

# FLORIDA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION: CONSTITUTION

*Last Revised November, 2005 [Current Version as of November, 2010]*

**Article 1.** This body shall be called the Florida Baptist State Convention.

**Article 2.** The membership of this State Convention shall be composed of messengers from cooperating Baptist churches, which shall include constituted churches and church-type missions, that are in friendly cooperation with this State Convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work, as defined by the State Convention's bylaws.

A. Every cooperating local church shall be entitled to three messengers and one additional messenger for every hundred additional members in excess of one hundred. Each church shall appoint or elect and then certify those members who shall serve as messengers to the State Convention annual meeting. No church may appoint more than ten messengers.

B. A messenger is an appointed or elected representative of their church or church-type mission who is assigned the responsibility to represent their church at the annual meeting of the Florida Baptist State Convention. In the role of messenger this individual, acting on the basis of their individual conscience and beliefs, may vote on business and issues. Additionally, the messenger is expected to report back to their church on the actions taken and information shared at the annual meeting.

**Article 3.** The general object of this State Convention shall be to facilitate the union and cooperation of Florida Baptists in the work of upbuilding the kingdom of Christ in the state and throughout the world. Its more specific objects shall be to promote spiritual religion by all Scriptural means; to foster the spirit of worldwide missions; to support Christian and Theological education; to encourage the spirit and practice of liberal and systematic benevolence; and to accept any designated contribution, grant, bequest or devise provided it is consistent with the Convention's (1) mission and priorities, (2) budget process and fiscal restrictions, (3) full ownership and control of the funds or assets, and (4) tax-exempt purposes. As so limited, donor-designated contributions will be accepted for special funds, purposes or uses, and such designations will be honored. The Corporation shall reserve all right, title and interest in and to, and control of such contributions, as well as full discretion as to the ultimate expenditure or distribution thereof in connection with any special fund, purpose or use.

**Article 4.** While independent and sovereign in its own sphere, this State Convention does not claim and will never attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church auxiliary organization, association, or convention; nor shall this State Convention be limited or restrained by any authority or decisions of such bodies in the promotion of its work.

**Article 5.** The officers of this State Convention shall be a President, a First Vice-President, a Second Vice-President and a Recording Secretary. Persons nominated for each office shall be elected by ballot by the end of the second day of each annual meeting by a majority of all votes cast. Newly elected officers shall hold their office from the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected until their successors are elected and take office, which typically shall be a one-year term. The Bylaws shall prescribe the procedures for candidates to be nominated and selected, as well as describe the responsibilities of these officers.

A. Either the President or one of the Vice-Presidents shall be a layperson other than a person ordained to the gospel ministry or a member of the professional staff of a church. Additionally, either the President or one of the Vice-Presidents shall be a person ordained to the gospel ministry or a member of the professional staff of a church.

B. Nominations for the offices of First Vice-President and Second Vice-President shall not be made until after the election of the President has been announced and declared. After the ballots have been cast or election of these officers, the nomination and election of the Recording Secretary shall be conducted.

C. No person shall be elected as an officer who is not a certified messenger to the State Convention at the time of the nomination. No employee or staff member of the Florida Baptist Convention, Inc., or any agency, institution or association may serve as an officer of the Florida Baptist State Convention. No employee or staff member of any agency or institution receiving Cooperative Program funds may serve as an officer of the Florida Baptist State Convention.

D. The person elected to serve as either the President or as one of the Vice-Presidents may serve two (2) consecutive one-year terms in the same office. In no case shall a person serve in the same office after serving two consecutive (one-year) terms until as much as one (1) year has elapsed from the time a successor is elected. The person nominated for Recording Secretary may be re-elected annually.

E. Upon the resignation, removal, disability or death of the President, the First Vice-President shall automatically become President, the next in succession to be the Second Vice-President.

