29; Romans 14:5-12; II Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:9; I John 2:27)

E. The Final Judgment of Man

1. Of the Believer

Every saved individual will someday stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment is not of their worthiness of salvation but of their works in order that every believer may receive rewards from the Lord. (I Corinthians 3:10-15; 4:5)

2. Of the Unbeliever

Unsaved individuals will someday stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne of Judgment where they will recognize Jesus Christ as Lord, be judged according to their works, and sentenced to eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. (Luke 16:19-31; John 3:18; Romans 14:10-12; Revelation 20:11-15)

F. Human Sexuality

God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. Any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's genetic, birth gender by self-identification, surgery or appearance (Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; I Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).

God's design for marriage is the joining of one man and one woman for life. (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23).

G. Family Relationships

Men and women are equal in position before God, but God has ordained distinct and separate roles for men and women in the home and the church. The man is to be the primary leader of the home and men are to be the primary leaders of the church. (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12).

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The church submits to the headship of Christ; in the

same manner, the wife submits to the headship of her husband. If the husband leads her into sin, she must obey Christ. Children are a heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction (Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Mark 10:6-12; I Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4, Colossians 3:18-21; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 3:1-7).

SECTION VI - THE SPIRIT WORLD (Angelology)

A. The Creation of Spirit Beings (commonly called angels)

Prior to the creation of the world and the universe, God created a host of spirit beings to serve Him and bring Him glory. They were created with rank and authority, which is seen in their divisions: anointed cherub, cherubs, seraphs, archangel, and angels. The Scriptures further describe the ranks or organization of angels as powers, rulers, thrones, dominions, and authorities. (Genesis 3:24; Job 38:1-7; Isaiah 6:1-4; Ezekiel 28:14; Colossians 1:15-17)

B. The Present State of Spirit Beings

Elect Spirit Beings

a. Their State

The spirit beings that did not leave their original state of creation are unfallen or elect spirit beings and will forever remain in that state. (I Timothy 5:21)

b. Their Ministry

These spirit beings today minister in two general areas: (1) they worship God and carry out His bidding; (2) they are ministering spirits to those who are heirs of salvation. (Isaiah 6:1-3; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 4:6-11)

Fallen Spirit Beings

a. Satan

God created all things perfect and without sin. But when Satan, the anointed cherub and God's highest created being, determined to be like God, sin entered into the creation. Satan is a real being and is extremely powerful, but he does not have God-like attributes. He is evil and

cunning, intending to destroy God's plan and usurp God's sovereign rule. He seeks to achieve his purposes and control through deceitful temptations and trying circumstances. He is the accuser of the brethren. (Job 1 & 2; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-17; John 8:44; II Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 12:9, 10)

b. Demons

In seeking to overthrow God's authority Satan convinced one-third of the angels to follow him, resulting in their fall. Because of this willful act of sin, their eternal punishment and destiny is sealed with no opportunity for repentance. Until these fallen angels are sent to their eternal punishment they are demonic messengers under Satan's control opposing God's plan and purpose. (Ephesians 6:10-12; Revelation 12:1-6)

c. Their Activities

Both believers and unbelievers are influenced by these demonic forces, but unbelievers are powerless to resist their schemes and dominance. Unbelievers may also be demon possessed. Believers have the strength to resist Satan's temptations if they use the Armor of God and the power given to them by the Holy Spirit. Demons seek to entice believers to act independently of God. (Matthew 4:1-11; Acts 5:3; II Corinthians 2:10, 11; 6:14-16; 11:13-15; Ephesians 2:1, 2; James 1:12-15; I John 5:19)

SECTION VII - SALVATION (Soteriology)

A. Its Provision and Assurance

God authored and Christ purchased our eternal salvation. God has chosen [AC3] who will believe and who will exercise personal faith in Christ. Each person is held accountable to obey and yield to His sovereignty. This salvation is all of grace through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone, who paid the full redemptive price for our sins. He satisfied God's righteous demands by suffering the death and penalty for man's sin on the cross of Calvary. Salvation is made effective to man only as he believes, exercising personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Those who have placed their faith in Christ are saved forever and nothing can separate them from God's love. Since believers are eternally His, God will not allow the believer to be separated from Himself. (John 3:16; 14:6; 20:31; Acts 16:30, 31; Romans 10:9, 10; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 5:9; 10:10,14-18; I Peter 1:2-5, Acts 4:12)

