**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF WATERVILLE**

**(formerly FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH)**

**(Sept. 2020, Revised Oct.2021, Feb.2022, Oct.2022, Oct. 2023)**

**ARTICLE I – NAME**

This Church shall be called the FIRST CHURCH of Waterville, Maine.

**ARTICLE II – OBJECT**

**Section 1 – Covenant**

Abiding in the faith that God has led us to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to profess our communion with him and his church by being baptized, we enter with joy into solemn covenant with him and with each other as one body in Christ.

WE COVENANT by the aid of the Holy Spirit to love one another as Christ has loved us; walking together as followers of Christ, sustaining each other with Christian concern.

WE CONSENT to the discipline of embodying the Spirit of Christ; abstaining from that which is clearly contrary to his teaching, making every relationship a channel of his goodness.

WE COMMIT ourselves to the work of Christ’s church; searching the Scriptures diligently and teaching them faithfully to our children, proclaiming those truths which make inescapable demands upon us and embodying them in the conduct of our lives, seeking through word and witness to lead others to Christ, ministering to those whom Christ would serve, sustaining without fail the worship of God and the ordinances of Christ, acknowledging our time, talent, and resources to be trusts from God and using them to make known his gospel in this place and around the world.

WE JOIN in communion with all who call upon the name of Christ in faith; united with them in witness to His love, yoked with them in dedication to his mission, receptive with them to the prompting of His Spirit.

May God bless us, guide and strengthen us in our endeavor to grow in the likeness of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, risen with Him to a new and holy life.

**Section 2 – Incorporation**

For legal purposes this church is incorporated as the First Church of Waterville, Maine. The object and purpose of the corporation shall be as follows:

1. To receive, hold, invest, or expend any sums of money which may come into the possession of the church for the support of religious services or other kindred purposes, as authorized by vote taken at any regularly called meeting of the corporation.
2. To receive, buy, hold, improve, care for, sell or convey real estate for church purposes, as authorized by vote taken at any regularly called meeting of the corporation.

**ARTICLE III – CHARACTER**

**Section 1 – Doctrine**

This church receives and adopts the New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith of 1833.

**Section 2 – Polity**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who comprise its active membership. It acknowledges the control of no other ecclesiastical body but recognizes and sustains obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation as described in **Section 3** of this article.

**Section 3 – Affiliation**

In fulfillment of its obligation of communion with all who call upon the name of Christ this church shall recognize and sustain responsible relationships of mutual counsel and cooperation with such regional, state, national, and international ecclesiastical bodies in keeping with its character and covenant as shall be determined by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of its active corporate members present and voting at a business meeting called for that purpose. We have chosen to be a non-denominational church in the Reformed tradition.

**ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1 – Reception**

Any responsible adult person professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and giving assent to the statement of faith who shall complete a course of instruction approved by the Board of Elders may be received as a member without respect to race or national origin by vote of the Board of Elders, unless otherwise ordered by the church, in one of the following ways:

1. Upon the profession of his faith and after baptism. This shall be the accepted way for new members.
2. Upon profession of faith. This shall be the way reserved to those new members whose exceptional circumstances of infirmity warrant the adjustment in execution of the rite of baptism, as determined by vote of the Board of Elders.
3. Upon presentation of a letter of transfer. This shall be the accepted way of those members of good and regular standing in another Christian church who present a letter from that church indicating their standing and dismissal or recommendation to join this church.
4. Upon reaffirmation of faith. This shall be reserved to those members of another Christian church who for any reason acceptable to the Board of Elders are unable to present a letter of transfer. The candidate shall relate his experience of baptism and church membership, reaffirm his faith, and be subject to examination by the Board of Elders.
5. Upon request for reinstatement. This shall be the accepted way of those whose membership in this or some other Christian church has been terminated. The candidate shall present a statement of experience and a reaffirmation of faith which is deemed satisfactory by the Board of Elders.
6. Upon request for watch-care. This shall be the way a member of another Christian church residing temporarily in the Waterville Area as a student or a member of the armed services shall become a participant in the membership of this church. The candidate shall present a letter of recommendation and a request for watch-care from his/her home church, and although entitled to full fellowship in the membership of this church his/her membership shall terminate automatically upon the removal his/her residence from this area. Watch-care members shall not be required to take the course of instruction required of all others before being received into membership and may not vote.

**Section 2 – Duties and Privileges**

**1. Duties:** Members of this church are expected to honor their covenant obligations, to attend the services of the church regularly, to contribute responsibly to the support of the church and its mission, and to participate in its corporate activities.

