

1 **The Constitution**
2 **of**
3 **Jefferson Park Baptist Church**

4 **We have been led** by the Spirit of the One God Almighty to receive His son Jesus as our
5 personal Savior and Lord. We have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the
6 Holy Spirit. Therefore, to secure and preserve our faith and liberties, and to conduct ourselves in an
7 orderly manner consistent with God’s will and our heritage as baptized believers, we solemnly and
8 joyfully unite in Christ as **Jefferson Park Baptist Church** of Charlottesville, Virginia, in
9 accordance with the following articles.

10 **Article I. Beliefs**

11 Foremost, we accept the Holy Bible as authoritative and sufficient in matters of faith, word, and
12 deed. Basic Baptist beliefs are summarized in *The Baptist Faith and Message* adopted by the Southern
13 Baptist Convention.

14 **Article II. Purpose**

15 The purpose of Jefferson Park Baptist Church is—

16 To do the will of God the Father Almighty.

17 To act as the church, the body of Jesus Christ, part of a people called out from the world,
18 citizens of the kingdom of God, witnesses to the works of His Holy Spirit, and servants
19 at His command.

20 To fulfill the great commission given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, to “go and make disciples
21 of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
22 Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”
23

24 In addition to these statements of general purpose, the church may from time to time adopt
25 more specific declarations of purpose which shall be equally binding upon the Members.

26 **Article III. Covenant**

27 We have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, and we now live for His purposes. We
28 therefore dedicate ourselves to do God’s will in humility and purity, to walk in the Spirit, to live
29 together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of ourselves and others in faith, in knowledge,
30 in wisdom, in holiness, and in service, and to support the work of the church in our worship, prayer,
31 discipleship, teaching, giving, doctrine, and ordinances.

32 We will worship God together regularly.

33 We will prayerfully and regularly study the Holy Bible both privately and together to discern
34 the will of God for ourselves and for His church and to learn the eternal principles which undergird our
35 life on Earth.

36 We will pray to God both privately and together, giving Him thanks for all His gifts, seeking
37 His forgiveness and guidance, and bringing to Him our concerns and requests.

38 We will live as disciples of Jesus Christ—redeemed sinners in a sinful world. We will be
39 loving, just, and truthful at home, at work, at school, and wherever we go. We will not conform to this

40 world's self-seeking, self-deceiving ways, but we will instead seek the straight and difficult path
 41 spoken of by our Lord, bearing faithful witness to God's unfailing love.

42 We will be good stewards of our bodies, because they are temples of the Holy Spirit; we will
 43 not abuse ourselves through addiction or excess.

44 As members of the family of God, we will watch over each other in brotherly love. We will
 45 pray for each other, because we are all in need. We will aid each other in times of trouble, bearing each
 46 others' burdens. We will humbly warn a brother who is in danger of falling into disobedience or error.
 47 We will speak the truth in love, be slow to take offense, and be eager to seek swift and lasting
 48 reconciliation.

49 We will pray for the salvation of our unsaved relatives, friends, and acquaintances, and of all
 50 who are lost.

51 We will raise our children so that they will know how to live righteously and will be able to
 52 recognize God when He makes Himself known to them personally.

53 We know that we do not stand alone and that cooperation and mutual effort are necessary
 54 among Christians. We will therefore support the church of Jesus Christ throughout the world in
 55 whatever ways God leads us.

56 If we leave this church, we will immediately seek to join another with similar purposes and
 57 covenants.

58 **Article IV. Members**

59 **Section 1. The Meaning of Membership.** Membership in the church does nothing to ensure a
 60 person's salvation or sanctification; such matters are left to the judgment and power of God Himself.
 61 Membership in the church signifies a Christian believer's willingness to unite in the fellowship and
 62 work of this body. Joining the church is an act that should both affirm and assist the work of God in the
 63 individual. Members should both benefit from the ministry of the church and bestow similar blessings
 64 on others as part of the ministry of the church.