B. Its Content

New Birth

Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden brought the penalty of death to him and all his descendants. At that moment of his sin both Adam and Eve died spiritually and began to die physically. In order for God to deal with mankind's spiritual death, He sent His Son to die for all sin and to be raised from death in order to give victory over the penalty of sin. At the moment of salvation or new birth, the Spirit of God gives to a person who is spiritually dead, spiritual life. In this new life, believers are adopted as children of God and as such are made joint heirs with Christ. This spiritual life enables them to understand spiritual truth and to communicate with God. Not only are believers made alive spiritually, but also indwelt with the Holy Spirit, who is the believer's source of power. (Genesis 1:17; John 3:3-8; Romans 3:23, 5:12-21; II Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:24; II Peter 1:4)

Justification by Faith

Individuals are acquitted from the guilt of sin when they are saved by faith. At the moment of salvation, God declares them to be righteous and holy in the person of Jesus Christ. It is not possible for anyone to earn justification before God. (Romans 5:1-11)

Sanctification

Believers are in an ongoing process of being set apart from sin to the purpose of God in their lives. This is daily sharing and participating in God's holiness as the Holy Spirit is active in their lives. (I John 3:1-4)

Glorification

In the future, when believers are in His presence, they will be like Christ. Not that they will become gods, but they will be glorified and holy in reality as Christ is holy. (John 3:1-3; Romans 6; I Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 3:12-14; I Thessalonians 3:12, 13; II Peter 1:2-11; I John 3:1-4)

SECTION VII - FUTURE EVENTS IN PROPHETIC SCRIPTURE (Eschatology)

A. The Church Age

The Church began on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given and will continue on earth until the Rapture of the Church. (Acts 2; I Corinthians 15:51-52; I Thessalonians 4:13-17)

B. The Rapture

The next great prophetic event awaiting the Church is the bodily coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the air when true believers from the day of Pentecost until His coming will be caught up to meet the Lord and be taken into heaven in glorified bodies. (I Thessalonians 4:13-17; II Thessalonians 2:1; I John 3:2)

C. The Judgment Seat of Christ

Following the rapture is judgment for believers in order to receive a reward. It is not a judgment of our being qualified for heaven but a judgment of our life as we give an account of what we have done for the Lord. (I Corinthians 4:5; II Corinthians 5:10)

D. The Tribulation

This is the seven-year period, also known as Daniel's Seventieth Week, in which God will once again focus on the people of Israel and will pour out His wrath on all nations of the earth. The tribulation is divided into two equal parts, the first half being "the beginning of sorrows" and the second half being "the great tribulation". The church will be taken to be with the Lord prior to the beginning of this seven-year period. (Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24; Daniel 9)

E. The Second Coming of Christ

Christ shall return with His Church to the earth to establish His earthly kingdom just prior to the end of the Tribulation Period. As Christ sets foot on the earth He will bring the great campaign of Armageddon to an end. At that time He will conquer the nations and establish His millennial kingdom. (Zechariah 14:1-5; Jude 14-15; Revelation 19:11-21)

F. The Resurrection of Old Testament Saints

Following the Tribulation, Old Testament believers will be resurrected in order to receive their inheritance in Christ's millennial kingdom. (Daniel 12:1-3, 9-13)

G. The Millennium

The Millennium is the fulfillment of God's promise to David that he would have a descendant who would sit on his throne forever. Jesus Christ will literally begin to fulfill this prophecy as He rules and reigns on the earth for one thousand years. At the end of 1000 years, Satan will be released from prison to deceive and gather the rebels for battle. However, fire from Heaven will consume them, and the Devil will be thrown into the Lake of Fire where he will be tormented forever. (II Samuel 7:8-16; Isaiah 11:1-16; Revelation 20:1-10)

H. The Great White Throne of Judgment

Next is the judgment of unbelievers of all ages. All will be resurrected to stand before the Lord to be cast alive into the Lake of Fire because their names are not written in the Book of Life. (Revelation 20:7-10)

