

First Baptist Church
Oxford, Michigan
Church Constitution—Articles of Faith
Adopted: October 18, 2015

ARTICLE III: ARTICLES OF FAITH

Section 1. The Scriptures

We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, as originally written; that it was verbally and plenary inspired by God; that it is the product of Spirit-controlled men; and, therefore, is infallible and inerrant in all matters of which it speaks. We believe that God has preserved the Bible, though no originally written manuscripts exist today. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian unity and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed and opinions shall be tried. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Section 2. The True God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, the Maker and supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth, in whom all things have worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that God exists wholly and indivisibly, simultaneously and eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption; and that these three persons exist in one divine essence, identical in nature, having the same attributes and perfections, equal in power and glory, worthy of all honor, worship and adoration. Exodus 20:2, 3; Matt 28:19; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Revelation 4:11.

Section 3. God the Father

God is the infinite and perfect Spirit in whom all things have their source, support, and end. God has made general information about Himself known to all men through creation and conscience. This general revelation tells men that they are dependent on God; they are responsible to Him; and that they need acceptance by God. Since the existence of God is a matter of general revelation, God's special revelation in the Bible makes no attempt at proof. Rom. 1:20; 2:14-15; Acts 17:25-28; Rom. 1:32.

God is a person. His personality is seen in His possession of intelligence, will, emotion, self-consciousness, etc. The attributes of God may be divided into two categories: Greatness, qualities which finite human beings may not possess; and Goodness, qualities that believers may in increasing measure possess and practice in a finite capacity. The attributes of God's greatness include: self-existence, infinity, perfection, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, and incomprehensibility. The attributes of God's goodness include: holiness, truth, love, righteousness, faithfulness, mercy, and grace. Acts 15:18; John 6:38-39; 3:16; Ex. 3:14; Gen. 21:33; 1 Kings 8:27; Matt. 5:48; 19:26; Psa. 139:1-4, 7-12; Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:33; Lev. 11:44-45; Psa. 99:4-9; 31:5; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 4:8; Deut. 32:4; Psa. 145:17; 36:5; 2 Cor. 1:3, Eph. 2:4; Eph. 1:7, 1 Peter 5:10.

God is the Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things. God has planned all things according to His own will and for His good pleasure and glory. God created the universe in six normal twenty-four hour days. Although God has ceased from creation, His work of preservation continues. Eph. 1:11; Psa. 115:3; Psa. 135:6; Isa. 48:11; Gen. 1; Ex. 20:11; Gen. 2:2; Col. 1:17.

Section 4. Jesus Christ

A. Nature and Work. Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Triune God. He is coequal and coeternal with the Father. His preexistence is seen in that He was the agent of creation and was manifested in the Old Testament as the Angel of Yahweh. Via the miracle of the virgin birth, God the Son, without ceasing to be God, became man. The Incarnation resulted in one Person having two natures: He is fully human and fully divine. In adding humanity to His divinity at the Incarnation, Christ voluntarily gave up the independent use of His divine attributes and prerogatives. Man's redemption required the perfect life and death of Christ. Because He is God, He is incapable of sin. Therefore, His work in both life and death was effectual. In life, He perfectly kept God's law. In death, He paid the penalty for sin demanded by God's law. The infinite worth of the work of Christ, though *sufficient* for all men, is *efficient* only for the elect. Christ rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which he lived and died, ascended visibly into Heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of the Father as the Head of the Church and as our great High Priest. John 10:30; 6:38; 8:58; 1:3; Col. 1:16; Gen. 16:10-13; Ex. 3:24; Zech. 1:12-13; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:20-23; Luke 1:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:5; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 5:8-9; Heb. 2:17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15, 13:8; Gal. 4:4; 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 4:10; Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:11; Col. 1:18; Heb. 7:25.

B. Virgin Birth. We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God, the Son. Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 1:14.

C. Resurrection and Ascension. We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and in His ascension into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest interceding for us. Matthew 28:6, 7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; 1 Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6, 51; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 8:6; 12:2; 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 2:17; 5:9, 10.

Section 5. Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, the third person of the Trinity, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the Agent in the new birth; and that He seals, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer. We believe that the sign/revelatory gifts of the Holy Spirit (e.g. tongues, healing) have fulfilled their purpose and are not applicable to the work of the Holy Spirit today. John 14:16, 17; Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Genesis 1:1-3; John 16:8-11; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5, 6; Ephesians 1:13, 14; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Luke 24:49; Romans 8:14, 16, 26, 27; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; 13:8-10; 14:1-40; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:24.

Section 6. Angelic Beings

A. Holy Angels are spirit beings possessing the characteristics of personality. They were directly created in the opening moments of creation as holy beings, and have been assigned various tasks in fulfilling God's purposes upon the earth. Heb. 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2; Luke 15:10; Job 38:7; Isa. 6:3; cf. Job 38:7 and Gen. 1:1; Gen. 1:31.

B. The Devil, or Satan We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, the Devil; and that he was created by God as an angel but through pride and rebellion became the enemy of his Creator; that he became the unholy god of

this age and the ruler of all the powers of darkness and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire. Matthew 4:1-11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:10.

