

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

MT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH OF COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI

Constitution

PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner.

I. NAME

The legal name of the body shall be known as the Mt Vernon Baptist Church of Columbus, Mississippi.

II. PURPOSE

Our purpose is to help people discover and fulfill their God given purpose for living. Specifically, we long to be a church that:

- Is a dynamic spiritual organism empowered by the Holy spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and the world;
- Is a worshiping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership;
- Experiences an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers;
- Assists others to experience a growing knowledge of God and His relationship to mankind;
- Ministers unselfishly to persons in the community and the world in Jesus' name; and
- Strives to be Christlike in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the Lordship of Christ.

III. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Bible

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are God's revelation of Himself to mankind. They were written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, with the result that Scripture is God's Word—entirely true and without error in the original writings. They are the supreme and final authority for Christian beliefs and living. We further believe that the focus of all Scripture is the

person and work of Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Psalm 119:11, 89, 105, 160; Jude 3; Romans 15:4; Titus 1:1-3)

God

We believe there is one living and true God, who is the Creator, Preserver, Redeemer and Ruler of the universe. He is infinitely perfect in every way and eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (in a relationship known as the Trinity). We believe these three are one God and each possesses fully the nature, attributes and perfections of deity. (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 6:1-3; 40:12-28; 45:5-7; Jeremiah 10:10; Matthew 28:19; Acts 17:24-25; Romans 11:33-36; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 3:20)

Jesus Christ

We believe Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary—a miraculous process by which he received a human body and a sinless human nature. He is fully God and fully human in one person. We believe He lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to the law of God. Through His death on the cross, He made provision for the salvation of sinful people. We believe He was raised from the dead with a glorified body, ascended into heaven where He rules over the universe and prays for His people, and will one day return visibly to earth. (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 24:14-43; John 1:1, 14; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:15-22; 2:9; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 7:25; 1 Peter 2:21-24)

The Human Condition and Salvation

We believe that God created mankind in His own image and for His glory as the crowning work of His creation. However, man sinned against God and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. This spiritual death has been transmitted to the entire human race (except for Christ) with the result that every person is born into the world with a sinful nature that rebels against God and is under His condemnation. (Genesis 1:26-28; 3; Psalm 8:3-8; 14:1-3; 51:5; Isaiah 59:2; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:12, 19; 6:23; Galatians 3:22; Ephesians 2:1-3)

We also believe the incredibly good news found in the Bible that those who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior become spiritually new people who are declared “not guilty” for their sin and receive the gift of eternal life. This salvation is acquired through faith alone, apart from any good or religious works, and is based entirely on the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as their substitute. We believe that Christ’s resurrection demonstrated God’s full acceptance of his death as payment for sin and foreshadows the final resurrection of all believers. (John 3:16, 18, 36; 14:6; Romans 4:25; 5:1, 6-9; 6:23; 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 1:13-14; Titus 3:5)

We believe that the Holy Spirit comes to live in those who are “reborn” as God’s children. As Christians live in obedience to God, the Holy Spirit empowers them to gradually overcome the power of sin and become more like Christ. We believe that those who are truly born again will be protected by God’s power and steadfastly continue in

their Christian life until the end. (John 10:28-29; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 2:12; 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23-24; Jude 24)

The Church

We believe in the one, universal Church made up of all who have trusted Christ, who is Head of the Church, which is His body. We also believe in the local church, which is an autonomous, geographically-local congregation of baptized believers who gather for worship, spiritual growth, service, fellowship and observance of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The local church operates under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and is governed by pastors/elders who are assisted by deacons. It grows as each member serves the body using the spiritual gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit, resulting in maturity, unity and glory to God. Christ has commissioned the church and its individual members to spread the Gospel throughout the world. (Matthew 16:16-19; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; 20:28; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:20-21; 4:11-16; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Timothy 3)

We believe that the Lord Jesus has given the local church two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. All who have received Christ as Savior should be baptized by immersion as a symbolic testimony to their participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Likewise, believers should regularly partake of the Lord's Supper as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's death and as a testimony of our fellowship with Him and our unity as the body of Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

The Last Days

We believe that at God's appointed time, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly to the earth and establish His kingdom. We believe in the bodily resurrection of believers and unbelievers. At the final judgment, unbelievers will be separated forever from God in a place of everlasting punishment because of their rejection of Jesus Christ. Believers, in their resurrected bodies, will live in God's glorious presence as they worship and serve Him forever. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 14:3; Acts 1:6-11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26; Philippians 3:20-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Hebrews 9:27-28; 2 Peter 3:7-13; Revelation 20-22)

IV. RELATIONSHIPS

Mt Vernon Baptist Church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Christ-centered, Biblical churches. Insofar as it is practical and beneficial for the building of the Kingdom of God, this church will cooperate with and support the association and state convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

V. CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to maintain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also encourage family and individual devotions, to disciple our children in the Christian faith, and to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.