I. The New Heavens and the New Earth

Following the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ and the judgment of unbelievers, God will restore the heavens and the earth to their original perfection. The new heavens and earth will be the eternal home of the saints. (II Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-22:5)

J. Eternity

Believers will exist eternally in the presence of the Lord. For the unbeliever, it will be eternal existence separated from God to bear the punishment of their sin without relief. (I Corinthians 15:3-57; II Thessalonians 1:8, 9; Revelation 21-22)

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be "Meridian First Baptist Church" of Meridian, Idaho.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of this organization shall be to:

- Provide a spiritual fellowship among New Testament believers in our community by maintaining an independent Baptist church;
- Provide a place of worship and prayer with faithful recognition of the biblical doctrines and ordinances;
- Provide a center of discipleship training for the whole family in Bible knowledge and Bible doctrines;
- Provide teaching and give an example of faithful stewardship in time, talent, and money;
- Provide training and motivation for continuous witnessing under the direction of the Holy Spirit;
- Proclaim the good news concerning Christ at home and abroad as commanded by our Lord;
- Promote scriptural missions at home and abroad.

ARTICLE III – ASSOCIATIONS

An independent New Testament Baptist church cannot join anything outside itself but only affiliate on the grounds of fellowship. This church declares itself to be in fellowship with the following groups so long as these groups remain true to their original statements of faith, aim, and practice.

1. The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC)
2. The Baptist Network Northwest (BNN)
3. The Southern Idaho Regular Baptist Fellowship (SIRBF)
4. Idaho Regular Baptist Bible Camp, Inc. (Camp Pinewood)

The church may associate or withdraw association from an organization at its own discretion by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the church. No church association or financial support is to be given to a work or workers whose doctrinal position is not consistent with the Declaration of Faith of this constitution.

ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Qualifications of Membership

The membership of this church shall be restricted to those who profess personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and evidence spiritual fruit. (Gal. 5:22, 23); to those who have been baptized by immersion, acknowledge substantial agreement with the Declaration of Faith and practices of this church; and have been received into the fellowship by regular action of the church.

Section B. Individual Responsibilities of Members

Every member of the church is expected to:

- Be faithful in all spiritual disciplines essential to the Christian life as set forth in the scriptures. (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 John 2:15)
- Attend the meetings of the church (Hebrews 10:25)
- To labor for the physical and spiritual welfare of fellow members and for the success and progress of the work of the church (Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 8-11)
- To encourage, build up and teach one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Colossians 3:1-17; 2 John 6; Hebrews 5:12)
- To regard and protect its reputation in the community
- To contribute regularly and according to their ability for its expenses and ministries
- To honor, esteem, trust and submit to the elders, pray for them regularly and assist them in carrying out the ministries of the church.

Members will endeavor to keep the unity of the church; and if at any time they find themselves opposed to the doctrines and policies of this church, they will seek counsel and resolution with the elders. If a resolution of the differences is not achieved, they will not seek to disrupt its fellowship but will respectfully withdraw from its membership.

Members moving from this community are encouraged to unite with a biblical church of like faith and order in their new locality as soon as possible.

(Romans 12:1, 2; 16:17, 18; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:1-17; II Timothy 3:1-5; James 1:27; I John 2:15-17; II John 9-11; Hebrews 13:7,17-18, 10:25).

Section C. Corporate Responsibilities of the Membership

The Membership of Meridian First Baptist shall hold the following privileges and responsibilities corporately. Any member may make a motion at either of the semi-annual meetings to call for a special meeting to be scheduled no less than 2 weeks to address any of these corporate responsibilities. The specific corporate responsibility must be stated in the motion, and will be approved by a simple majority.

1. Affirming the selection of elders.
2. Dismissing elders.
3. Affirming the selection of deacons.
4. Affirming the elders' recommendation of new members.
5. Participating in the final step of church discipline by excluding unrepentant members.
6. Adopting, amending or repealing this constitution.
7. Affirming the annual budget.
8. Modifying associations.
9. Selling, acquiring or encumbering property.
10. Dissolving the corporation.