**2. Privileges:** Members of good and regular standing are privileged to share equally in the conduct of the affairs of the church and its ministries. Members in good and regular standing who have reached the age of twenty-on (21) years of age shall be designated active corporate members with the right to vote on matters pertaining to **ARTICLE II – Section 2**.

**Section 3 – Termination**

Membership may be terminated by vote of the Board of Elders, unless otherwise ordered by the church, in one of the following ways:

1. By request of the member
2. By letter of transfer to another Christian church.
3. By virtue of failing to honor the covenant obligations. Members found by the Board of Elders to be inactive for one year by failing to observe at least one (1) of the following covenant obligations:
4. Regular attendance at service of worship
5. Regular financial contribution to the church budget
6. Participation in church activities

Those members found to be in violation shall be transferred to an inactive list and shall be no longer in good and regular standing or allowed to vote.

**ARTICLE V – ORGANIZATION**

**Section 1 – Election**

1. **Election:** Unless stipulated otherwise elsewhere in this Constitution and By-laws, all officers and members of the boards shall be elected from the active membership of the church at the annual meeting when the vacancy occurs. Officers, excepting the Pastor, shall serve a term of one (1) year and shall be eligible for reelection. Members of Boards shall serve a term of three (3) years and shall be eligible for reelection as further stated.

**Section 2 – Pastor**

1. A Pastor shall be chosen and called whenever the vacancy occurs. His election shall be on nomination of the Pulpit Committee and shall be by a ¾ vote at a meeting of the church regularly called for that purpose. Further, a quorum of ¾ of active regular members (out of the total active membership) in good standing of the church is required to proceed with a vote for election of Pastor.
2. The term of office shall be without limitation of time subject to termination by action either of Pastor or of church after due notice has been given in writing three months in advance, or within a shorter period by mutual agreement. Action by the church to terminate shall be by a ¾ vote of active regular members in good standing (out of the total active membership) at a meeting of the church regularly called for that purpose. A quorum of ¾ of active members in good standing is required to proceed with the vote to remove from office.
3. The salary, retirement benefits, and other financial considerations of the Pastor’s salary shall be recommended by the Board of Elders, after consultation with the Pastor, for determination by the church, annually and whenever additional consideration must be given. The annual vacation and any other leaves of absence of the Pastor shall be determined by the Board of Elders in consultation with the Pastor, unless otherwise ordered by the church.
4. In the performance of his duties the Pastor shall conduct regular services of worship, administer the ordinances, and fulfill such other functions as by common consent or determination of the Board of Elders are incumbent upon him. He shall be a member ex officio of all boards and committees.

**Section 3 – Moderator**

The Pastor shall be the **Moderator** to preside at all meetings for business of the church, and to call meetings of the church.

**Section 4 – Clerk**

There shall be a **Clerk** to issue the call to all meetings of the church, to keep records of those meetings, to maintain the accurate listing of the membership of the church, making annual report of the same to the church and to such other ecclesiastical bodies as the church shall direct, and to care for the official correspondence of the church. The clerk is re-elected every two years upon majority vote of the congregation.

**Section 5 – Treasurer**

There shall be elected a **Treasurer** to receive, hold, invest, or expend, and account for all funds and properties of the church as authorized by the church and directed by the Board of Elders or other designated agent of the church. They shall keep segregated accounts of each separate fund of the church and shall make report of said accounts annually to the church, monthly to the Board of Elders, and at such other times as it may be required. They shall be a member ex officio but without vote of the Board of Trustees. The treasurer shall be bonded to the amount determined by the Board of Elders. The treasurer is elected for a two-year term and can be re-elected upon majority vote of the congregation.

**Section 6 – Board of Elders**

The Elders shall be comprised of Christian men who satisfy the qualifications of Elder set forth on 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. No Elder shall concurrently hold the office of Deacon.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the Elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Pt. 5:1-4, the Elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by discipleship, teaching, and sound doctrine), and the shepherding of God’s flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by congregational vote triennially. After an Elder, not to include the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be reelected to office after a one-year hiatus.

The Elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, oversee the work of the Deacons, appoint church committees, coordinate worship in consultation with the Senior Pastor, equip the membership for the work of ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions.

The Elders may establish ministry positions and committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities of spiritual care. The Elders may propose funding for various ministries, in consultation with the Trustees and approval by the congregation.

Each year the Elders in coordination and consultation with the Deacons, the Trustees and the membership shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a regularly called meeting of the Senior Pastor, Elders, Deacons and Trustees. The budget shall then be presented to the congregation in a duly called meeting.

The Elders shall elect one member of their number to act as Moderator upon approval by the congregation.

