

# **Bylaws and Rules of Order of the First Baptist Church of Rockport, Massachusetts**

(Incorporated as the Baptist Society in Gloucester by Chapter 53 of the 1811 Special Statutes of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, adopted June 22, 1811, and renamed as the First Baptist Church of Rockport by an amendment approved April 26, 1955)

## **Article I. POLITY**

### **Section 1. Purpose:**

The purpose of this congregation is to give visible form to that faith and fellowship to which God has called his people. We acknowledge ourselves to be a local manifestation of the universal church in and through which Jesus Christ continues to minister to the world by His Holy Spirit. We shall seek to fulfill this calling through corporate worship services, through a program of Christian nurture by which His followers may be built up in their faith and love, through proclamation of the gospel by word and deed, and through ministering to human need in the name of Christ.

### **Section 2. Doctrine:**

Recognizing Jesus Christ as the only head of the church, this congregation shall seek to ascertain and to obey the will of our Lord in all matters of faith and practice. Authority to reach decisions for governing the affairs of this church being given to us by Christ, we hold that such authority and responsibility is vested in the active membership of the congregation. This church accepts the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the inspired record of God's self-disclosure in human history and as the authoritative basis for its doctrine and practice.

### **Section 3. Greater Fellowships:**

In carrying out the wider ministry for which Christ has made His church responsible, we shall adhere to and be a member of the Adoniram Judson Baptist Association, The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts and the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A. In addition to the other requirements set forth in Section 4 of Article III, it shall be a prerequisite to amendment of this paragraph that the Pastor and the Board of Deacons of this church shall have conferred with the moderator of the Association, the area minister and the executive minister of the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts. This church shall also cooperate with the larger fellowship of people worshipping God through participation in local and other councils of churches and other Christian organizations and endeavors.

## **Article II. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. Procedure:**

A vote of the church, either at a regular or special business meeting or at a regularly scheduled public worship service, shall be required for the admission of any person to membership or affiliate membership, or for the formal dismissal of any member or affiliate member. Nor shall any question regarding membership of any person be in order for vote of the church unless such question shall have been submitted for consideration by the Board of Deacons and the Deacons' recommendation thereupon, if any, is simultaneously reported to the church.

### **Section 2. Admission to Membership:**

Any person accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord who is in essential agreement with the doctrine and practice of this church may be received into the fellowship of this congregation following his baptism.

A person who is in substantial accord with the doctrine and practice of this church may be received by a letter of commendation from any other Christian church.

A believer of worthy character who has formerly been a member of a Christian church and who, for sufficient reason, cannot present a letter from that church, but who is in substantial accord with the faith and practice of this church, may be received upon statement of his Christian experience.

Any person who has formerly been a member of this church but has lost his membership for any reason may be restored to membership.

### **Section 3. Transfer or Dismissal:**

Any member in good standing may receive a letter of transfer and recommendation to any other church. The name of the church to which membership is being transferred shall be stated in the request and the letter shall be sent to the pastor or clerk of that church. Such letter shall be valid for only six months after its date, and this restriction shall be stated in the letter.

Any member in good and regular standing desiring to sever his membership without uniting with another church may receive a testimonial of Christian character upon making personal application for it.

The name of any member shall be removed from the membership roll within a reasonable time after such member (a) makes written request that his name be erased from the roll, (b) dies or (c) is known to have joined another church without having been dismissed.

The Board of Deacons shall present at each annual business meeting a list of members whose names should be transferred from the active member list to the "friends of the church" list. No such transfer shall be recommended unless for a period of not less than two years the member has without valid reason failed to participate in the public worship, the educational program or the

financial support of the church. Before such transfer is recommended the Deacons will make every attempt to communicate with the member in person or by letter to ascertain their intentions regarding their relationship with the church.