Section D. Receiving Members

1. Candidates may qualify to become members of the church in one of two ways:
 - a. Interview with the elders and Baptism by immersion at Meridian First Baptist Church.
 - b. Statement of Christian experience and interview with designated elders. (having been previously baptized by immersion as a believer).
2. Prospective applicants for membership shall be published two weeks prior to the vote. If one or more members, because of the knowledge of some existing circumstance, deem it necessary to object to an applicant, a written objection shall be brought in person to the elders for examination. The elders shall examine the accusation to determine validity.
3. After a recommendation by the elders, applicants shall be affirmed by a vote of the congregation at any Sunday service or business meeting of the church and shall be accepted upon approval of a majority of present, voting members.

Section E. Removal from Membership

1. Inactivity

The elders shall review the membership roll of the church regularly. Members absent for at least three months shall be contacted by the elders to determine their reason for their absence. Absent members shall be given an additional three months to demonstrate active fellowship, after which they will be announced to the church. If the member has not returned to active fellowship after a total of 6 months from the church announcement they will be removed from the membership roll and notified in writing by the Clerk.

2. Conduct

The elders shall contact any member who persists in unrepentant sin and shall call them to repentance. If the member persists in sin and does not repent, their membership shall cease immediately and shall be presented to the congregation for an affirmation by vote to remove from membership and exclude from fellowship.

When the congregation has affirmed by vote to exclude from fellowship any member who has been duly proved unworthy of membership, membership shall cease immediately

3. Death

4. Request

A member may request to be removed from the membership roll, however, should a member be progressing through the process of church discipline the elders may elect to delay removal to allow the church to complete the responsibility of discipline for the member.

5. Joining another church

Section F. Special Types of Membership

1. Junior Members

Children under the age of 18 baptized at Meridian First Baptist Church shall become Junior Members. Junior Members shall have the same individual responsibilities as regular members but none of the corporate responsibilities of regular members. Junior

members shall not vote or affirm church business. A junior member is subject to the same standard of care as a regular member. Upon turning 18, a junior member may choose to meet with the elders and request a transfer to the regular member list.

2. Watchcare Members

Watchcare members are those members that are temporarily separated from Meridian First Baptist Church. Reasons for this separation may include military deployment, temporary workplace assignment, college attendance, missionary work or incarceration. Watchcare members may vote and affirm in person or by absentee ballot. Watchcare members shall not be subject to removal for inactivity, however, they are expected to regularly attend a biblically-based church in their area.

3. Associate Members

Associate Members are members of another church of like faith who are temporarily residing in the community and wish to unite themselves to this church for service to Christ and to fellow believers. Associate members must meet the same qualifications as formal members. They may teach and serve in the church, but they may not vote.

4. Homebound Members

Members unable to attend regular services and meetings due to age or health-related concerns may be moved to the homebound list. Members on the homebound membership list shall have all the rights and responsibilities of regular members but are exempted from regular attendance. Homebound members shall be ministered to by an elder or designee and shall be allowed to vote and affirm in person or by absentee ballot.

5. Inactive Members

Inactive members will not be permitted the privilege of voting at any meeting. Restoration to regular membership shall be reviewed by the elders upon request of the inactive member and affirmed by a vote of the church. After six months of inactivity the elders will review the circumstances and may recommend removal to the congregation. If the members affirm the removal the individual will be notified in writing by the church clerk.

ARTICLE V – CHURCH LEADERSHIP

This church acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as its only head and accepts Scripture as its supreme and only guide in all matters of faith, order, and discipline. Under that authority, the government of this church is vested only in the body of believers who compose its membership.

Within the guidelines and limitations defined by this document, the members assign authority and administrative functions to the elders as its board of directors.

Section A. Elders

Elders are charged with teaching, shepherding and leading the church; it is the elders who are accountable to God on behalf of the Church (1 Peter 5:1-4) Each elder must be an active male member of this church. He shall be in accord with and submit to this constitution.