**Section 7 – Board of Deacons**

The office of Deacon is described in Acts 6:1-6/1 Tm. 3:8-13. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving themselves in the service of the church, and who possess particular gifts for service as Ministers of Mercy. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6, these members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Deacons and Deaconesses. They shall be elected to one term of three years and may only be re-elected after a one-year hiatus.

Deacons and Deaconesses shall care for the temporal needs of members, develop ministries of mercy to the congregation and community, and encourage and support members in the development of helping ministries.

The Deacons and Deaconesses shall receive, hold, and disburse, in consultation with the Elders and Trustees, a fund for benevolence, reporting to the Elders its use upon request and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

The Deacons and Deaconesses in agreement with the Elders may establish any unpaid ministry positions and/or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in ministries of mercy.

**Section 8 – Board of Trustees**

1. The Trustee is not a biblically mandated office, but a state mandated office. As such, the sole responsibilities of the Trustees engage only upon the dissolution of the church. It is then the responsibilities of the Trustees to distribute the assets of the church according to state law.
2. Other than dissolution of the church by vote of the regular active membership, Trustees function as advisors to the Board of Elders and congregation in the areas of finances and facilities. They may make recommendations to the congregation and the Board of Elders, but these recommendations are for advisory purposes only. Any implementation of recommendations requires the prior approval of the Board of Elders and ratification by vote of the regular active members of the congregation.
3. A minimum of two Trustees must be elected annually for a term of one year.

**Section 9 – Nominating Committee**

The **Nominating Committee** shall consist of the Board of Elders.

**Section 10 – Pulpit Committee**

1. Upon acceptance by the church of the resignation of the Pastor, the church shall elect a **Pulpit Committee** composed of up to five (5) members from within the church with the Clerk and the Chairman of the Board of Elders serving ex officio in addition.
2. The **Pulpit Committee** shall search out and investigate thoroughly likely candidates for the office and shall present one as its recommended candidate for election by the church.

**ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS**

**Section 1 – For Worship**

1. Each Sunday and at other appropriate times the church shall hold public meetings for worship and other religious services, at times and of a character to be at the discretion of the **Board of Elders**, unless otherwise ordered by the church.
2. The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper shall be celebrated when appropriate at the discretion of the **Board of Elders,** provided that the Lord’s Supper shall be celebrated monthly on the first Sunday of the month unless voted otherwise by the Board of Elders or by the Church.

**Section 2 – For Business Meetings**

1. Upon the call of the Clerk when instructed to do so by the Pastor and Board of Elders, the church shall meet for the conduct of business.
2. The **annual meeting** shall be called by the Clerk upon instruction of the Pastor and Board of Elders to be held on the second Sunday of October of each year to receive the annual reports of all officers, boards, committees, and integral organizations, to elect officers; and to conduct such other business as provided for by this Constitution and By-laws or as stated in the call to the meeting.
3. **Business meetings** other than the annual meeting shall be called by the Clerk when instructed to do so by the Pastor, to be held at such times and for such purposes as are stated in the call to the meeting. Meetings may be ordered at the discretion of the Pastor but shall be ordered by the Board of Elders when requested to do so by a majority vote of the church or by written request of 35% of active corporate members.
4. Due notice shall be given in the calling of any meeting for business.For a special meeting for routine business not involving the conduct of corporation affairs nor the changing of any policy, due notice shall be announcement at public services of worship on the preceding Sunday. For all other meetingsdue notice shall be the posting of the official call stating the time and business of the meeting by ordinary means of written and electronic communication two (2) weeks prior to the meeting, and the public announcement of the call in the customary manner of making such announcements at the public services of the church for the two (2) Sundays preceding the meeting.
5. The conduct of business shall be governed by the following rules of order:
6. A quorum of thirty-five percent (35%) of the active corporate membership of the church as reported to the last preceding annual meeting shall be required to transact any business of a character that requires two (2) weeks due notice in the all. Other routine business may be conducted at the discretion of the Moderator subject to the approval of the meeting.
7. All members of the church are privileged to participate in all meetings of the church for business, but only such members as have attained the age of twenty-one (21) years and are active corporate members shall be permitted to vote upon matters pertaining to **Article II, Section 2,** of this Constitution and By-laws.
8. Any procedures not specifically provided for in the Constitution and By-laws shall be governed by **“Roberts Rules of Order.”**

**ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS**

This **Constitution and By-laws** may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote to do so by the active corporate members present and voting at any meeting of the church regularly called with the required quorum for corporation business provided that the proposed amendments had been submitted in writing to the clerk and announcement of its substance had been made through the customary channel of announcement of the church one (1) month prior to the date of the meeting, and intention to do so was included in the call to the meeting.