Section 7. The Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in innocence, in the image and likeness of God, under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression Adam fell from his sinless and happy state, and all men sinned in him, in consequence of which all men are totally depraved, partakers of Adam's fallen nature, and sinners by nature and by conduct, and in the case of those who reach moral responsibility become sinners in thought, word and deed, under just condemnation without defense or excuse. Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; 5:12, 19; 1:18, 32.

Section 8. Salvation

A. Work of God. We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by the appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His personal obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ the Lord bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. The way of salvation was planned by the Father from eternity past, accomplished by the Son who came in the fullness of time, and is applied by the Spirit in the life of each person who is called and believes in the Savior. We believe that salvation is received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-8.

B. Faith. We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith. Jonah 2:9; Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24, 25; John 3:16; Matthew 18:11; Philippians 2:7, 8; Hebrews 2:14-17; Isaiah 53:4-7; 1 John 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24.

C. Regeneration. We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about by our sovereign God in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life. John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:1; Acts 16:20-33; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13; John 3:8.

D. Justification. We believe that justification is that judicial act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous upon the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any work of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's shed blood. Romans 3:24; 4:5; 5:1,9; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9.

E. Sanctification. We believe that sanctification is the divine setting apart of the believer unto God accomplished in a threefold manner; first, an eternal act of God, based upon redemption in Christ, establishing the believer in a position of holiness at the moment he trusts the Savior; second, a continuing process in the saint as the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to the life; third, the final accomplishment of this process at the Lord's return. Hebrews 10:10-14; 3:1; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4; 5:23, 24; 1 John 3:2; Jude 24, 25; Revelation 22:11.

F. Eternal Security. We believe that all who are born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6; John 10:28, 29; Romans 8:35-39; Jude 1.

Section 9. The Church

A. Local Church. We believe that a local church is an organized congregation of immersed (baptized) believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We believe the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have

opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is Scriptural for like-minded churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; that on all matters of membership, polity, government, discipline, and benevolence, the will of the local church is final. 1 Corinthians 11:2; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Acts 2:41, 42.

B. Body of Christ. We believe in the unity of all New Testament believers in the Church which is the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 3:1-6; 4:11; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; Acts 15:13-18.

C. Baptism. We believe that Christian baptism is the single immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our identification with the crucified, buried and risen Savior, through Whom we died to sin and rose to new life; that baptism is to be performed under the authority of the local church; and that it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership.

D. Lord's Supper. We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He come, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. We believe that the Biblical order of the ordinances is baptism first and then the Lord's Supper, and that participants in the Lord's Supper must be immersed (baptized) believers. Acts 8:36, 38, 39; John 3:23; Romans 6:3-5; Matthew 3:16; Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42.

Section 10. End Times

A. Israel. We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God's eternal covenant people, that she is now dispersed because of her disobedience and rejection of Christ, and that she is being re-gathered in the Holy Land and, after the completion of the Church, will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ. Genesis 13:14-17; Romans 11:1-32; Ezekiel 37.

B. Rapture & Revelation. We believe in the pre-millennial, pre-tribulational return of Christ, an event which can occur at any moment, and that at that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all shall be

caught up to meet the Lord in the air before the seven years of the Tribulation. We believe that the Tribulation, which follows the Rapture of the Church, will be culminated by the revelation of Christ in power and great glory to sit upon the throne of David and to establish the millennial kingdom. After the millennium the Lord will establish the eternal state and usher in the new heaven and the new earth, in which the saved of all times will dwell eternally with God. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-54; Philippians 3:20, 21; Revelation 3:10. Daniel 9:25-27; Matthew 24:29-31; Luke 1:30-33; Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-9; Acts 2:29, 30; Revelation 20:1-4, 6; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1-22:5.

C. The Righteous and the Wicked We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that only those who are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting conscious blessedness of the saved in the presence of the Lord and the conscious suffering of the lost, first in Sheol/Hades and then eternally in the Lake of Fire. Malachi 3:18; Genesis 18:23; Romans 6:17, 18; 1 John 5:19; Romans 7:6; 6:23; Proverbs 14:32; Luke 16:25; Matthew 25:34-41; John 8:21; Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 20:11-15.

Section 11. Separation

We believe, in obedience to the biblical commands, that believers and churches must separate from those who deny essential doctrines of the faith; that believers and churches must separate from those who compromise the faith by granting Christian recognition and fellowship to those who have denied essential doctrines of the faith; and that believers and churches must strive to reflect God's holiness and Christlikeness, living differently than those who have not experienced the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Jude 3; 2 John 9-11; Rom 16:17; Rom 16:17; Phil 3:17-19; cf. 2 Thess 3:6-15; 1 Pet 1:15-16; Eph 4:17-19.

Section 12. Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for and conscientiously honored. They are to be obeyed in all things, except in those things contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture and opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming

King of kings. 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Romans 13:1-7; 2 Sam. 23:3; Exodus 18:21, 22; Acts 23:5; Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; Daniel 3:17-18.