65
 66 **Section 2. Responsibilities and Privileges.** A Member of the church, except where specifically noted
 67 otherwise,—

68 Shall work to fulfill the church's Purpose.

69 Shall abide by the church's Covenant.

70 May exercise all the rights and privileges specified in this Constitution and others as enacted by
 71 the church.

72
 73 **Section 3. Candidacy.** Any person confessing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior may present
 74 themselves as a candidate for church membership in one of the following ways:

75 **By baptism**, following Jesus in baptism by immersion.

76 **By statement or by letter**, declaring prior conversion to Christ and baptism by immersion.

77 **Under Watchcare**, desiring affiliation with the church short of being a full Member.

78
 79 **Section 4. Acceptance of Candidates.** The church shall establish a process for receiving new
 80 Members into the church.

81 The Deacons shall evaluate a candidate's eligibility for membership and bring a
 82 recommendation before the church in Conference. Only the Deacons may bring recommendations for
 83 membership in the church, and only the Members voting in Conference may grant membership to a
 84 candidate.

85

86 **Section 5. Status.** Each voting Member shall be categorized as Resident or Non-resident. The specific
87 criteria for a given status shall be determined by the church. The Deacons shall review the status of
88 Members annually.
89

90 **Section 6. Inactive Members.** If a member, not otherwise providentially hindered from participation
91 (for example: by illness), should cease involvement in the meetings of the church, most importantly in
92 worship on the Lord's Day, this is a matter of utmost concern to the church family. Attempts will be
93 made by the members to reach out to this person, to inquire as to his spiritual state, and to invite him
94 back into the fellowship. If these efforts fail, and the person has not been involved in the meetings of
95 the church for a period of six months, then the Deacons shall transfer that person from active
96 membership to a membership concern list. This action shall be reported to the church in conference.
97 Those on the membership concern list will no longer be considered active members and will not be
98 granted the privileges of active membership. They may not vote in church conferences or hold church
99 offices. The church shall, however, continue to pray for and encourage those on the concern list to
100 become involved again in this fellowship or another Christian congregation. If the inactive member
101 should return to active participation, then the Deacons will, with joy, recommend to the church in
102 conference reinstatement to active membership.
103

104 **Section 7. Discipline.** If a Member enters into trouble, the first goal of the church shall be redemption
105 and reconciliation rather than punishment. The Ministry Leaders and the Deacons shall be available for
106 guidance in difficult or controversial circumstances. In sharp disputes, the Deacons shall ensure that
107 those involved attempt to solve their problems in accordance with Jesus' instructions in Matthew
108 18:15–20.

109 If a Member has seriously or persistently abused privileges or has become a liability to the
110 church, the Deacons shall arrange the process of church discipline. All such proceedings must be
111 pervaded by a spirit of Christ-like humility, fairness, self-control, and forbearance.
112

113 **Section 8. Removal.** Except in the case of the death of a Member, only the church voting in
114 Conference may revoke a person's membership in the church. A person removed from membership
115 surrenders immediately all status and privileges of membership. A Member's removal from the church
116 can be brought before a Conference in the following ways:

117 **Request for Removal.** The Member requests to be removed from the church rolls.

118 **Request for Transfer.** The Member requests that the church grant a letter of transfer or a
119 certificate of good standing for full membership in another church.

120 **Discipline.** The Deacons recommend that the church expel the Member—the most extreme
121 disciplinary action. A two-thirds majority is required for such a removal.
122

123 **Section 9. Watchcare.** Members in good standing of other Christian churches may request
124 "Watchcare" membership. A Watchcare Member—

125 May join the debate in church Conferences, but is not counted for purposes of a quorum, may
126 not vote, may not make or second any motion or nomination, and may not participate in Executive
127 Session.

128 May not be nominated for or serve as a Deacon, an Officer, or a messenger or representative of
129 the church to organizations outside of the church.

130 May otherwise participate in all activities of the church unless specifically prohibited by this
131 Constitution or by some other official action of the church.

Article V. Government

Section 1. Character. This church is subject to God alone and not to any other person, power, or organization. The government of this church resides in the Members. The will of the church shall be determined by eligible Members voting in Conference. The work of the church shall be done by the Members, led and supported by the Deacons, Ministry Leaders, Officers, Committees, and others, as described in this Constitution and as otherwise enacted by the church.