#### **Section 4. Affiliate Membership:**

Any person whose residence in Rockport is of temporary or seasonal nature, who is a member in good standing of any Christian church, upon letter of recommendation from his home church may be received as an affiliate member while retaining membership in his home church. Affiliate membership shall terminate when that person leaves with no intention of returning. An affiliate member shall have all privileges of membership other than a vote on church matters.

### **Article III. BUSINESS MEETINGS**

#### **Section 1. Fiscal Year:**

The fiscal year of the church shall begin on January 1 of each year and shall end December 31 of the same year.

#### **Section 2. Dates of Business Meetings:**

The annual business meeting of the church shall be held on the last Sunday of January. Committees and church leadership shall present a brief written report of their work for the first half of the year to the congregation on the last Sunday of July.

Special meetings may be called, through either the Clerk or the Moderator, by either the Pastor or seven members entitled to vote on the business for which the special meeting is called. The call for a special business meeting shall specify the matters that it is called to consider. Notice of a special business meeting, including a concise statement of the matters to be considered, shall be published in the church bulletin if possible and in any event by an announcement from the pulpit at the regularly scheduled public worship services on the two Sundays immediately preceding the special meeting. If practicable, similar notice shall also be published in a local newspaper.

#### **Section 3. Subjects to Be Considered:**

At the annual business meeting, all officers, boards, standing committees and auxiliary organizations shall submit written reports of their year's work. Such reports shall be presented before the church and subsequently submitted to the Clerk to be maintained as a permanent record of the church's activities for the year just ended. At the other regular business meetings, reports shall be limited to the following, unless other reports are specially requested: Clerk's minutes of the previous meeting, Pastor's report, Treasurer's report, and reports of the Board of Deacons and Board of Trustees and Finance.

Only the business specified in the call may be transacted at a special business meeting.

No sale or other conveyance or encumbrance of any real estate or substantial personal property of the church nor any expenditure of \$10,000 or more not included with the annual budget shall be authorized at any regular or special business meeting unless the call or other notice of the meeting

includes specific warning that such proposed sale, conveyance, encumbrance or expenditure will be considered.

Any office or position which is not filled at the annual business meeting or which thereafter becomes vacant may be filled for the portion of the term then unexpired at any regular business meeting or (if the filling of such office or position is a matter specified in the call) at a special business meeting.

#### **Section 4. Amendment of Bylaws:**

These bylaws may be amended at any regular business meeting by the affirmative votes of at least two-thirds of those members who are present and entitled to vote. No amendment shall be submitted to the church for a vote, however, until notice thereof shall have been given by at least the following means: (a) The full text of the proposed amendment shall be read from the pulpit at the regularly scheduled public worship service on the fourth Sunday prior to the business meeting. (b) The proposed amendment shall be posted in a conspicuous place in the church building at least one month before the business meeting. (c) Notice of the proposed amendment, including a concise statement thereof, shall be published in the church bulletin if possible and in any event by announcement from the pulpit at the regularly scheduled public worship services on the three Sundays immediately preceding the business meeting.

#### **Section 5. Quorum and Voting:**

Eleven members who are at least eighteen years of age shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Only members who are at least eighteen years of age may vote on financial matters or those affecting the property of the church. On all other matters, all members shall be entitled to vote.

Except as otherwise specifically stated herein, a majority of the votes cast with respect to a particular office or position shall be sufficient for election thereto and a majority of the votes cast with respect to a motion shall be sufficient to adopt or defeat the same.

#### **Section 6. Order of Business:**

Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of all church business meetings.

The order of business at all regular business meetings shall be: (1) prayer, (2) Clerk's minutes of the last meeting, (3) Pastor's report, (4) reports of the other officers and of boards, (5) if applicable, committee reports and reports of auxiliary organizations, (6) old business, (7) new business and (8) adjournment.

#### **Section 7. Continuity of Office:**

A term of one year, as that phrase is used herein, shall mean a term ending at the annual business meeting next following election, and terms of two and three years shall end at, respectively, the second and third annual business meetings after election. Nevertheless, every officer and every member of a board or committee shall continue to hold office, even after the annual business meeting at which his term would otherwise expire, until his successor is duly elected.

