

**Constitution and By-Laws  
of the  
First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc.  
Ministering as  
Open Door Fellowship**

**Adopted: January 22, 2006  
Revised: January 10, 2010**

**CONSTITUTION**

**PREAMBLE**

We the members of the first Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. in order to promote the work of the church and advance the cause of Christ do set forth and adopt this constitution.

**ARTICLE I**

**NAME AND PURPOSE**

SECTION I. Name. The corporate name of this organization shall be the First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc.; however, the operational name of this organization shall be Open Door Fellowship. Hence forth in this document this organization is referred to as “organization” or “church”.

SECTION II. Purpose. The purpose of this organization shall be:

1. To preach and promote by every legitimate (i.e, Biblically acceptable) means available the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ both at home and abroad that the lost everywhere might be saved.
2. To support the various ministries of the Free Will Baptist denomination as they endeavor to carry out the Great Commission.
3. To provide opportunities for spiritual fellowship and Christian growth and maturity for God’s people.
4. To plant other churches through active evangelism in other communities.

**ARTICLE II**

**DOCTRINAL STATEMENT AND COVENANT**

SECTION I. Doctrinal Statement. Those who hold membership in this organization shall subscribe to the statements of faith and practices as set forth in The Treatise of Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, Inc., Revised.

SECTION II. Covenant. As believers in Christ, we are bound together for worship and service by the following covenant:

**A Free Will Baptist Congregation**



Having given ourselves to God, by faith in Christ, and adopted the Word of God as our rule of faith and practice, we now give ourselves to one another by the will of God in this solemn covenant.

We promise, by His grace, to love and obey Him in all things, to avoid all appearance of evil, to abstain from all sinful amusements and unholy conformity to the world, from all sanction of the use and sale of intoxicating beverages, and to "provide things honest in the sight of all men."

We agree faithfully to discharge our obligations in reference to the study of the Scriptures, secret prayer, family devotions, and social worship; and by self-denial, faith, and good works endeavor to "grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together for church conferences, public worship, and the observance of the ordinances of the Gospel; nor fail to pay according to our ability for the support of the church, of its poor, and all its benevolent work.

We agree to accept Christian admonition and reproof with meekness, and to watch over one another in love, endeavoring to "keep the unity of the Spirit" in the bonds of peace, to be careful of one another's happiness and reputation, and seek to strengthen the weak, encourage the afflicted, admonish the erring, and as far as we are able, promote the success of the church and of the Gospel.

We will everywhere hold Christian principle sacred and Christian obligations and enterprises supreme; counting it our chief business in life to extend the influence of Christ in society, constantly praying and toiling that the kingdom of God may come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

To this end we agree to labor for the promotion of educational and denominational enterprises, the support of missions, the success of Sunday schools, and evangelistic efforts for the salvation of the world. And may the God of peace sanctify us wholly, and preserve us blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **ARTICLE III**

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

**SECTION I. Active Membership.** The active membership of this organization shall consist solely of those who profess Jesus Christ to be both their Lord and Savior, who consent to the beliefs and practices of this organization as defined in Article II Section I, and who adhere to the covenant set forth in Article II Section II. The organization shall maintain an active list of those who meet the standards set forth in this section thereby identifying those on the active list as being in good and regular standing. Those who are in good and regular standing have the right to participate in the governing process of the organization.

**SECTION II. Reception of Members.** Individuals may gain active membership status in this organization by majority vote of the active membership, by meeting the standards of active membership as defined in Article III Section I, by completing a new members' orientation, and by meeting one of the following requirements.

1. Baptism. An individual who has been duly baptized by immersion following his/her conversion is considered to have met this requirement.
2. Letter. An individual may be received based on a letter of recommendation and statement of good standing from another church of like faith (i.e., doctrinally fundamental, evangelical church as determined by the Pastor).
3. Statement of Faith. An individual may be received by his/her public profession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, declaration of baptism by immersion following conversion, and by the recommendation of an active member in good and regular standing.
4. Restoration. Any former member of this organization whose name because of disciplinary action was removed from the active role of members in good and regular standing may be reinstated by a majority vote of the active membership in a regular business meeting upon evidence of repentance and appropriate restitution to the wronged if applicable.

