

# **NORTHRIDGE CHURCH CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

THE DEACON MINISTRY OF **NORTHRIDGE CHURCH**  
THE MINISTRY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HAINES CITY, FL, INC.

# **AMENDED AND RESTATED ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION**

## **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HAINES CITY, FLORIDA, INC.**

We declare and establish this Church Constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern this local body of believers in an orderly manner. This Constitution will preserve the Purpose Vision Mission of our Church and the liberties of the individual members. While the Constitution identifies the corporation and outlines the basic principles for our existence, the Bylaws spell out the details of how this corporation conducts its articles of incorporation.

The amendments stated herein were approved by the members at the meeting of October 5, 2025 and the number of votes cast for the amendment was sufficient for approval.

### **Article I - Identification**

- A. NAME:** This Church's name is First Baptist Church of Haines City, Florida, Inc., a Florida nonprofit corporation.
- B. AFFILIATION:** Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, this Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches in world missions, this Church voluntarily affiliates with the Southern Baptist Convention in its international, national, state, and local mission endeavors and expressions.

### **Article II - Address**

The principle place of business is located at 2250 State Road 17 South, Haines City, Florida.

### **Article III - Purpose**

The purpose of the corporation is to be a biblical Church, carrying out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Elements of this corporation's purpose include the following:

- A.** Clearly state the Purpose, Vision, and Mission (from here on expressed as PVM) of the Church.
- B.** Identify the Church's strategy and annual plan to accomplish the Church's PVM. Such strategy shall include how the Church shall receive members.
- C.** Structure the Church to accomplish its strategy and annual planning. The Church's principle means of financially supporting its PVM shall be the collection of tithes and offerings. The Bylaws shall give direction to the management of properties and the distribution and accounting of all resources.

### **Article IV - Our Doctrinal Statements**

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God and as the only authority for our beliefs and practice. An explanation of core beliefs is set forth in the Bylaws.

## **Article V- Dissolution Procedures**

Should this Church disband, all property and money shall be turned over to the Florida Baptist Convention and the Church Corporation shall be dissolved.

NorthRidge Christian Preschool, as a non-profit ministry of First Baptist Church of Haines City (dba NorthRidge Church), shall operate under the leadership and direction of the Church as governed by its leadership and by the Bylaws and Constitution of First Baptist Church. No provision is implied or given to violate or supersede the legal documents, financial and or property provision, certificate of incorporation, Bylaws, and Constitution of First Baptist Church. In the case of dissolution of NorthRidge Christian Preschool, any resources and property that may have been utilized for the purposes of education by the Preschool shall be returned to First Baptist Church. Furthermore, in the case of dissolution any academic records that were not transferred with the student to another school of the student's choice will be held on the church property for one year from the time of dissolution. Beyond the period of one year, all remaining academic records will be surrendered to Polk County School Board for the retention and distribution of said records.

## **Article VI- Directors**

The Church shall annually designate up to five directors, one of which will be designated as President and another as Treasurer. They, along with the Senior Pastor and the Church Administrator, shall execute all legal documents of the Church. Directors shall hold in trust the Church property. They will serve on behalf of the Church, in relationship with the Elders. Selection and functions of the Senior Pastor, Church Administrator, and Directors are set forth in the Bylaws.

## **Article VII- Incorporators**

The names and addresses of the amended and restated incorporators:

Tom Sheek	92 Pine Forest Lane, Haines City, FL 33844-9675
Thomas Williams	397 Troon Ct. Winter Haven, FL 33884
Roger Lumsden	5501 Baker Ave Haines City, FL. 33844
Steve Smith	113 South Blvd. E. Davenport, FL. 33837
David Myers	20 Pine Forest Lane, Haines City, FL 33844

## **Article VIII- Ratification of Church Constitution**

- A.** The original address for this amended and restated Articles of Incorporation is 2250 State Road 17 South, Haines City, Florida 33844.
- B.** The Bylaws of this corporation can be made, altered, or rescinded by the membership of the corporation according to its decision-making process.
- C.** These articles of Incorporation, effective the October 5, 2025 revoke all previous Constitution provisions of First Baptist Church, Haines City, Florida, Inc.
- D.** *IN WITNESS WHEREOF, We have hereunto set our hands and seals at Haines City October 5, 2025.*

**E. Signatures of Incorporators:**

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Tom Sheek, President

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Date

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Thomas Williams, Treasurer

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Date

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Roger Lumsden, Director

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Date

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Steve Smith, Director

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Date

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David Myers, Director

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Date

# **BYLAWS OF NORTHRIDGE CHURCH**

## **Article I - Church Name**

This Church's Corporation Name will remain First Baptist Church, Haines City, Inc., a Florida nonprofit corporation. We shall be known doing God's business as NorthRidge Church. This decision, arrived by means of the Unity Process, occurred on October 21, 2001.