1. Qualifications

- a. Aspires to the office of overseer; exercising oversight voluntarily and eagerly, according to the will of God (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2)
- b. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7)
- c. Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)
- d. Temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2)
- e. Sober-minded, prudent (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- f. Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- g. Given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- h. Able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)
- i. Not given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- j. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)
- k. Not a brawler; not contentious; not soon angry, quick-tempered or violent. (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- l. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy for dishonest profit (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:6)
- m. Rules well his own house; his children are faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:7)
- n. Not a novice; not a new convert (1 Timothy 3:6)
- o. Has a good report or reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7)
- p. Not self-willed (Titus 1:7)
- q. Loves what is good (Titus 1:8)
- r. Just, fair (Titus 1:8)
- s. Holy, devout (Titus 1:8)
- t. Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)

2. Selection and Authority

Elders are called by God, appointed by the elders, and affirmed by the membership for the work of oversight in the local church.

The elders shall identify men with a desire to serve as elders and will examine their qualifications. If the elders determine it necessary to identify a man from outside the church membership to fill a specific ministry need in the church, an appropriate examination by the elders must be done to select the right man. Potential elders shall subject themselves to examination by the elders, abide by any recommendations, and upon affirmation faithfully execute their responsibility before God. The period of the examination shall be determined by the elders and shall include input from the congregation and intentional discipleship in different areas of Christian life and ministry. (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2, Acts 20:28, Acts 14:23)

If the candidate demonstrates biblical qualifications, he will be appointed by the elders to the task of eldership. The man will then be affirmed publically by the membership and the laying on of hands. (1 Timothy 5:22, 1 Timothy 4:14)

The number of elders will be the number of male members who meet all of the qualifications. In the event that fewer than three men are qualified and willing to serve as an elder, a primary goal of this church shall be to secure a second and third elder.

Elders may serve as long as they desire to serve as an elder, continue to meet the qualifications of an elder, and continue to function as an elder according to the Word of God. Each year, the elders will evaluate their life and ministry and be given the opportunity to remove themselves from serving as elders.

3. Responsibilities

Elders, as the spiritual overseers of the flock, are to determine church policy (Acts 15:22); oversee the church (Acts 20:28); appoint other elders (1 Timothy 4:14); lead, teach, and preach (1 Timothy 5:17); exhort and refute (Titus 1:9); and act as shepherds, setting an example for all (1 Peter 5:1-3). They are to devote themselves first of all to prayer and to the ministry of the Word, and select deacons to handle the daily operational matters of the church (Acts 6:3-4). The elders will be responsible to:

- a. Uphold the truth of the Scriptures; teach, preach, exhort and refute as necessary (Titus 1:9)
- b. Identify, equip, organize, and appoint the members for their best possible service to the Body of Christ (Acts 6:3-4, Acts 15:22)
- c. Develop procedures to establish order in the church's activities that will fulfill its purpose and vision (1 Peter 5:1-2)
- d. Provide for the regular administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- e. Regularly provide the opportunity for the members to bring forward potential items of business. Suggestions will be reviewed by the elders before being added to a meeting agenda.
- f. Serve as the church's board of directors, exercising trusteeship over the physical and financial assets of the church and represent the interests of the church before civil and governmental authorities.

- g. Execute instruments
- h. Create the annual budget and present it annually to the members for affirmation by vote.
- i. Serve as ex-officio members of all church committees as needed.
- j. Exercise direct supervisory oversight and responsibility for all paid staff.
- k. Meet regularly for prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17)
- l. Oversee the administrative affairs of the church with the exception of those items listed in Article VI, Section C that require the inclusion of all members (Corporate Responsibility of Members)

4. Accountability

As undershepherds of the church, the elders are accountable to:

- a. God (1 Peter 5:1-4)
- b. Scripture (Titus 1:9)
- c. Other elders (Matthew 18:15-18, Galatians 6:1)
- d. The members of the church (1 Timothy 5:19-21; Matthew 18:15-18)

5. Types.

The three biblical terms of Elder (*presbuteros*) Bishop (*episcopos*) and Pastor (*poimein*) refer to different functions within the same office. These elders may be compensated or volunteer.

a. Compensated Elder(s)

In order to allow further devotion to ministry in the church, a compensation package may be presented to current and prospective elders. Responsibilities will be designated in a job summary written by the elders. The compensation package and responsibilities shall be presented to the church for a vote at a specially called church business meeting, and shall be reviewed annually as a component of the church budget (Article IV, Section C). All compensation packages will cease when an elder is removed from office. (1 Timothy 5:18)

b. Volunteer Elder(s)

Are equal in responsibility and accountability to compensated elders but serve without pay. Lay elders are held to the same standard of conduct and exercise the same authority.