Section 2. Newsletter. The church shall publish and distribute to Members (and to others as deemed appropriate) an official Newsletter which shall report official notices, the business of the church, and other appropriate items of importance or interest. The Ministry Leaders, led by the Pastor, shall serve as editors of the Newsletter.

Section 3. Record of Enactments. The church shall publish and keep current a Record of the bylaws, standing rules, policies, and procedures enacted in Conference. A public copy of the Record shall be kept in a convenient place.

Section 4. Budget. The church shall adopt an annual Budget to govern its expenditures during each calendar year. The proposed Budget shall be presented for discussion at a Conference in October and shall be presented for adoption at a Special Conference during regular worship on the first Sunday in November.

Section 5. Conferences. The church shall hold Conferences for the purpose of conducting official business, enacting policies and procedures, electing Members to positions of service, establishing matters of record, hearing reports and announcements, and otherwise maintaining the general welfare of the body.

Regular Conferences. Church Conferences shall be held regularly at a duly established time and place. The time, place, and agenda of a regular Conference need not be published unless there is a change in the time or place or there will be business of an unusual or specific nature. The time or place of the regular Conference may be changed by a majority vote at a Conference.

Business of an Unusual or Specific Nature. The Moderator, the Pastor, or the Deacons may designate "business of an unusual or specific nature" if such is not already stipulated by this Constitution or other act of the church. If a Conference involves business of an unusual or specific nature, then the particulars must be both published in the Newsletter and announced at regular Sunday worship services in the two weeks immediately preceding the Conference.

Special Conferences. The Moderator, the Pastor, the Deacons, or the church in Conference can call Special Conferences at need. The time, place, and agenda of a Special Conference is business of an unusual or specific nature. No other business than that on the published agenda may be discussed or acted upon at a Special Conference. Special Conferences that are held during regular Sunday worship are for determining the will of the church on questions already discussed; no discussion or amendment may take place at Special Conferences during regular Sunday worship.

Quorum. The presence of thirty-five Resident Members shall constitute a quorum for any Conference unless the Conference involves the calling of a Ministry Leader or disciplinary action against a Member or Ministry Leader, for which one fourth of the Resident Members shall constitute a quorum.

Rules. The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern church Conferences in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and any special rules of order the church may adopt.

318 The church may grant an Organization permission to establish its own budget and receive and
319 spend its own funds independently of the church's budget and funds.

320 All Organizations are accountable to the church, shall be under the church's control, and shall
321 coordinate their activities with the Ministry Leaders.

322 **Sunday School.** The church shall establish, organize, and support a Sunday School for Bible
323 study, evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship. The Sunday School shall have a Director who is an
324 Officer of the church. The structure, schedule, and workers of the Sunday School shall be duly
325 established.

326

Article IX. Officers

327 The church shall elect the following Officers who must, unless specified otherwise, be at least
328 twenty-one years of age and have been Resident Members in good standing for at least two
329 consecutive years at the beginning of their terms. Unless otherwise stated, Officers shall be elected
330 annually to a regular term of one year (or until the election of a successor) and may serve successive
331 terms without limit. The Nominating Committee shall present at least one candidate for each vacant
332 office to serve a regular term or any portion of an uncompleted term. The church may enact other
333 restrictions and responsibilities in addition to those enumerated below.

334

Section 1. Moderators

336 **Moderator.** The Moderator shall preside at Conferences and perform other duties as specified
337 in this Constitution. The Pastor shall be Moderator unless he notifies the church in writing at a
338 Conference that he does not wish to fill this office, in which case the Pastor shall nominate an eligible
339 candidate to serve as Acting Moderator for a specified time, subject to approval by the church in
340 Conference.

341 **Vice Moderator.** The Vice Moderator shall assist the Moderator and perform the regular duties
342 in the absence of the Moderator. The Chairman of Deacons shall be Vice Moderator unless he notifies
343 the church in writing at a Conference that he does not wish to fill this office, in which case the Pastor
344 shall nominate an eligible candidate to serve as Acting Vice Moderator for a specified time, subject to
345 approval by the church in Conference.