Section 13. Creation, Life and Marriage

A. Creation. We believe the Biblical account of the creation of the physical universe, angels, and man; that this account is neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of the direct, immediate creative acts of God without any evolutionary process; that man was created by a direct work of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all men are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race. We believe that all of the material universe and all living things on the earth were created in six, 24-hour days. Genesis 1; 2; Colossians 1:16, 17; John 1:3.

B. Human Life. We believe human life begins at conception and the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustifiable, inexcusable taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well-being of the mother are acceptable. Psalm 51:5; 139:14-16; Isaiah 44:24; 49:1,5; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:44.

C. Sexual Purity. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; I Corinthians 5:1; 6:9-20; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4.

D. Marriage. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. Therefore, this church shall not endorse, the facilities shall not be used for, and no officer (pastor or deacon) shall participate in or officiate over any ceremony that is not consistent with that definition of marriage. Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; I Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23, 25.

E. Gender Roles. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to

be the loving, unselfish leader of the home. Men are to be the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the local church. Women are to honor and serve God through their unique gifts, experiences, and perspectives. A married woman is to be a “suitable helper” to her husband. A wife is to honor her husband and submit to his proper leadership in the home and church. If God blesses the marriage union with children, then the mother has opportunity to profoundly influence their lives for the glory of God. Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18; I Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-15; Titus 1:5-9.

Section 14. Positions of FBCO Concerning Various Contemporary Issues

A. Questionable Practices, Entertainment Choices, and Substance Abuse.

Every believer should refrain from any practice that would dishonor the Lord, undermine his/her spiritual growth, create a stumbling block for other believers, damage his/her reputation before unbelievers, or hinder his/her witness to unbelievers. See Rom 14-15; 1 Cor 6:12; 8:9; 10:23; Phil 2:14-15; Col 4:5-6; 1 Thes 4:10; 1 Tim 3:7; Titus 2:9-10

A believer must carefully guard his/her heart and mind by making wise, principled decisions regarding entertainment choices. That includes the use of music, reading material, television or movies, in whatever location or format. See 1 Cor 6:19-20; Eph 4:1; 5:10; Phil 4:8-9; Col 1:9-14.

A believer should also refrain from partaking of any substance (naturally occurring, modified, or synthetically produced) that would be injurious to the mind or body, or in any way inhibit or alter one’s conscious ethical response to circumstances and relationships in life, except under the explicit oversight of a physician. That would include the use of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, and the misuse of prescription medication. See Rom 12:1-2; 13:12-14; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Eph 5:11, 18; Phil 4:8-9; cf. also 1 Cor 5:9-11; 6:10; Gal 5:19-21.

B. Christian Giving.

New Testament teaching is very clear on the principles of giving. This stewardship responsibility and worship opportunity should be generous, sacrificial, voluntary, cheerful, and systematic. Funds received by the church are to be used for (1) ministry to believers in need; (2) support for the elders of the church; (3) sustaining the various ministries of the church; and (4) supporting others who minister elsewhere on behalf of the church. See Mark 12:41-44; 26:7; Luke 6:38; 21:1-4; Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37; 11:19-30; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; II Corinthians 8:1-6; 9:6-7; Galatians 6:6-10;

Philippians 4:10-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9; 1 Timothy 5:9-16, 17-18; Hebrews 13:16-17.

C. Women's Role in Church Leadership. Men and women are created equal in the image of God, but maintain complementary differences in role and function. In the church, some roles are to be held only by men (e.g. elder/bishop/pastor and deacon). This is because of the exercise of authority in the teaching role and/or decision making responsibility. The Bible teaches that women should minister in a way that does not undermine the principle of spiritual leadership by men in the home and church. Women all have valuable spiritual gifts which they are to exercise in the worship and ministry of the local church. See 1 Cor 11:1-6; 14:33-36; Eph 5:23; 1 Tim 2:12; cf. 1 Tim 3:2, 4-5, 11-12; Titus 1:6.

D. Bible Translations. We hold that inspiration is a direct miracle of God by which human authors and human languages were employed by God to give human beings His revelation in written form. We believe that God has providentially preserved His word in the many manuscripts, fragments, versions, translations, and copies of the Scriptures that are available, and that by diligent study, comparison, and correlation, the original text (words) can be ascertained. Any translation that is faithful to the inspired original autographs can be held up as the Word of God. We acknowledge the right of all Christians to study the manuscript evidence regarding the text of Scripture, as well as the merits of various approaches to translation theory, and to come to a preference for a text type or translation. We hold that the Word of God is not to be found exclusively in one English translation or any one translation in any other language. See 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21.

We believe that the King James Version, first translated in 1611, and revised several times over the years, is God's Word. It is the Bible translation used in our church for public preaching and teaching. It has been used widely by believers for hundreds of years with great spiritual profit, and has had a profound influence upon culture and literature across the English-speaking world. Though acknowledging the many changes to word meaning and literary style since the time of its writing, the King James Version of the Bible should be treated with spiritual reverence and literary respect.