10. Removal

An Elder may serve as long as he meets the above qualifications and continues to lead well.

1. Accusations against an individual elder must be substantiated by two or three witnesses to the other elders in order to be considered (1 Timothy 5:19) in accordance with the process of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-18).
2. Elders may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the elders if he is found to be spiritually unqualified according to the scriptural qualifications listed in this document. The elders shall inform the membership at a regular or special business meeting (1 Timothy 5:20).
3. Elders may also be removed by resignation, death, physical or mental incapacity.

An Elder will be encouraged to take sabbaticals from serving as he feels the need or at the recommendation of the other Elders. A sabbatical shall be for a defined period of time and is not a means of removal. Elders who elect to take a sabbatical shall return to service as an elder at the discretion of the Elders. Guidelines for sabbaticals of a compensated Elder will be written in his compensation package in accordance with the sabbatical policy.

Section B. Deacons

Deacons are called to specific tasks within the church. Their role is of service, sacrifice, and commitment to the needs of others including encouragement ministries and serving the physical needs of members.

1. Membership Qualifications
 - a. Deacons must be members of Meridian First Baptist Church for no less than 1 year.
2. Character Qualifications
 - a. Known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3)
 - b. Aspires to the office of deacon (1 Timothy 3:1, 8)
 - c. Worthy of respect (1 Timothy 3:8)
 - d. Sincere; not double-tongued; not a malicious gossip (1 Timothy 3:8)
 - e. Temperate; (1 Timothy 3:8)
 - f. Not pursuing dishonest gain (1 Timothy 3:8)
 - g. Keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience (1 Timothy 3:9)
 - h. Tested, then appointed to serve. (1 Timothy 3:10)
3. Familial Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:12)
 - a. Deacons must be adult men.
 - b. Husband of one wife; a one-woman man.
 - c. His children and household must be well managed

4. Deacon's Wife's Character. A deacon's wife must exhibit specific character qualities as well. A wife's character may disqualify a man from recognition as a deacon.
 - a. His wife must be (1 Timothy 3:11)
 - i. Dignified
 - ii. Not slanderous
 - iii. Temperate
 - iv. Faithful in all things
5. Selection
Deacons are called by God, nominated by the members, reviewed by the elders, and affirmed by the members. (Acts 6)
6. Duties
Deacons are servants. Deacons support the ministry of the church and the members under the authority of the elders toward unity (Acts 6:5), caring for the needy through encouragement and caring for physical needs, (Acts 6:2-3) and commitment to the needs of others.
7. Accountability
The deacons, under the headship of Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the authority of the scripture are accountable to:
The elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:7, 17)
The members (Matthew 18:15-18, Galatians 6:1)
8. Removal
As long as the deacon remains a member of the church and both he and his wife and his children meet the qualifications he may retain the office and title of deacon. A deacon may be disqualified from recognized service by the conduct of his wife or his children. If accusations are made against a deacon, his wife or his children, the elders shall investigate and determine appropriate measures.

Deacons may request a sabbatical as personal needs warrant.

Section D. Other Church Roles

1. Clerk – (Recommended by the elders, affirmed by the members)

It shall be the duty of the Clerk to keep an accurate record of all business meetings of the church and a complete alphabetical and chronological record of the date and manner of admission and dismissal of members of both the active and inactive roles. The Clerk

shall conduct the official correspondence of the church regarding business meetings and membership as directed by the church.

2. Treasurer – (Recommended by the elders, affirmed by the members)

The Treasurer shall at all times be guided by the principle to safeguard the Church's financial assets. The Treasurer shall make disbursements of monies. Church funds shall be held in designated accounts at an FDIC or equivalent United States Financial Institution. The Treasurer maintains the accounting records for the Church and shall promote accuracy, efficiency, and consistency in the accounting and business operations of the Church. These records shall include an accurate accounting of funds deposited into and payments made against Church bank accounts. The Treasurer shall report the financial activity and position of Church funds to the elders at regular intervals and to the full church membership at least twice per fiscal year. To enhance separation of duties, the Treasurer will not approve bills. A designated member of the Finance committee may substitute for the Treasurer in their absence.