To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense but always ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Bylaws

I. General

The church retains the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this body.

II. Membership

Section 1. Candidacy

A person requesting membership at Mt Vernon must profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; be or previously have been baptized by immersion; and complete the Mt Vernon Church Membership Record.

Section 2. Voting Right of Members

Every member of the church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to a Church Conference, provided the member is present on campus at the time of the vote.

Section 3. Termination of Membership

A member will be removed from the church role by one of the following acts:

- A. Death
- B. Transfer to another church
- C. Exclusion by action of the church elders

III. Church Leadership

All church leadership must be members of the church. The leadership of this church shall be as follows:

Section 1. Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. His primary responsibility is the ministry of teaching the Word and ministry through prayer. He will seek to lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, discipleship, ministry, and mission.

A Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given. At

said meeting the church will consider a candidate recommended by the Senior Pastor Search Ministry Team. Election shall be by written ballot, an affirmative vote of seventy five percent of those members present being necessary for a choice. The pastor thus elected shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request, upon motion brought before a Church Conference.

Section 2. Church Staff

This church shall employ such ministerial staff members as the church shall need. Ministerial staff members other than the Senior Pastor shall be recommended to the church for affirmation, seventy five percent of those members voting being necessary for affirmation. Unless determined otherwise by the Elders, affirmation will be by written ballot.

Section 3. Elders

General: A body of Elders is entrusted with authority for oversight of the ministries of Mt Vernon Baptist Church as specified in this document. The Elders will be selected from the male membership of the church as led by the Holy Spirit and affirmed by the congregation.

Qualifications: The Biblical qualifications for selecting men to serve as Elders are: Acts 14:23; Acts 15; Acts 20; I Timothy 3:1-7; I Timothy 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4.

Number and Term of Service: There will be a minimum of three (3) active Elders, plus the Teaching Elder, who is the Senior Pastor. The number of Elders may increase or decrease upon recommendation of the Elder Team but will not have less than three (3) active members. Elders will serve on a rotating term of three (3) years. If an elder serves two consecutive full or partial terms, he will not be eligible to serve as an Elder for twelve (12) months after his second term expires. The Elders will assume office on January 1 of the year following approval by the church.

Selection: The Elder Nomination Ministry Team will begin the selection of prospective elders prior to the selection of Deacons and Ministry Team Members.

- A. The Elder Nomination Ministry Team will solicit nominations from church members.
- B. The Team will pray and determine whether any nominees on the list are prepared to serve based on Biblical and church qualifications.
- C. Upon unanimous recommendation from the Elder Nomination Ministry Team, the nominees will be presented to the church for

affirmation at a pre-announced worship service, prior to final selection by the Elder Nomination Ministry Team.

- D. Vacancies and/or unexpired terms may be filled at the discretion of the Elder body. If the Elders choose to fill the vacancy, the nominee will be from the latest elder nomination list. These nominations will be affirmed by the church according to the above procedures.

Officers: Each year the Elders will elect from its body a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. The Teaching Elder (Senior Pastor) is not eligible for any of these positions.

Records: The Elders shall keep minutes of their meetings on file in the church office.

Responsibilities: The Elders will oversee the servant leadership of the Body of Mt Vernon Baptist Church by:

1. Teaching and feeding of the flock (1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17; 1 Thess 5:12; Titus 1:9)
2. Providing leadership to the flock (Acts 20:28, 1 Thess 5:12, Hebrews 13:17)
 - in practical matters (Acts 6:1-6; 11:29-30)
 - in matters of doctrine (Acts 15; 16:4) and
 - in matters of discipline and character (Heb 13:17)
3. Caring for the flock in a loving manner (James 5:14-15, Acts 20:35; Hebrews 13:17)
4. Protecting the flock (1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28)

Discipline and Removal: Any Elder may be removed from office by resignation or by unanimous vote of the other Elders plus concurrence by the church. His position will remain vacant until the next regularly scheduled election or until the current Elders choose an approved replacement.