Forthwith upon the election of his successor, each officer and each member shall deliver into his successor's custody all books, records and other property for which he was responsible or which he held in connection with his office or position.

## **Article IV. THE PASTORATE**

### **Section 1. Duties:**

The Pastor shall be the leader of the church in all of its activities and shall preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, have charge of the stated services of public worship, and direct the spiritual welfare of the church. He shall be available as counselor to all members of the congregation and any others who may need his services. He shall be expected to lead the church to reach beyond its own constituency in obedience to the command of the Lord. In his administrative capacity he shall have supervision over the total program of the church, shall be a member ex officio of all boards, committees and auxiliary organizations of the church and shall lead the church in developing an effective program and a warm Christian fellowship.

### **Section 2. Call:**

When the pastorate becomes vacant, the Board of Deacons shall call a special business meeting for the election of a pastoral committee composed of five members and shall present to the church nominations for the said committee. The pastoral committee shall take necessary steps to secure the names of prospective pastors, working in cooperation with The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts. It shall request full information about the record and qualifications of those persons whose names are submitted for its consideration and shall not recommend a minister until such information has been so secured. When the committee has found unanimous agreement with a suitable person for the pastorate, it shall recommend him to the church for consideration. Only one such candidate shall be presented to the church at a time.

The call of a Pastor shall be considered by the church at a special meeting, notice of such meeting having been given in accordance with Section 2 of Article III and in addition by mailing at least one week before the scheduled meeting a letter addressed to each member at his last known address. A three-fourths majority of the members present and qualified to vote shall be necessary to extend a call.

In the call which is extended to a Pastor the following shall be stated: (1) the amount of salary to be paid, (2) the length of annual vacation with pay which will be granted to him by the church, (3) the amount of sick leave to be granted, (4) information regarding usage of the parsonage, and (5) pension payments, car allowance, hospitalization, telephone allowance, and other benefits.

### **Section 3. Termination:**

The term of office shall be without limit as to time but the Pastor or the church may terminate the pastorate upon three months written notice or upon less notice by mutual consent. The termination of the office by the church may be voted only at a special business meeting duly called for that purpose.

## **Article V. OFFICERS**

### **Section 1. Election and Term:**

Each of the officers referred to in this Article V shall be elected at each annual business meeting for a term of one year, except the Church School Superintendent and his assistant, if any, who shall be chosen in the manner and serve for the terms specified in Section 9. In addition, there may be elected for equal or shorter terms such assistants or other officers as the church may from time to time deem necessary or convenient.

### **Section 2. Clerk:**

The Clerk shall keep a complete record of all business transacted at the meetings of the church, a copy of which shall be read for approval at the following business meeting. He shall keep rolls of the names and addresses of members and records of dates and manner of admission and dismissal of members and former members and also a record of baptisms. He shall notify all officers, board and committee members, and delegates of their election. He shall issue letters of transfer and recommendation voted by the church, and give notice of all meetings as required by Article III. He shall assist in preparing denominational reports. He shall be the archivist of the church having the responsibility for safe-keeping of all historical records prepared and delivered to him by the Historian.

### **Section 3. Historian:**

The Historian shall collect newspaper and all other available sources on material comprising a record of the affairs of the church, shall assemble such materials in a manner suitable for preservation as part of the permanent archives of the church and shall then deliver the same to the clerk for safe-keeping.

### **Section 4. Moderator:**

The Moderator shall preside at all business meetings of the church.

### **Section 5. Treasurer:**

The Treasurer shall have custody of the funds of the church and all deposits made in the name of the church, and all checks drawn by him shall be in the name of the church. He shall keep separate accounts of all funds raised or contributed for particular purposes. He shall have custody of the securities, investments, title papers, and other valuable documents of the church.