346 If there is no Pastor to nominate a replacement, and either of these offices is vacant, then the
347 Nominating Committee shall nominate an eligible Member to serve for a specified time, subject to
348 approval by the church in Conference.

349

Section 2. Trustees

351 **Duties.** Trustees shall hold in trust the title to all church properties and act as legal officers for
352 the church. According to written instructions adopted by the church in Conference and in conformance
353 with applicable law, the Trustees shall have power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any part or
354 all of such properties and sign any legal or notarized documents pertaining to church business.

355 **Number and Term.** There shall be three Trustees, and each shall serve a regular term of three
356 years or until a successor is elected. One regular term shall expire every year.

357 **Nomination and Election.** The Nominating Committee shall present annually to the church
358 three eligible Members as candidates, one of whom shall be elected by the church.

359 **Incapacity.** Should one of the Trustees be unable to perform the duties of office, the remaining
360 two may act on behalf of the church.

361

Section 3. Clerks

362 **Duties.** With the assistance of the Ministry Leaders and Employees, the Clerk shall—

363 Keep a current roll of church Members and their status.
364

365 Attest to an accurate record of each church Conference.

366 Maintain the church's Record of enactments.

367 If necessary, attest to official correspondence with other churches and organizations.

368 **Assistant Clerk.** The church shall elect an Assistant Clerk to share these duties under the
369 supervision of the Clerk.

370

371 **Section 4. Treasurers**

372 **Duties.** With the assistance of the Ministry Leaders and Employees, and in accordance with
373 established procedures, the Treasurer shall—

374 Arrange for the deposit of all money received through all channels.

375 Pay all accounts and debts promptly in compliance with the church's budget, or as
376 directed by the church in Conference, or as duly directed by the Finance
377 Committee.

378 With the assistance of a duly designated Employee or Member, keep an orderly set of
379 books of all financial transactions, clearly describing all receipts and
380 disbursements.

381 Sign all checks.

382 Report the church's financial situation and recent receipts and disbursements at regular
383 Conferences.

384 In the first quarter of each fiscal year, present to the church a financial report of the
385 previous year's financial activity, including total receipts, disbursements
386 itemized against the budget, and the disposition of the church's financial assets
387 and liabilities. The Finance Committee or the church in Conference may
388 authorize additional time to prepare this report.

389 Deliver to the church all related books, records, and accounts upon election of a
390 succeeding Treasurer.

391 **Assistant Treasurer.** The church shall elect an Assistant Treasurer to share these duties under
392 the supervision of the Treasurer.

393 **Restrictions.** The Treasurer shall serve *ex officio* on the Finance Committee, but may not act as
394 Chairman. The Chairman of the Finance Committee may not be elected an Assistant Treasurer.

395

396 **Section 5. Historians**

397 **Duties.** The Historian shall—

398 Supervise the preservation of the church's historical materials.

399 Collect and publish materials on the history of the church as directed by the church or as
400 deemed appropriate by the Historian.

401 Prepare a brief history of the church each year to be presented at a Conference.

402 Nominate Assistant Historians as needed.

403 **Assistant Historians.** The church may elect Assistant Historians to share these duties (except
404 that of nomination of other Assistant Historians) under the supervision of the Historian.

405

Article X. Committees

406 **Section 1. General**

407 **Reason for Being.** Committees are established so that the work of the church may be
408 distributed equitably and so that Members may apply themselves to specific tasks for which they have
409 a calling or talent.

410 **Types.** The church shall elect the Essential Committees named in this Constitution in order to
411 execute its provisions. The church may, by a simple majority vote, establish Standing Committees to

412 continually sponsor, oversee, and support continuous elements of the church's work. The church may
413 elect ad-hoc Committees to serve for limited terms and purposes.

414 **Eligibility, Number, and Terms.** Unless specified otherwise, Committees must consist of at
415 least five Members, each of whom is elected to a regular term of one year (or until a successor is
416 elected) and who may serve up to three consecutive terms on the same Committee.