## **Article II - Purpose Vision Mission (PVM)**

The Direction of this Church is set forth by our Purpose, Vision, and Mission statements (PVM)

### **◆ The Scriptural Source For Our PVM:**

- **The Great Commandments:** *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

Matthew 22:36-40

- **The Great Commission:** *Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you . . ."*

Matthew 28:18-20

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."*

Acts 1:8

- **Great Ministry Performance:** *"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. . . And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints (members) for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ . . . by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."*

Ephesians 4:1, 11-12, 16

- **NorthRidge's Purpose Statement**

We Exist to Glorify God and Do Good to Others

- **NorthRidge's Vision Statement**

To be a Worshipping Community of Ministering Believers Committed to Exalting the Lord, Evangelizing the Lost, Educating Learners, Equipping Leaders, and Extending Christ's Love to the People Groups of the World.

- **NorthRidge's Mission Statement**

Turn Spiritual Seekers into Fully Developed Ministers of Christ as we live up to our motto *"Where Friends Become Family"*

## ● **NorthRidge's Core Values and Belief Statements**

After conducting internal assessments involving the church membership, the church staff, and the lay leadership, we discovered that there are seven major core values that summarize all of our feedback. The family of NorthRidge Church has the following guiding values that are foundational to understanding our commitment to who we are and who we want to be:

### **Core Value # 1 A Commitment to Biblical Preaching and Teaching**

We understand that the authority for our ministry and life comes from the inerrant, infallible Word of God, we submit ourselves to do what it says, thus yielding our lives to become what Christ desires for us to be.

### **Core Value # 2 A Commitment to Prayer**

We believe that God desires His people to pray, and we also believe that He hears and answers prayer. The ministries of this church will be characterized by a reliance on God through prayer.

### **Core Value # 3 A Commitment to Worship**

We acknowledge that our very lives are instruments for His glory and purpose...the focal point of our very lives in all that we do will be to honor Him.

### **Core Value # 4 A Commitment to Evangelism**

We believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation thus leading us to pursue vigorous means of proclaiming the gospel to our community, city and world.

### **Core Value # 5 A Commitment to Love**

We affirm what Jesus said, "This is how all men will know that you are my disciples: that you love one another." We commit to living our lives in active love towards one another.

### **Core Value # 6 A Commitment to Fellowship**

We value the gathering together as an assembly of believers sharing with one another in the commonality of belief in Jesus Christ.

### **Core Value # 7 A Commitment to Unity**

We believe that we have been united in Christ thus becoming the church; that is the body or the family of God. Therefore we are compelled to unite together for the cause of the Great Commission as our highest purpose as a body.

## **Article III - Our Doctrinal Statements**

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God and as the only authority for our beliefs and practice. This Church accepts the "Baptist Faith and Message" as amended in the year 2000 by messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention, as a general statement of our beliefs. Specific essential beliefs that must be held by all members are as follows:

# THE ESSENTIALS WE BELIEVE

## 1. ABOUT GOD

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He eternally exists as three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are coequal, co-eternal, and are one infinitely perfect God. (Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Cor. 13:14)

## 2. ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is God the Son, the begotten Son of God, Son of Man. He is the agent through whom the universe was created. He is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and Holy Spirit. Jesus was born as a result of a miraculous virgin conception. He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose bodily from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, and in eternity He will rule the new heaven and new earth created after His millennial reign on earth (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; 6:23; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16; 20:1ff; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

## 3. ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with God the Father and God the Son. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He is spiritually to us what Christ was physically to the first disciples. He provides Christians with power for loving God and others, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer at least one spiritual gift when they are saved. Some of the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is ~ *Baptizer, Sealer, Indweller, Regenerator, Renewer, Intercessor, Filler, and Anointer*. Christians seek to live under His control daily (John 14:16-20,23; 16:7-13, Acts 1:4-5,8; 2:33,38-39; 4:31; Romans 6:3-8; 8:9-17, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; 12:13; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 3:17; Galatians 3:27; 5:25; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 4:10; Titus 3:5; 1 John 2:20-27).

## 4. ABOUT THE BIBLE

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and Christian living. The Bible is the basis for both the beliefs and practices of the Church. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error.