The Treasurer shall receive, record and disburse all monies contributed for missions, sending the amount on hand each month to designated headquarters, all in accordance with the church budget and the special purposes for which said monies were contributed.

Funds received for the support of the church, and for the reduction of the church indebtedness, shall be disbursed by him only on the order of the Board of Stewards or on the vote of the church.

He shall present to the church an itemized report of receipts and disbursements, showing the actual financial condition of the church at each regular business meeting, this report to have been audited previously by the Auditor. He shall make such other financial reports as may be desired by the church.

**Section 6. Collector:**

The Collector shall receive and count the weekly offerings of the church and all other money that may come to him for church work, and it shall be his duty to keep a correct account thereof between the church and its members. He shall, among other things, furnish pledge cards and envelopes for contribution to church expense and benevolence, keep a record of all pledges made, and upon the Deacons' request report to the Board of Deacons the names of those members who have failed to make any contributions of record toward church expense or benevolence. Each week he shall render to the Treasurer and the Benevolence Treasurer statements of his collections and either deliver to them the monies collected or deposit the same in a bank selected by the Board of Stewards. The Collector shall, at the end of each fiscal year, report to the church an account of the matters pertaining to his office.

**Section 7. Auditor:**

The Auditor shall audit the books of the Treasurer and the Benevolence Treasurer and all other financial records of the church three times each year or whenever requested by the church to do so and shall make a report to the church thereupon as soon as possible.

**Section 8. Head Usher:**

The Head Usher shall cause to be done everything necessary or appropriate to express the hospitality and fellowship of the church at its public worship services, especially in the welcoming and seating of visitors, and shall perform such other duties as may be determined by the Board of Deacons.

**Article VI.  
BOARDS**

**Section 1. Board of Stewards:**

The three Trustees elected as provided in Section 3, the Pastor, the Treasurer and the Collector shall comprise the Board of Stewards, which shall hold in trust all property belonging to the church and shall take all necessary measures for its protection, management, and upkeep. The Board shall determine the use of the church building by outside groups in consultation with the Board of Deacons and shall determine suitable conditions for such use. It shall designate the bank where the funds of the church shall be deposited, shall secure the services of a caretaker of the buildings at such salary as is authorized by the church and supervise his services, and shall transact all legal matters on behalf of the church, including the negotiation of contracts.

The church shall not be bound to any agreement or contract except those negotiated by the Board of Stewards after authority therefor has been granted by two-thirds vote of the church at a regular or special business meeting duly recorded in the minutes kept by the Clerk. The previous sentence

shall not preclude officers, boards or committees' making expenditures within the limits of their budget as stated in the annual church budget adopted by the church.

After consultation with each officer, board and committee which § has responsibilities in the respective areas of concern and consideration of all budget requests submitted by any officer, board or committee, the Board shall prepare a recommended budget for the ensuing fiscal year. The recommended budget, together with, for the purposes of comparison, the budget for the current year, shall be mailed to each member at least one month prior to the annual business meeting and shall be presented for action at that meeting.

The Board shall supervise ways and means of raising the necessary funds for the support of the church and for the benevolences and for the disbursement of these funds as appropriated, which may include an annual every-member canvass for the current expenses and benevolences of the church.

### **Section 2. Diaconate:**

The Deacons elected as provided in Section 3, and the Pastor shall comprise the Board of Deacons, which shall have general oversight of the spiritual life and home and foreign mission work of the church. The Board of Deacons shall aid the Pastor in the performance of his duties and control the spiritual and moral use of the church property.

The Board shall advise with applicants for church membership and recommend them for church fellowship and assist in the administration of Baptism. The Deacons shall also provide for administration of the Lord's Supper and see that the pulpit is supplied and that the pastoral needs of the congregation are attended to when the Pastor is absent.