SECTION III. Dismissal of Members. Members may be dismissed from the membership list and lose their status as a member in good and regular standing for any of the following reasons:

1. Discipline of Members. Any member who for any reason does not adhere to the doctrinal statements and covenant as set forth in Article II Sections I and II shall be subject to removal from the active membership list. Prior to removal from the active membership list, the organization is to take the steps to correct a member as defined in Matthew 18:15-17. The Pastor, or in his absence the chair of the Board of Deacons, shall be the leader in any correction action undertaken.
2. Transfer. Letters of standing will be granted for members who transfer to other evangelical churches upon application for said letter from the receiving church. The content and recommendation of said letter is at the discretion of the pastor.
3. Request. An individual can provide a written request to be removed from the active list of members in good and regular standing maintained by the organization.
4. Death. Upon the death of any member, his/her name shall be automatically removed from the membership list.

SECTION IV. Member who Moves. A member who moves from the area is encouraged to seek membership in a church of like faith in the area of his/her new home. If a member desires to maintain his/her membership in this organization, he/she is expected to attend worship regularly wherever they are and to maintain correspondence with and financial support of this organization. The standing of the individual in this situation is absent with reason. Any individual designated as absent with reason must be reinstated by a majority vote of the members in good and regular standing present at a business meeting before rights of participation in church government can resume.

## ARTICLE IV

### OFFICERS and COMMITTEES

SECTION I. Corporate Officers. The corporate officers are to be the pastor who serves as the chief operating officer, the clerk, and the treasurer. Members in good and regular standing (see Article III Section I) are to elect the corporate officers as outlined in Article IV Section II and Article IV Section IV.

SECTION II. Pastor. The members in good and regular standing (see Article III Section I) present at a duly scheduled business session are to elect by a majority vote the pastor who will then serve for an indefinite term.

SECTION III. Pastor Dismissal. The active membership in good and regular standing (see Article III Section I) can petition for a vote of support for the pastor if three fourths (75%) of the active membership on record as being in good and regular standing sign the petition. Once a petition is signed by three fourths (75%) of the active membership in good and regular standing, a vote is to be scheduled and announced at two separate Sunday worship services. The vote must be scheduled at least seven (7) days after the second announcement of the vote. If the pastor fails to receive a majority vote of support, then a vote of dismissal is to be called.

If a majority of members present for the vote of dismissal favors dismissal of the pastor, the pastor is given a notice of dismissal with a dismissal date not less than thirty (30) days following the date of the vote or any period longer than thirty (30) days as specified in the vote. The dismissal vote should include direction to the Pastor as to his responsibilities during the dismissal period.

SECTION IV. Other Officers. The organization shall elect at the annual business session a clerk and treasurer. As the organization deems necessary it may establish other officers who will serve a term determined at the establishment of the office.

1. Clerk. The Clerk serves at the discretion of the membership for a term of one (1) year.

Paragraph A. Duties. The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of the business meetings and the membership of the church. He/She shall provide reports as may be required by the organization or the denomination.

Paragraph B. Election. The Clerk shall be elected in the annual business session each year by a majority vote of members in good and regular standing present at the business session. Should the office be vacated before the expiration of the term, then the clerk shall be elected at any duly called business session and shall then serve until the next annual business session.

Paragraph C. Dismissal. The Clerk may be dismissed by a majority vote of members in good and regular standing at any duly called business session.