### Concerning the Bible's inspiration, we believe in its:

- **Revelation**--God reveals truth about Himself and eternity that we could not know unless He revealed it (2 Timothy 3:16).
- **Preservation**--God breathed the truth into the men who wrote the Scriptures, and their original writings were without error. Over the years since the original books of the Bible were written, God has **preserved** His Word from misleading error being introduced into it; therefore, rightly understood, the Bible is our infallible guide in matters both temporal and eternal. (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 1 Peter 1:21)

- **Illumination**--By revealing God's intended truth to us as the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit makes the inspired Word of God alive in those who believe. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Hebrews 4:12; John 16:13-15; 1 John 2:20-21)
- **Interpretation**--The method to interpret the Bible our Church uses is a grammatical, historical, analogy of Scripture method. This method of exegesis has been in common use since the Reformers, some would say even from the Apostles. True to its word, this method places importance on the usage and meaning of words in the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts and how they are used by the writers of the Scripture. The writer's use of grammar (syntax) is important. Understanding his viewpoint is vital for the reader to escape the demonic trap of "private interpretation," considered by the Bible as spurious (2 Peter 1:20). The grammatical, historical method also stresses viewing Scripture in its context within a verse, paragraph and in regards to the entire book or composition. The history of the times in which it was written is important to understanding Scripture. Without knowing the circumstances that surrounded and spurred the writings of the document, the interpreter can miss the "then" meaning and make a bad "now" teaching to others (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Timothy 1:13; Psalm 119:105, 160; 12:6-7a; Proverbs 30:5; Jeremiah 1:12; 1 Corinthians 2:14; John 14:17, 26; 16:13).

## 5. ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS

People are made in the image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience of rebellion toward God called sin. Sin separates people from God and causes many problems in life. Sin is so problematic that death is the result of its consequences. Every person needs to be redeemed from sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross in order to become what God desires human beings to be (Gen. 1:27; 2:15-17; 3:1-6; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a; Rom. 3:23; Isaiah 59:1-2).

## 6. ABOUT SALVATION

Salvation is God's free gift to us, but human beings must accept it. Salvation comes as a result of Jesus Christ's willingness to die in our place, to take upon Himself, on the cross, the consequences of our sins—death. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith. Salvation is by God's grace alone and we reap its benefits by faith alone. The acceptance of God's saving grace is revealed by growing faith, right beliefs, obedience, good works, perseverance, righteous actions and attitudes (Romans 6:23; 10:9-10,13; Ephesians 2:8-10; John 1:12; 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 1:17; 5:1-2, 8-10; Acts 4:12).

## 7. ABOUT ETERNAL SECURITY

Because God gives us **eternal** life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is God's grace -- His saving and keeping power -- that gives us eternal security. The day a believer is born-again, the Holy Spirit, Himself, is given to him as a pledge, sort of a security deposit, to secure the believer and seal him with life to the day of final redemption -- the resurrection of the body (Ephesians 1:13-14). Spiritual birth, like physical birth, is

a one-time experience (John 3:5-6). **You're not born again and again and again.** The relationship with the Father begins and never ends.

Belief in eternal security has been criticized by some well-meaning Christians who say it is a license to sin. They seem to believe that only if you fear losing salvation will you live in victory over sin. However, the Bible teaches that the chief motivation to live for God is not fear, but love (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). God gave us free will so that we may choose to love Him, not to choose to sin. Far from sinning all we want, eternally-secure, Spirit-born believers sin more than they want, because willful sin shows a lack of love and respect for the Lord Jesus Christ who saved us, eternally secure Christians grow in faith and purity in relationship with Christ (John 3:16; 10:29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25, 10:10, 14; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:1-6).

## **8. ABOUT ETERNITY**

Made in the image of eternal God, people were created to exist forever. We will either exist separated from God by sin or live eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is hell. To be eternally in unity with Him is eternal life/Heaven. (John 3:16; John 12:25; John 14:1-6; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:11; Revelation 21-22; Matthew 13:36-43; Luke 16:19-31)

We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, of believers into eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord and His people and of unbelievers into judgment and everlasting separation from God's love, mercy, and grace in conscious existence in hell. (John 5:25-29; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, 35-54; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Philippians 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

## **9. ABOUT THE CHURCH**

A New Testament Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers, who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. A local congregation under the lordship of Christ is the only tangible expression of church in the New Testament times and succeeding ages from the first century. The word church is never used in the New Testament to refer to a denomination or to a regional group of churches. When referring to groups of churches, the New Testament always uses the plural "churches." For example, "Churches which are in Asia . . ." (Rev. 1:11). Even in its plural sense, the singular local church is preserved. When John addressed the churches in Asia, he used the singular word "church" to describe them. (See Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14.)

There is a sense of the Church in the New Testament that is a universal expression of all the redeemed of all the ages. But this is a heavenly, eternal expression, not the earthly, temporal expression of the local church. Every Spirit-born believer automatically and forever is a member of the heavenly church, but that does not negate each believer's responsibility to voluntarily unite with a local New Testament Church in community and service with other Spirit-born Christians.

## **10. ABOUT CHURCH ORDINANCES**

Believer's baptism (immersion) in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances of the Church commanded by Christ to be done as symbols of His saving work. The Church is to continue these ordinances until Christ returns (Matthew 28:19; 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 2:37, 38).