The Board of Deacons shall also be responsible for organization and administration of the educational program for the church and for the development of the educational objectives or goals of the church. The Board's responsibility includes, among other things, (a) studying the educational needs of the church, (b) evaluating curriculum, (c) making decisions concerning (i) time schedule, (ii) educational use of housing and equipment, and (iii) the elimination or addition of classes or programs, and (d) discovering, enlisting and training church educational workers. The Deacons are also responsible for coordinating and approving outreach programs of the church and church groups and organizations and for educational activities in cooperation with other churches. The Deacons are also responsible for overseeing the Sunday School.

The Board of Deacons shall be responsible for the promotion of mission work of the church through missionary services, mission projects and distribution of missionary literature. It shall also have full charge of the maintenance and use of the Deacons' Fund. Subject to express directions of the church in business meetings, the Deacons shall determine the distribution of monies pledged and given to the church for mission purposes.

### **Section 3. Election and Term:**

There may be elected at each annual business meeting Deacons and Trustees for a term of three years. There should be an attempt to maintain a balance of genders on the boards.



No person shall be elected to serve at one time in more than one position pursuant to the preceding paragraph. A person may serve simultaneously as a member of one Board and in an office which entitles ex officio membership on another Board. (For example, a Deacon may be elected as Treasurer, even though the Treasurer is ex officio a member of the Board of Stewards.)

Any elected member of a board who shall be absent from three (3) successive regularly scheduled meetings of that board, excepting unavoidable absences, shall be deemed to have resigned his position on that board. Any dispute as to whether an absence is unavoidable shall be resolved by the other two boards meeting jointly.

#### **Section 4. Organization:**

The Pastor shall call each board to meet within three weeks following the annual meeting to organize, to select a chairman and a secretary, and to establish a regular schedule of meetings. A special meeting may be called upon reasonable notice by the chairman or the secretary. A majority of the members of a board, including its members ex officio, shall constitute a quorum. Members ex officio shall be entitled to vote upon all matters which come before the Board but shall not be eligible to serve (except temporarily) as chairman or secretary of a Board.

Each board shall report to the church at all regular business meetings.

### **Article VII. COMMITTEES**

#### **Section 1. Music Committee:**

A Music Committee of five members shall select the organist and choir director and have general oversight of the music for public worship services. The choir director and organist shall be notified of, and normally shall attend, meetings of the Music Committee.

The Chairman of the Music Committee shall be elected at each annual business meeting for a term of one year. One member of the Music Committee shall be chosen by the Board of Deacons and one by the board of Stewards from their respective members, and one member of the Music Committee shall be chosen by the choir at its regular rehearsal next following the annual business meeting. The Pastor shall also be a member.

#### **Section 2. Church Personnel Safety Oversight and Nominating Committee:**

Each year a Church Personnel Safety Oversight and Nominating Committee shall be established. The first purpose of the Committee is to assure a safe environment for all persons participating in any activity associated with the First Baptist Church of Rockport or functioning on property owned by the First Baptist Church of Rockport. The Committee shall also exist to submit to the annual business meeting and any other regular business meeting at which the election of any officer or member of a board or committees may be considered nominations for all such positions then vacant. The Committee shall interview each person proposed to be nominated to ascertain their willingness and preparedness to serve if elected and shall then prepare a list of nominees and post it in a conspicuous place in the church building at least two weeks before such business meeting.

This Committee will consist of three members, the Committee Chairperson, the Pastor and a third member. The Chairperson will be elected during the Annual Meeting for a term of five years. The Board of Deacons and Board of Stewards working jointly will appoint one at-large member. Their term will also be for five years. The Committee will meet periodically for the following purposes