2. Treasurer. The Treasurer serves at the discretion of the membership for a term of one (1) year.

Paragraph A. Duties. The Treasurer shall keep a complete and accurate account of all receipts and disbursements of the church. He/She shall be authorized to deposit all monies in the name and to the credit of the church, make the disbursements of all funds as ordered by the church, provide quarterly and annual financial reports, and perform such other duties that pertain to his/her office.

Paragraph B. Election. The Treasurer shall be elected in the annual business session each year by a majority vote of members in good and regular standing present at the business session. Should the office be vacated before the expiration of the term, then the clerk shall be elected at any duly called business session and shall then serve until the next annual business session.

Paragraph C. Dismissal. The Treasurer may be dismissed by a majority vote of members in good and regular standing at any duly called business session.

SECTION V. Boards and Committees. The organization shall maintain an active Board of Directors and an active Deacon Board. As the organization deems necessary it may establish other boards or committees that will serve for a time period and a purpose determined at the establishment of the board or committee.

1. Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall consist of one (1) deacon representative, three (3) general board members, and a chairperson for a total of five (5) members.

Paragraph A. Duties. The Board of Directors serves as the trustees for the organization and monitors the general business activities of the organization. The board is expected to meet at least on a quarterly basis to review the organization's needs. Meetings of the board may be called at any time by the Pastor or the Chairperson.

Paragraph B. Election of Board of Directors. The three (3) general board members and the chairperson shall be elected by a majority vote of members in good and regular standing at an annual business session. The deacon representative is appointed by the Deacon Board. All Board of Directors shall serve for a term of two (2) years. Vacated positions may be filled by an election held at any duly called business session and the person elected shall then serve the balance of the vacated position's original term.

Paragraph C. Dismissal. Elected Board of Directors may be dismissed by a majority vote of members in good and regular standing at any duly called business session. The Deacon representative may have his appointment recanted by the Deacon Board.

2. Deacon Board. The Deacon Board shall consist of four (4) men who meet the requirements set fourth in Scripture (I Timothy 2:8-13) to hold the office of deacon.

Paragraph A. Duties. The Deacon Board serves the church by encouraging the spiritual well being of the organization, by being spiritual examples before the congregation, by visiting the sick and shut-ins, by the general care of widows and orphans, by evangelism, by enabling the pastor to concentrate on prayer and teaching, and by any other Scriptural means to help the church achieve its mission.

Paragraph B. Election of Deacons. Deacons shall be elected at an annual business session and shall serve for a term of three (3) years. First time deacons are to be ordained by the church in a special service designated for such a purpose. Vacated positions may be filled by an election at the next annual business session.

Paragraph C. Dismissal. Deacons may be dismissed by a majority vote of members in good and regular standing at any duly called business session.

SECTION VI. General Qualifications. At the time appointed, all officers, board or committee members must be members in good and regular standing (see Article III Section I) with the exception of the Pastor who should join at his first opportunity after accepting the call from the church (see Article IV Section II).

## ARTICLE V

### GOVERNMENT

This organization shall be operated according to the principles of congregational church government.

## ARTICLE VI

### AUXILIARIES

All auxiliary organizations of the church shall be subject to the approval and control of the church.

## ARTICLE VII

### MEETINGS

SECTION I. **Worship and Teaching Services.** Worship and/or teaching services are established at the discretion of the Pastor or the organization's members in good and regular standing (Article III Section I).

SECTION II. **Business Meetings (Conferences).** An annual business meeting shall be held in the evening service of the second Sunday in January of each year. Other business meetings can be held at any time deemed necessary by the Pastor or the Board of Directors. Any called business meeting must be announced at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

## ARTICLE VIII

### FINANCIAL POLICY

The financial needs of this organization shall be met through voluntary gifts, offerings, and tithes.

## ARTICLE IX

### PROPERTY

SECTION I. Uses by the Organization. The property of the organization shall be used only for the worship of God, the teaching of God's Word, or fellowship of believers as set forth in the purpose for the organization (Article I Section II). Such uses include worship, teaching/study (small group meetings), church auxiliary meetings (youth, women's, men's groups), associational meetings, weddings (including receptions), anniversaries, birthdays, outreach ministries, or any other church related meeting deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors ~~Pastor~~.