# Article IV - Church Membership

## Section 1: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Membership in this Church shall consist of all persons who meet the qualifications for membership and are listed on the membership role.

## Section 2: QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

1. A personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation leading to a personal relationship with God as Father.
2. Believers Baptism by immersion as a testimony of salvation.
3. Completion of the church's membership class.
4. A Personal commitment to abide by the Church Membership Covenant.

## Section 3: ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Associate Membership in this Church is granted to those who temporarily reside in our region, but who, because of circumstances, also maintain Church membership in their home state. Requirements for Associate Membership are the same for regular membership. Limitations of membership are based on the ability of members to provide leadership within the time frame they are active in the Church, each year. Participation in the unity process is granted to associate members in good standing; within the time frame they are present. No decision-making privileges are granted while not residing in the region or not participating in Church.

## Section 4: RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS (Church Covenant)

Having received Christ as Lord and Savior and having been baptized by immersion, and agreeing with the Church statements, strategy, and structure, each member commits to God and to the other members to do the following:

### ● PROTECT THE UNITY OF THIS CHURCH

... **By acting in love toward other members.**

... **By refusing to gossip.**

... **By following the leaders.**

*“So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together.” (Romans 15:19)*

*“Live in complete harmony with each other - each with the attitude of Christ toward each other.” (Romans 15:5)*

*“Have a sincere love for your fellow believers, love one another earnestly with all your hearts.” (1 Peter 1:22)*

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...” (Ephesians 4:29)*

*“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.” (Hebrews 13:17)*

● **SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS CHURCH**

- ... **By praying for its growth.**
- ... **By inviting the unchurched to attend.**
- ... **By warmly welcoming those who visit.**

*“To the church... we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly.” (1 Thess. 1:2)*

*“Go out into the country... and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full.” (Luke 14:23)*

*“So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.” (Romans 15:7)*

● **SERVE THE MINISTRY OF THIS CHURCH**

- ... **By discovering my gifts and talents**
- ... **By being equipped to serve by my pastors**
- ... **By being involved in ministry that fits my gifts**

*“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you...” (1 Peter 4:10)*

*“God gave... some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” (Ephesians 4:11-12)*

*“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ... who took on the very nature of a servant...” (Philippians 2:3-4, 7)*

● **SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF THIS CHURCH**

- ... **By attending faithfully**
- ... **By living a godly life**
- ... **By giving regularly**

*“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one another.” (Hebrews 10:25)*

*“But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ.” (Philippians 1:27)*

*“Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering.” (1 Corinthians 16:2)*

*“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse...and prove me in this says the Lord...” (Malachi 3:10)*

**Section 5: TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

**Membership in this Church will be terminated in the following ways:**

1. Death of member
2. Formal withdrawal to attend another church
3. Non-participation in the Church body after a year or more based on personal choice.
4. Church Discipline in areas of misconduct deemed to be hindering the ministry influence of the Church in the community.

## Section 6: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

To preserve the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ, all manners of conflict and misconduct will be handled according to instructions by the Lord Jesus instructed in Matthew 18:15-17:

*Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

Every relational step will be taken to correct and restore fellowship with those who are troubled. Restoration of fellowship will be based on confession for offenses, recognizable repentance of such actions, and steps of restoration determined by spiritual leadership. The spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:6-8 will be observed in the restoration process.

While this Church body offers love unconditionally, trust is earned and is based on trustworthiness. Only after a forgiven offender has regained trust will opportunities for service or leadership be made available, a period of not less than six months should pass as this proving time (1 Timothy 3:10).

In serious cases where a member(s) tries to divide the Church body, the Pastors and Elders will follow Titus 3:10-11 for the purpose of correcting and restoring fellowship. If no resolution is found, the Senior Pastor, Pastoral staff, and Elders will constitute the body of the Church and shall expel the divisive person from Church membership.

## Section 7: NONMEMBER PARTICIPATION

**NorthRidge Church recognizes levels of participation other than Church member:**

1. **Sunday School or small group membership** -- entitles participants to engage in Bible study, member care, activities, and limited-service opportunities set forth by Pastoral leadership and Elders.
2. **Church Attendees** -- all services are open to all people, willing to cooperate with the purposes of the service attended.
3. **Volunteer Efforts** -- limited-service opportunities are available to individuals who are not members of the Church. Pastoral leadership and Elders have the responsibility to determine the qualifications and expectations of such service opportunities.
4. **Church Employees** -- opportunities for employment are available to believers in Jesus Christ who are members of other churches. Pastoral staff and Elders have the oversight to determine which areas of employment are available to nonmembers.
5. **Miscellaneous Services** -- NorthRidge Church, works with screened outside groups that provide services to its ministry groups or minister to local needs. Pastoral staff and Elders have the oversight to administrate all such cooperative activities.