- A) The review and administration of background checks such as CORI or similar procedures offered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Safety and or the United States Department of Justice within the First Baptist Church of Rockport. The Chairperson will be the primary liaison between the Church and Governing authorities.
- B) In order to protect children, the church and to be a community that is striving for excellence, the church will require background checks on all persons serving in leadership. Pursuant to the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the contents of background checks will be held confidentially within the Committee. All Church officers, all members of the Boards of Deacons, all members of the Board of Stewards, all persons who are employed by the church (with the exception of temporary contractors or temporary employees), all persons who teach children and any other category deemed necessary by the Church Personnel Safety and Nominating Committee will be required to have a background check on file with the Committee. Each background check is to be updated every three years. Persons cannot serve in any leadership position as defined in Article IV, Article V, Article VI and Article VII or in any leadership capacity with children until they have cleared a background check and been approved by the Committee.
- C) The Board of Stewards is required to only grant keys and access to Church property to individuals who have been approved by the Church Personnel Safety Oversight and Nominating Committee.
- D) All Christian Education and Youth Group Volunteers are required to comply with the Church Safety Oversight and Nominating Committee.
- E) Each year the Committee shall review and or establish a policy for child safety in relation to Sunday Schools, Youth Groups and all other events involving individuals under the age of eighteen. The policy and subsequent updates shall be made available on the church website.
- F) Every year all persons defined in point B must read the Child Safety Policy (referenced in point E) and submit written acknowledgment of having read the document and agree to adhere to its standards. Written acknowledgment of the Child Safety Policy for every given year must be completed prior to the Annual Meeting and on file with the Committee.
- G) All outside groups using the church or church property will be subject to the oversight and conditions of the Church Personnel Safety Oversight and Nominating Committee.
- H) The Committee shall review policies with outside legal counsel once every five years. A written acknowledgment of this review shall be included in Annual Reports pertaining to years ending in "0" or "5".

### **Section 3. Other Committees:**

From time to time, as the need arises, special committees may be formed for the specific purposes upon majority vote of the church at a regular or special business meeting. Each committee shall be of temporary nature and shall terminate automatically upon its fulfilling the purpose for which

it was established. Members of such committees shall be appointed by the Moderator unless some other manner of selection is specified in the vote of the church by which the special committee is formed. Each such special committee formed by the church shall file a written report with the Clerk upon its termination.

#### **Section 4. Advisory Council:**

The Chairpersons of the two boards and all committees, together with the Pastor and other officers of the church, shall comprise the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council shall meet from time to time at the call of the Pastor or any five members of the Council to consider any problems confronting the church and render advice thereupon to the appropriate board, committee or officer or to a business meeting of the church. The Pastor shall act as chairman of the Advisory Council and the Clerk shall act as its secretary.

#### **Section 5. Hospitality Team:**

The Hospitality Team shall be responsible for coordinating and or delegating the coordination of special events that meet for the purpose of the general fellowship of the First Baptist Church of Rockport. The Team oversight will include but not be limited to the after church coffee hour and fellowship meals. The Team will oversee the use and condition of the kitchen. The Hospitality Team will along with the Board of Deacons seek to practice excellence in church hospitality. As needed the Board of Deacons may apportion funds for the purpose of the ministry of hospitality. The Board of Deacons shall appoint a Hospitality Team Coordinator for a term of one year. The person or persons responsible for coordinating church flowers will work in conjunction with the Hospitality Team.

### **Article VIII. ORGANIZATIONS AND DELEGATES**

#### **Section 1. Auxiliary Organizations:**

An auxiliary organization is one which works with and for the church's interest and which has been officially recognized by vote of the church at a regularly scheduled business meeting.

The Clerk shall maintain a roster of organizations thus recognized. Each auxiliary organization shall be responsible to the church for its activities and shall file a written report of its activities and a financial statement of income and expenses at the annual business meeting.

#### **Section 2. Delegates and Representatives:**

The Board of Deacons shall submit at the annual business meeting nominations of delegates or representatives to the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, the Adoniram Judson Baptist Association, the Cape Ann Interfaith Commission and other organizations and endeavors; nominations may also be made from the floor. Thereupon, the church shall elect for terms of one year delegates or representatives in such number as the church is entitled to send.