417 **Leaders.** Each Committee shall have a Chairman who is nominated by the Nominating
418 Committee and elected by the church to serve a regular term of one year (or until a successor is
419 elected). Committees may elect other officers and subcommittees as they see fit.

420 **Purpose and Responsibilities.** Committees shall work in accordance with a written statement
421 of purpose and responsibilities adopted by a simple majority vote in Conference, and they shall make
422 timely reports to the church.

423 **Budgeted Allotments.** A Committee whose responsibilities require the spending of church
424 funds must make recommendations to the Finance Committee regarding the church Budget.
425 Committees who have been allocated funds in the Budget may spend such allocations according to
426 established procedure without further approval of the church as long as the Treasurer who releases
427 such funds concurs that the expenditure is within the Committee's budgeted allotment and verifies that
428 the church has the money to cover the expenditure.

429 **Non-budgeted Expenditures.** A Committee that will bring a motion before a Conference to
430 spend church funds that are not budgeted or that are in excess of a budgeted item must first confer with
431 the Finance Committee regarding the proposed expenditure.

432

433 **Section 2. Essential Committees.**

434 The church shall elect the following Essential Committees which are necessary for the
435 implementation of this Constitution. The Essential Committees shall consist of Members in good
436 standing who must have been Resident for at least one year prior to taking office. At least one member
437 of each Essential Committee shall be an active Deacon. Watchcare Members may not serve on
438 Essential Committees. The church may, by a simple majority vote, enact additional duties, policies,
439 and eligibility requirements regarding Essential Committees.

440 **Nominating Committee.** The Nominating Committee shall find eligible and capable
441 candidates to stand for election to positions of service in all cases where procedures for
442 nominations have not been otherwise established.

443 **Personnel Committee.** The Personnel Committee shall represent the church as an employer
444 and shall make recommendations to the church regarding the qualifications,
445 recruitment, hiring, responsibilities, evaluation, compensation, and dismissal of
446 Ministry Leaders and Employees and the procedures involved in doing so; these duties
447 shall not, however, preclude or override other provisions of this Constitution.

448 **Finance Committee.** The Finance Committee shall—

449 With the approval of the church in Conference, establish and oversee adequate
450 procedures for the receipt, safekeeping, disposition, allocation, and
451 general handling of the church's cash and other financial assets.

452 Maintain the confidentiality of financial records designated as confidential and
453 make full disclosure of all other financial records.

454 Research, compile, and recommend Budgets for the church.

455 Make necessary adjustments to the Budget during the fiscal year.

456 Have authority to authorize individual non-budgeted expenditures of up to
457 \$500.00 without consulting the church in Conference.

458 **Constitution Committee.** The Constitution Committee shall maintain the integrity of this
459 Constitution and shall interpret its provisions.

460 **Article XI. Employees**

461 The church may hire Employees to perform specific jobs. A representative job description and
462 approximate compensation for each vacant position must be accepted by the church in Conference
463 before a search for candidates begins. Unless specifically enacted otherwise, all Employees shall be
464 under the supervision of the Pastor.

465 **Article XII. Amendments**

466 The Constitution Committee may present motions to amend to this Constitution.

467 Any Member in Conference may move to amend this Constitution. The church shall discuss the
468 proposed amendment and vote whether to refer it to the Constitution Committee. If the church votes to
469 refer the proposed amendment to the Constitution Committee, that committee shall, in consultation
470 with the Member who made the motion, refine the proposal for amendment so that it conforms with the
471 rest of this Constitution and maintains, as much as possible, the intent and substance of the original
472 motion. The committee's conformed amendment shall then be returned to the church in Conference for
473 further consideration. If, however, the church does not refer the motion to the Constitution Committee,
474 then the motion to amend is considered defeated.

475 The church is not required to mail proposed amendments to all the Members, but the church
476 shall make copies of proposed amendments available to all Members who attend regular Sunday
477 worship and to other Members on request.

478 A motion to amend this Constitution that is presented or returned by the Constitution
479 Committee is business of a specific or unusual nature. A two-thirds majority of those voting is required
480 for amendment.

481 **Article XIII. Responsibility**

482 The church body shall ensure that the provisions of this Constitution are faithfully carried out.