# Article V - Church Leadership Structure

## Section 1: PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

**Senior Pastor** -- responsible to God for leading the NorthRidge Church to function as a New Testament Church. He leads the Purpose, Vision, and Mission (PVM) of the Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is to lead the Church body towards spiritual health. The Senior Pastor has the primary responsibility for selecting and recommending to the body other pastors who can provide leadership to carry out the church's PVM. The Senior Pastor is the final authority with advice from the Elders, for the hiring and termination of personnel, administrating the annual budget adopted by the Church body, and implementing the vision and direction of the Church, as outlined in these Bylaws.

The Senior Pastor will hold mutual accountability with the Elders (See Section 2) who will serve as encouragers, advisors, and prayer warriors with him.

**Senior Pastor Selection** -- from time to time the office of Senior Pastor will be vacant. At that time a Pastor Search TEAM of 6 to 12 members will be selected from the Church's Spiritual Leader Fellowship and Elders. This team should consist of adult Sunday School teachers, division directors, small group leaders, trustees, small group coaches, and unpaid ministry leaders. Paid support staff may serve as long as their spouse is not part of paid pastoral, ministerial, or administrative staff. The Elders will oversee the process of selection and one of the members of the Elders will be chosen to act as moderator of the meeting. The Pastor Search Team will be presented to the Church and affirmed during the morning worship times. The presentation will be done by the transitional (interim) pastor or moderator of the Elders.

**Senior Pastor Dismissal** -- removal of the Senior Pastor can only be done due to serious sin that affects the church's moral and spiritual testimony to the world. Such action must be conducted through the Church's spiritual leadership groups (see Section 2) and confirmed by the body through *The Unity Process*. Questions concerning the leadership competency of the Senior Pastor must be according to biblical principles outlined in 1 Timothy 5:17-20. The Senior Pastor may relinquish his position due to personal or spiritual considerations with at least a two-week notice.

**Associate pastors** -- responsible for key areas of ministry leadership within the Church body. Such areas would include all vital purposes of the Church (evangelism, worship, education, discipleship, fellowship, ministry), articulated in the Church vision structure. Associate pastors are responsible for Great Ministry Performance in their leadership areas by constantly monitoring and evaluating vision, growth, personnel, and financial health. All pastoral staff must hold to and conform to the same high standards and qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11; and 1 Peter 5:1-4. The Associate pastors are responsible to the Senior Pastor to carry out their functions and serve under his advice and consent. Associate pastors can be removed by recommendation of the Senior Pastor and confirmed through the Elders.

**Accountability** -- together, the Pastoral staff and Elders serve as a team responsible for administrating the direction of the Church as outlined in the annual Church budget and annual planning by staff and ministry leaders.

## Section 2: SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP GROUPS

**The Elder Board**- this group of ordained and unordained men is comprised of select men from the Spiritual Leaders Fellowship. They will serve as an accountability team of advisors for the Senior Pastor. Those who serve on the Elder Board must fulfill the standards of

I Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-11 with particular emphasis on ability in “*rightly dividing the word of truth*” II Timothy 2:15. The Elders will help the pastoral leaders in the oversight of the church’s mission and vision annually by reviewing the By-Laws of the Church for compliance or to make revisions. The Elders will also designate who will serve annually as Incorporators/Directors for the Church. **All other guidelines and qualifications for Elder can be seen in the Policy-“*The Elder Board Responsibilities and Qualifications.*”**

**The Servant Leadership Team (Deacons)**- Acts 6:1-7 is the passage of scripture often cited for the beginning of the office of deacon in the early Christian church. Though the (7) men originally selected were not specifically called “*deacons*”, the office of deacon grew out of this experience. One reason they were chosen was to solve problems that arose among the blossoming church fellowship. The assignment given them by the Apostles were:

- To care for the needs of the flock...preserve harmony in the church...and free the Pastors to give attention to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and equipping the Saints.

The position of deacon in Acts 6 was a selected one. A deacon should certainly feel led to serve in this position. It is truly a position of leadership; “*Servant Leadership.*”

The **Biblical Qualifications** for a deacon are found in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3:8-13

- **SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS** (Acts 6:1-6)
- **MORAL QUALIFICATIONS** (I Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13)
- **PRACTICAL QUALIFICATIONS** (These are the qualifications and expectations of the church members as clarified by our NorthRidge Covenant.)

The selection process, and the different service opportunities within the office of Deacon, and the ordination to the office of the Deacon Ministry are laid out fully and available to read in the **DEACON HANDBOOK, (appendices A,B, and C)**. Separate document available upon request.