Exclusions: Elders shall have no power to acquire, sell, pledge, borrow or mortgage real property without a specific vote of the corporation authorizing each action.

Authority to Act: It shall be the function of the Chairman of Elders, or in his absence the Vice-Chairman of Elders, to affix his signature, if so duly authorized by church vote, to legal documents involving the acquiring, selling, pledging, borrowing, or mortgaging real property of the church or other legal documents where the signature of a church officer is required.

Section 4. Deacons

General: In accordance with the meaning of the work and practice of the New Testament, Deacons are to be the leading servants of the church. Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the congregations' physical welfare. Deacons have the honor of modeling, for the local church and the lost world, God's compassion, kindness, mercy and love.

Qualifications: The Biblical qualifications for selecting men to serve as Deacons are: 1Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13.

Number and Term of Service: The Deacons shall serve a 3-year term and are eligible to serve consecutive terms. The number of deacons shall be decided by the needs of the church and the number of men adequately qualified to hold the office. This number shall be determined by the Deacons and approved by the Elders.

Selection: The selection process will be determined by the Elders. A list of nominees will be presented to the Deacon Leadership Team for review. The names of the selected candidates will be presented to the church for affirmation at a regular worship service.

Officers: The Deacons will select their own chairman and other officers as they deem necessary. Deacon officers will comprise the Deacon Leadership Team.

Responsibilities: Deacons are to effectively and carefully administer the church's charitable activities. They are to be distributors of relief and agents of mercy. They help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the elderly, the homeless, the shut-in, the imprisoned and the disabled (Matthew 25:44). They comfort, protect, encourage people and help to meet their needs. Specific duties include, but are not limited to:

1. Service to the physical needs of the membership exhibiting the love and compassion of Christ. Specific attention is to be given to widows and widowers, the needy and the aged.
2. Assisting the Senior Pastor/Staff in the preparation/serving of the Lords Supper to the membership.
3. Other such duties as determined by the needs of the Body of Mt Vernon Baptist Church.

Discipline and Removal. Any Deacon may be removed from office if he relocates, becomes incapacitated or becomes spiritually unqualified. The Deacon Leadership Team will make a recommendation to the Elders for consideration.

Section 5. Moderator

The Senior Pastor, or his designee, shall serve as Moderator of Church Conferences. In the absence of the Senior Pastor or his designee, the Chairman of Elders shall preside.

Section 6. Recording Secretary

The Recording Secretary, who is appointed by the Elders, shall keep a record of all the actions and minutes of each Church Conference. All church records are church property and shall be filed in the church office. The church record of minutes shall be open to all members of the church.

Ministry Teams

Section 1. General

The Nominating Ministry Team, the Personnel Ministry Team, the Finance Ministry Team, and the Properties Ministry Team, shall serve on a three-year rotation system with one-third to be selected each year. All positions for these four ministry teams will be recommended by the Nominating Ministry Team, approved by the Elders and affirmed by the church. Ministry Teams will keep minutes of their meetings. The minutes shall be kept on file in the church office. The term of the teams will begin January 1 of each year.

Section 2. Nominating Ministry Team

The Nominating Ministry Team shall identify, interview and recommend candidates to serve on all standing teams. The Nominating Ministry Team shall consist of a minimum of six (6) members.

Section 3. Personnel Ministry Team

The Personnel Ministry Team assists the church in matters related to the administration of employed personnel. They shall serve in such areas as determining staff needs; employment; salaries; benefits; personnel services; staff evaluation; and maintaining personnel policies and procedures. Actions and recommendations of the Personnel Team will be coordinated with the Elders. The Personnel Team shall consist of a minimum of six (6) members.

Section 4. Finance Ministry Team

The Finance Ministry Team shall oversee that tithes, offerings and gifts are administered by the church staff utilizing sound principles of financial management. They shall prepare an inclusive annual budget sought for all expenses and coordinate this budget with the Elders prior to presentation to the church. This team shall also be responsible for ensuring financial internal controls are in place and shall ensure that the financial records of

the church are audited. Budget revision that increases the budget must be presented to the Finance Ministry Team. The Finance Ministry Team must coordinate budget changes with the Elders. This Finance Ministry team shall consist of a minimum of six (6) members.