SECTION II. Uses by Other Organizations or Groups. Use of church property by any group other than a duly authorized organization of the church must be approved by the Board of Directors.

SECTION III. **Ownership and Control of Property.** The Board of Directors shall serve as trustees to oversee real estate or other property held in the name of First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Inc. or any other name used by the organization.

## BY-LAWS

SECTION I. Active Member in Good and Regular Standing. The governing membership of this organization shall be all those who meet the requirements for members in good and regular standing as set forth in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (i.e., Open Door Fellowship) in Article III Section I.

Paragraph A. Admission of Members in Good and Regular Standing. Individuals may become active members in good and regular standing by the means set forth in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (i.e., Open Door Fellowship) in Article III Section II.

Paragraph B. Dismissal of Members from Good and Regular Standing. Individuals may be dismissed by those means outlined in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (i.e., Open Door Fellowship) in Article III Sections III and IV.

Paragraph C. Duties of Members in Good and Regular Standing. Members are expected to adhere to the covenant set forth in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (i.e., Open Door Fellowship) in Article II Sections II.

Paragraph D. Members in Standings other than Good and Regular Standing. Members in Standings other than Good and Regular Standing have no governing rights in the organization. Other membership standings are:

1. Absent with Reason. An individual becomes a Member Absent with Reason when he/she is providentially hindered from actively participating in the organization on a regular basis, but the individual continues to support the organization with whatever means he/she can. Examples of this standing are those who have moved too far away to take an active part in the ministries of the organization but who want to maintain membership in the organization or those homebound or in nursing homes for reasons of health and/or age.
2. Absent. An individual becomes a Member Absent when he/she has moved away without continued support or good reason. Upon recommendation of the Pastor an individual with this standing can be suspended for failure to meet his/her obligations under the church covenant.
3. Suspended. An individual is suspended as outlined in Paragraph B of the By-Laws and as outlined in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (i.e., Open Door Fellowship) in Article III Sections III and IV.
4. Past. An individual becomes a Member in Past Standing when he/she dies or upon written request.

SECTION II. Pastor. The Pastor serves as outlined in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (i.e., Open Door Fellowship) in Article IV Sections II and III.

SECTION III. Clerk. The Clerk serves as outlined in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (d.b.a Open Door Fellowship) in Article IV Section IV Part 1.

SECTION IV. Treasurer. The Treasurer serves as outlined in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (d.b.a Open Door Fellowship) in Article IV Section IV Part 2.

SECTION V. Boards and Committees. Boards and committees serve as outlined in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (d.b.a Open Door Fellowship) in Article IV Section V.

SECTION VI. Business Meetings. Business meetings may be held as outlined in the Constitution for First Free Will Baptist Church of Valdosta, Georgia, Inc. (i.e., Open Door Fellowship) in Article VII Section II.

SECTION VII. Participation in Business Meetings. Active members in good and regular standing who are at least eighteen years of age at the time of the meeting can participate in the business meeting.

SECTION VIII. Parliamentary Procedure. Procedures in all business sessions shall be conducted in an orderly fashion. The Pastor or the Chairperson of the Board of Directors or the Chairman of the Deacon Board shall serve as the moderator in all business sessions.

SECTION IX. Church Year. The church year is to be a calendar year running from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

SECTION X. Adoption and Amendments. This Constitution and By-Laws shall be adopted and put into effect after a majority vote of members in good and regular standing present at a business meeting.

Paragraph A. Previous Rules. The adoption of these rules shall effect a repeal of all previously adopted rules in conflict herewith.

Paragraph B. Modifications. The Constitution or any of these By-Laws may be amended, altered, or repealed by a two-thirds majority vote of the active members in good and regular standing present at a business meeting.