**The Spiritual Leadership Fellowship**- this group of church members who along with their spouse (if married), serve as ministry leaders in the Church. The (SLF) is all leaders who have been enlisted, trained, and commissioned to serve in and through NorthRidge Church. This team is made up of small group leaders, apprentices, coaches, all who lead out in ministry functions within the Church.

- **Principle Functions:**
  - To be a mainstay for the Pastor/s
  - To be a model for church Members
  - To be a mentor for potential leaders
- **Because Ministry to people is primary, the responsibility of all Spiritual Leaders are:**
  - Building relationships of grace and respect with other members.
  - Maintaining Biblical standards of integrity, doctrine, service and spiritual growth.
  - Equipping others for ministry.
  - Maintaining the Church’s values, mission, vision, purpose, and biblical form of Church government.
  - Active involvement in the church’s ministries.

### **Section 3: MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP**

Ministerial leaders serve under pastoral leadership. These leaders, paid or volunteer, include those called to temporary or permanent ministry in specific areas of the church's vision. These leaders may also include those called and being trained for pastoral leadership but have yet to be commissioned for that role..

### **Section 4: PROGRAM LEADERSHIP**

Program leaders serve directly under Pastoral and Elder leadership. These leaders have the closest contact with the Church body and thus, are vitally important to the health of the Church and its PVM.

Some examples of program leaders are: Leaders of the Men's Ministry / Women's Ministry / Prayer Ministry / Children's Awana Ministry.

### **Section 5: SUPPORT LEADERSHIP**

Support leaders are those who serve directly under Pastoral and Elder leadership. These leaders provide essential skills which assist their leaders and their teams to achieve Great Ministry Performance.

#### **Key support leadership positions this Church shall maintain include:**

- ◆ Membership secretary and other secretaries and assistants and Financial Officers, all who come under the supervision of the Senior Pastor as outlined in their job descriptions.
- ◆ **Directors:** The Elders shall annually designate up to four Directors who, along with the Senior Pastor and/or Church Administrator, shall serve as legal officers of the church. They shall hold in trust the Church Property. Based on approved budgets by the church body and such decisions as approved by the church; they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer Church property. When the signatures of the Directors are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage purchase, or rental of property. Lease or purchases of equipment, vehicles, and furnishings, within the church budget, may be done by signature of the Senior Pastor and one other Director.
- ◆ **Finance Team:** This team under the leadership of the Senior Pastor and the purview of the Elders, and the ongoing cooperation of the Directors, will be responsible for the development and administration of the Churches Annual Budget. They will meet monthly and verify all expenditures of the Church Financial Secretary.

### **Section 6: AD-HOC GROUPS**

Ad-hoc leadership groups will serve according to short-term task needs of this Church. Each task group shall be selected by pastoral leadership, according to their abilities, commitment, and availability. Ad-hoc task groups will research, perform any tasks, and make any recommendations to the Church leadership and/or the entire Church body concerning decisions necessary for Great Ministry Performance or that fall outside the annual budget (see "Unity Process," Article VII, Section 3, for further clarification).

## **Section 7: NORTHRIDGE CHURCH LEADERSHIP COVENANT**

In order to be a model for the congregation, serve as a mentor to other potential leaders, and be a mainstay for our pastor, we covenant together before God and His people to abide by the following principles.

1. We will pursue honesty, openness, and grace in our relationships. *Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 4:15, 25-27; 1 Peter 3:8-12; Matthew 5:22-26; 18:15-18*
2. We will see that hurts, offenses, and differences are reconciled quickly.
3. We will honor and edify one another and cover, not criticize one another's weakness. *Romans 12:9-10; 14:19; 1 Peter 4:7-9; Genesis 9:20-23*
4. We will submit to the teachings of Scripture and the God ordained authorities in our lives. *Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15; Hebrews 13:7, 17*
5. We will only receive factual accusations against another from the testimony of two or three witnesses. *1 Timothy 5:19-20; Proverbs 18:17*
6. We will hear one another's ideas, honor one another's differences, hold love supreme, and wholeheartedly embrace decisions we make together. *Acts 15:1-35*
7. We will meet together monthly to pray, share, worship, support, and pursue accountability. *Hebrews 10:23-25; Acts 20:17-38*
8. We will remain faithful to intentional personal evangelism. *1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 1 Timothy 4:5; Matthew 28:18-20*

## **VI. Church Ministry Structure**

This Church shall continually develop ministries according to its fundamental purposes: worship, education, evangelism / missions, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry. All organizations related to the Church ministry shall be under Church control, with key leaders selected by pastoral leadership and affirmed by the church's appropriate spiritual leadership group. This Church shall provide the human and physical resources to accomplish the purpose of each ministry. While all existing and new ministries are responsible for accomplishing all the purposes of the Church, the following basic ministries are identified.