Section 5. Properties Ministry Team

The Properties Ministry Team shall oversee the administration, maintenance and upkeep of all properties and facilities owned by the church. Expenses for all properties items shall be within the annual budget approved by the church. Any expenses above the budgeted amount must be approved by the Finance Ministry Team.

Section 6. Special Ministry Teams

A. Senior Pastor Search Ministry Team

The Senior Pastor Search Ministry Team will consist of the following: The chairman, vice-chairman and secretary of the Elders in the year of the Senior Pastor's resignation, the chairman of Deacons, and two women appointed by the Nominating Ministry Team.

Responsibilities: The Senior Pastor Search Ministry Team will seek a suitable Senior Pastor who shall be unanimously approved by the team members. It will bring only one name at a time to be considered by the church. The team will provide periodic progress reports to the church. All information and recommendations received by the Senior Pastor Search Ministry Team are confidential.

B. Elder Nomination Ministry Team

The Elder Nomination Ministry Team will be comprised of the Senior Pastor (Teaching Elder), one (1) Elder selected by and from the Elder Council, a representative from the Deacon Leadership Team, and two (2) female members selected by the Nominating Ministry Team. Should the Deacon representative wish to be considered for Elder, another Deacon will be selected by and from the Deacon Leadership Team.

C. Deacon Screening Team

The Deacon Screening Team will consist of at least one elder and at least two other members chosen by the Elder body.

D. Other Special Ministry Teams

Other Special Ministry Teams shall be created as needed by the Senior Pastor, and/or Elders. Members are appointed by the Senior Pastor, and/or Elders to serve until the job of the ministry team is completed.

E. Appointments

To provide consistency and enhance communications, all special ministry team appointments must be approved by the Elders.

Church Conference:

Section 1. Quorum

The quorum consists of those church members who attend the Church Conference.

Section 2. Scheduling

A Church Conference may be called by the Senior Pastor or the Elders. At least a one-week notice of the subject, date, time, and location must be given unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical.

Section 3. Parliamentary Rules

Parliamentary rules of procedure, as set out by the Roberts Rules of Order, Revised will be the authority for procedures in Church Conferences unless a parliamentary rule is in conflict with this Constitution and Bylaws. If there is such a conflict, this Constitution and Bylaws will control.

Section 4. Decisions to be carried before the church

The following matters will be presented at a Church Conference after being reviewed by the Elders, and will be approved by at least a two-thirds vote of all church members present and voting:

- Annual Church Budget
- Acquiring, selling, pledging, borrowing, or mortgaging, the property of the church
- Decisions by Elders to remove a member when the person refuses to accept the decision
- Any matter the Elders think should be brought before the church
- Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws

In lieu of floor discussions, Question and Answer forums may be made available to the church on any of the above matters prior to a Church Conference. The methodology of voting will be determined by the Elders except for election of Senior Pastor as specified above.

Section 5. Agenda

Agenda items for Church Conferences must be:

- presented for consideration to the Teaching Elder and the Elder Chair in writing at least seven (7) days prior to the date of the Church Conference, and
- Approved by the Elders

Church Finances

Section 1. Budget

The Finance Ministry Team shall prepare an inclusive annual budget, sought for all expenses. This budget shall be coordinated with the Elders before being submitted to the church for approval.

Section 2. Accounting

A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles shall be the responsibility of the Finance Ministry Team.

Indemnification

The church shall indemnify any of the leadership of this church, as identified in Part III of these Bylaws, who is or was a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil judicial or civil administrative action, suit, or proceeding, including all appeals (other than an action, suit or proceeding by or in the right of the church) arising out of such person's performance of services (or failure to perform services) on behalf of the church, against all expenses including attorneys' fees, judgments, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by such person in connection with such action, suit or proceeding unless such person acted, in such person's official capacity with the church, willfully and without reasonable cause. The indemnification provided by this section shall not be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which those seeking indemnification may be entitled as a matter of law or under any agreement, any insurance purchased by the church, or otherwise. The church may not indemnify a person under this section in connection with a proceeding by or in the right of the church in which the person was adjudged liable to the church; or in connection with any other proceeding charging improper personal benefit to such person, whether or not involving action in his or her official capacity, in which such person was adjudged liable on the basis that personal benefit was improperly received by him or her; or where such indemnification will constitute an act of self-dealing under chapter 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws and regulations.