F. Upon the resignation, removal, disability or death of the President, the First Vice-President and the Second Vice-President, the Administrative/Personnel Committee of the State Board of Missions shall serve as a nominating committee to nominate a President, a First Vice-President and a Second Vice-President for election by the State Board of Missions, who shall then serve as officers of the State Convention through the next annual meeting of the Florida Baptist State Convention.

G. Upon the resignation, removal, disability or death of the Recording Secretary, the President of this State Convention and the Executive Director-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, Inc., shall appoint a Recording Secretary to serve until his successor is elected and takes office.

**Article 6.** It shall be the duty of the President, assisted by the Vice-Presidents, to preside over the body, keep order, take the vote on all questions properly brought up, and to perform all other duties usually performed by such officers.

**Article 7.** The Recording Secretary shall assist the staff of the Executive Director-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention in their responsibility for all the papers and documents committed to their care, keeping correct minutes of all proceedings of this State Convention and preparing the same for publication, of which a permanent file shall be preserved, which shall constitute the authentic record of this State Convention. The Recording Secretary may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred for services rendered and may choose an assistant.

**Article 8.** The State Convention shall have a fraternal relationship with the Pembroke Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit Florida corporation designed to provide financial assistance and leadership to Southern Baptist church-type missions primarily in the state of Florida. This fraternal relationship shall not encumber nor obligate the State Convention to provide financial resources to the Pembroke Foundation, Inc.

**Article 9.** This Convention may create such boards, commissions, committees and other agencies as may be required to promote the work of this State Convention.

A. Any and all such agencies, whether or not they receive Cooperative Program funds, shall make annual reports to this State Convention and the State Board of Missions.

B. In keeping with the Business and Financial Plan of the State Convention as set forth in the Bylaws, boards, commissions and agencies shall provide annual audits for inclusion in the Convention Annual.

C. The Executive Director-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention shall serve as an ex officio, non-voting member of all boards of trustees or directors of State Convention agencies and institutions. The Executive Director-Treasurer or his designee shall be permitted to attend all regular and special meetings, including executive sessions, of the respective boards and their committees.

D. The Executive Director-Treasurer shall serve as an ex officio, voting member of any newly-created committee or study group authorized by the State Convention.

**Article 10.** The State Convention reserves the right to elect and remove any and all persons who are nominated to serve as members of convention committees, as well as, persons nominated to serve as a trustee or director of any convention-related entity. These entities shall specifically include: (1) State Board of Missions; (2) Florida Baptist Children's Homes; (3) The Baptist College of Florida; (4) Florida Baptist Financial Services, Inc. (and its several related divisions of work, including the Florida Baptist Foundation, Inc., Florida Baptist Auxiliary Enterprises, Inc., and Church Growth Investment Fund, Inc.); and (5) Florida Baptist Witness. The number of persons, terms of service, and qualifications for a trustee or director shall be defined by the Bylaws of the respective agency. The State Convention's Bylaws shall specify the procedure for the nomination, election and the removal process of a trustee, director or convention committee member.

**Article 11.** The annual meeting of this State Convention shall be held during the month of November at such time and place as the State Convention may elect. The State Board of Missions may change the meeting place and/or time, including the month, of the annual meeting of the State Convention in any given year.

**Article 12.** The President of the Florida Baptist State Convention may request the State Board of Missions to call a special session of the State Convention. The State Board of Missions on its own initiative, with or without the concurrence of the Convention President, may call special meetings of the State Convention. To call a special session of the Florida Baptist State Convention requires a two-thirds affirmative vote of the total membership of the State Board of Missions, under either initiative. The Board members shall be polled by the Executive Director-Treasurer and the member's vote shall be secured in writing.

**Article 13.** This Constitution or any article thereof may be amended by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the messengers present and voting at a meeting at which a quorum is present, at two (2) successive annual sessions of the State Convention. Notice of any change proposed must be published in the *Florida Baptist Witness* at least thirty days prior to the annual meeting of the State Convention.