### **Section 1: WORSHIP**

All diligence shall be given to prayerfully plan and perform worship services that are both Spirit driven and biblically sound. This Church shall organize its celebration services according to its PVM. Considerations shall primarily include glorifying God through leading the congregation in worship and giving opportunity to minister to spiritual seekers. Worship is to include the assimilation of new members, and the spiritual health of the membership.

**Section 2: EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS** (**Life Groups / Small Groups / Connect Groups / Sunday School** / are all different names used to identify ongoing discipleship opportunities to help our congregation find a place where they can truly connect with other believers, developing their faith, and learning to live life together.

The church shall organize small groups to function with the goals set forth in our Purpose, Vision and Mission (PVM). This is accomplished by studying the Books of the Bible, and at other times, studying topically what the scriptures have to say about conducting our everyday lives. Consideration for organizing and developing each group shall include age group particulars, and the discipleship processes taught in our “*New Membership Class*”, and the “*Growth Process*”. (Available under separate cover)

### **Section 3: WORLD MISSIONS**

This Church shall engage in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to every corner of the globe, using NorthRidge Church as a base of operation. Pastoral and Church spiritual leadership groups will be responsible for leading the Church to accomplish its world missions according to the church’s PVM. Basic methods are identified below for the purpose of clarification and information:

1. **Southern Baptist Cooperative Program** -- a percentage of the church’s budget will be designated to achieving world missions through cooperative efforts of our denomination.
2. **Florida Baptist Convention** -- this Church can support missions through the cooperative efforts of Baptists in the State of Florida.
3. **Regional Efforts** -- this Church can choose to involve itself in missions by cooperating with a number of local Christian groups or churches, including Ridge Baptist Association, multi-denominational crusade efforts, or partnering with individual churches.
4. **Missions Giving** -- this Church can conduct periodic missions giving efforts designed to reach North America and the world, using Southern Baptist agencies as the primary means for achieving these purposes.
5. **Short-term member mission opportunities** -- this Church can commission its own members to participate in opportunities that arise from mission agencies or Church organized projects.
6. **Vocational Ministers** -- this Church can commission leaders it confirms as called to the gospel ministry. Commissioning efforts include the licensing and/or ordaining of pastoral leaders, as recognized by the laws of the land.

### **Section 4: SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

This Church shall continually evaluate and employ support systems designed to aid ministries to achieve this church’s PVM. Pastoral leadership shall be responsible for the identification, function, and deletion of any support system not aiding the Church in achieving its purpose. Basic systems are identified below for the purpose of clarification and information:

1. **Financial Stewardship** -- the Church shall continually educate its members and attendees in the area of financial stewardship.
  - a) **Tithing** -- giving the tithe shall be the standard for all members supporting the “Great Commission.” The tithe shall be applied to the Church budget for operations of NorthRidge Church. Giving the tithe shall be the responsibility of all Church members and attendees before God. Responsibility for administering tithes and offerings shall be according to the Church approved budget through the FINANCE TEAM and financial officers of the Church.
  - b) **Offerings** -- shall be identified as designated giving above the tithe as a love gift to God for the purposes of supporting the church’s PVM. Primary designations of offerings include building programs, missions giving, and NorthRidge Ministries. Offerings not designated shall be considered budget giving. Designated giving is not meant to replace the tithe, but a supplement to it.
  - c) **Limitations** -- All supplemental fundraising by groups and organizations when approved will be conducted by advice and consent of pastoral leaders and never without the knowledge of the Senior Pastor or Church Administrator.
  
2. **Media Services** -- NorthRidge Church provides digital recordings of worship services through up-to-date technology

## **Article VII - Church Meetings**

This Church shall meet regularly to exalt the Lord, evangelize the lost, educate learners, equip leaders, and extend Christ’s love to the people groups of the world. Each individual meeting will be conducted according to a purpose for which it is designed. Listed below are the basic meetings held by NorthRidge Church:

### **Section 1: WORSHIP** (see VI ~ Section 1).

1. **Regular Worship Services** as scheduled.
2. **Ordinance of Baptism** will be observed at any service of worship on the weekend and at midweek, or at special evangelistic events during the week. Baptisms will be based on scriptural guidelines. Pastoral leadership shall designate times and places and who is authorized to baptize.
3. **Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper** will be regularly and faithfully observed in accordance with biblical guidelines. An annual schedule for the Lord’s Supper will be planned by the NorthRidge pastoral staff.

### **Section 2: GROUPS** (see V ~ Section 2)

1. Pastoral leadership is ultimately responsible for who shall lead Church groups
2. Times, places, resourcing, and accountability of groups will be determined by responsible Church leadership.