3. Financial Secretary – (Recommended by the elders, affirmed by the members)

The Financial Secretary shall at all times be guided by the principle to safeguard the Church's financial assets. The Financial Secretary shall count all monies received, prepare the weekly deposit, and maintain records of contributions. The Financial Secretary shall maintain records of all Income, and report this information to the full church membership at least twice per fiscal year. A member of the Finance Committee, other than the Treasurer, may substitute for the Financial Secretary in their absence.

4. Additional roles

Additional roles for specific church needs may be allowed upon recommendation of the elders, and with affirmation by vote at any regular or special business meeting called for that purpose. This individual may be removed by the recommendation of the elders.

Section E. Committees

Committees may be established or abolished by the elders for specific or ongoing purposes. These committees will be made up of members of the church and will perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and powers specifically delegated by the elders. The general functions of these committees will be to bring considered recommendations to the elders concerning ministries and to provide a wider base of counsel to the elders in specific ministries.

Section F. Vacancies

All roles, ministry and committee positions shall become vacant by the resignation of the occupant, removal from the active church membership roll, disqualification from membership of this church, or death. Should an individual fail to meet the obligations and responsibilities of their position they may be removed by the elders. Vacancies may be filled by appointment of the elders.

ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS

Section A. For Worship

Meetings shall be held regularly for public worship on Sunday. Meetings shall also be held regularly for prayer, praise, and/or Bible study during the week. The Church may, by official action, arrange the date, place and time of any meeting. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall ordinarily be observed at least monthly. Special meetings for the purpose of promoting evangelism, Bible study, missionary work, baptism, etc. may be held upon the recommendations of the elders.

Section B. For Business

The semi-annual business meeting shall take place prior to the end of January and prior to the end of July. Special meetings for the transaction of business may be called by the Elders, provided notice has been given to the church. Special meetings to address the corporate responsibilities of the membership may be called by any member at any regular business meeting.

Section C. Policy and Procedure

1. The elders shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining policy and procedures. Operational policies and procedures shall not be in conflict with any element of the constitution.
2. In keeping with the spirit of I Corinthians 14:40, Robert's Rules of Order are hereby adopted as a general guide for our business meetings.
3. All votes shall be by voice or by written ballot.
4. Absentee ballots may be accepted from qualified members provided:

- a. The ballot is placed inside a sealed envelope with the date cast and the member's printed name and signature on the outside of the envelope.
- b. Ballots are turned into the church office prior to the election and are given to the business meeting moderator prior to voting. The moderator shall read aloud the name of those casting absentee ballots to determine if the voter is 18 or older and an active member of Meridian First Baptist Church, and thereby a qualified voter. Once the voters are qualified the moderator shall remove the ballots from the envelopes and turn them over to the designated counters.
- c. If more than one ballot is required the absentee ballot shall be counted only with the first ballots cast.

Section D. Quorum

To transact business at a regular or special business meeting a quorum of twenty percent (20%) of the eligible members is required.

ARTICLE VII – FINANCIAL YEAR

The financial year of this church shall close with the last day of March, and full financial reports shall be made at the annual meeting. The method of raising money shall be by faith through free-will offerings.

ARTICLE VIII – ADOPTION AND CHANGE

Section A. Approval and Amendments

This constitution may be repealed or amended at the annual or any other meeting of the church called for that purpose. This action requires a two-week prior notice, and also requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the members present. Any proposed amendment or change must be in writing, and be submitted to the church for notification for three Sundays prior to the meeting at which it is to be considered.

Section B. Dissolution

In the case of dissolution of Meridian First Baptist Church, all assets, after paying all debts, shall go to other like-minded, non-profit, christian ministries.

This Constitution shall supersede all previous legal documents and shall now constitute the legal documents of Meridian First Baptist Church, Meridian, Idaho, adopted on this date, January, 26th, 2020 and shall be in effect beginning March 1, 2020.