### **Section 3: CHURCH BUSINESS**

This Church will meet annually to approve the ministry operations budget. Additionally, this Church will gather periodically to deal with major matters that fall outside the annual budget. When the Church conducts major business each member is responsible to participate in the decision-making process. What is commonly called a business meeting, we call the “**Unity Process**”

#### **Summary of *The Unity Process***

- Step 1* - A major need -- something not already allocated in the annual budget -- is suggested by a member, worker, or leader and is determined to be consistent with our Vision Mission.
- Step 2* - Leaders assemble to pray about the need and the timing for the need to be met. (This is usually done in Staff meetings or when the Senior Pastor meets with the Elders).
- Step 3* - The need is announced to the worshipping community.
- Step 4* - Pastoral leaders pray about people to serve on a task force, search team, or study group, and then determine together whom the Holy Spirit seems to be calling out to serve. Those people are then enlisted and equipped to function as a team by the pastors.
- Step 5* - The task force, team, or group studies the need, reports to the Church, and makes recommendations to the Church membership.
- Step 6* - The members either affirm the recommendations as God's will for the Church at this time, or give evidence that God is not leading the process and a new way is offered.
- Step 7* - Whichever way step 6 is answered, we proceed on in unity seeking to do God's will.
- Step 8* - When the recommendation is affirmed by member consensus, an appropriate existing ministry team or a special implementation team is enlisted to implement the plan.

**Notice of business** meetings that require the presence of the entire active membership will occur in print at least seven days before the Church meets.

#### **Special items that call for published Notice of Agenda:**

1. Calling or removing the Senior Pastor
2. Amending the Articles of Incorporation
3. Adopting, amending, or repealing Bylaws
4. Disposing of all or part of the church's assets
5. Adopting or amending a merger agreement
6. Approving the dissolution of the Church
7. Approving the acquisition of real property, constructing buildings, and related indebtedness
8. Increasing the current adopted annual church budget

This Church shall conduct its business with those members present, one person, one voice, no proxy voting.

**Church Messengers** -- the Senior Pastor can lead the Church to designate voting messengers to the Ridge Baptist Association, Florida Baptist Convention, or the Southern Baptist Convention and other such denominational meetings and conventions at least seven days in advance of the particular denominational meeting or convention. Messengers must be active leaders within the Church structure.

## **Section 4: Quorum**

This Church body recognizes the privilege to conduct business according to *The Unity Process*. The number of members present at the properly notified Church meeting constitutes a quorum. The quorum for task groups, teams, and ministry groups making recommendations to the entire church will be those members of the group or team present at the meeting in which the decision to bring the recommendation is made.

# **Article VIII - Church Finances**

This Church shall use proper accounting procedures based on Great Ministry Performance and the laws of the land. The Pastoral Management Team shall be responsible for administrating the annual budget.

## **Section 1: BUDGET**

The Senior Pastor or his designee will be responsible for recommending the annual budget. He should utilize the Elders, Ministry leadership, Financial officers, and selected spiritual leaders to assist in the preparation of the annual budget.

## **Section 2: ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES**

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church's designated financial officer, secretary, or financial assistants. Funds shall be properly recorded according to up-to-date financial records keeping. A Finance team will oversee the receipt and dispersal of monies each month through financial statements supplied by the Financial Secretary.

## **Section 3: REPORTING**

The financial officers will keep accurate records of giving by its supporters and the annual giving statement shall be given to all who give by the Church's system for receiving tithes and offerings. Furthermore, reports shall be available for review and accountability by all financial managers and others the Church so designates. From time to time a financial audit by a certified accounting firm shall be conducted to attest to the soundness of record keeping and financial health.

## **Article IX - Indemnification of Church Agents**

Every Director and Officer of the Church shall be indemnified by the Church against all expenses and liabilities, including counsel fees, reasonably incurred by or imposed in connection with any proceeding of any settlement of any proceeding (including any appeal thereof) to which a Director or Officer may be a party of may become involved by reason of being or having been a Director or Officer of the Church, whether or not a Director or Officer at the time such expenses are incurred, except when the Director or Officer is adjudged guilty or of liable for willful misfeasance or willful misfeasance in the performance of duties; provided that in the event of a settlement before entry of judgment, the indemnification shall apply only when Directors approve such settlement and reimbursement as being in the best interest of the Church. The foregoing right of indemnification shall be in addition to and exclusive of all other rights to which such Director or Officer may be entitled by law. Appropriate liability insurance may be provided for every Officer, Director and agent of the Church in amounts determined from time to time by the Directors.

## **Article X- Amendments to the Bylaws**

Subject to the provision of Florida Law, these Bylaws or any provision of them may be altered, amended or repealed, and new Bylaws may be adopted by consensus reached through *The Unity Process* at any special meeting which is called in accordance with Article VII, Section 3.

## **Article XI- Ratification of the Bylaws**

These Bylaws, effective the October 5, 2025 revoke all previous Bylaw provisions of First Baptist Church, Haines City, Florida.