

# **MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **BY-LAWS**

### **PREAMBLE**

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church and preserving the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish these Bylaws.

### **ARTICLE 1 – NAME**

This body shall be known as Mount Vernon Baptist Church (MVBC).

### **ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE**

MVBC is a dynamic spiritual organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead as many people as possible in our families, communities, and throughout the world to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and by our lifestyle to minister unselfishly in Jesus' name.

We strive to be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership.

We want to experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.

Our aim is to be a church that is Christ-like in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the Lordship of Christ.

### **ARTICLE 3 – CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led by the Spirit of God to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and on the profession of our faith in Him, having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we do now prayerfully and seriously make this covenant with God and with one another.

We pledge, by the grace of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and strength; to uphold its doctrine, ordinances, and discipline according to the teachings of the New Testament; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations; to identify and cultivate our

spiritual gifts and dedicate our energies to the service of Christ's Kingdom; and to seek to lead others into its fellowship to the end that His Kingdom may be promoted.

By God's help we further agree to cultivate personal and family devotions, to endeavor to lead our children to a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, to instruct our children in the Scriptures and the spirit of this covenant, and to seek the salvation of our family and acquaintances.

To give no man cause to speak evil against us, we will seek to be just in our dealings, to be faithful to our commitments, to set the proper example in our attitude and conduct, and to avoid inappropriate anger and conversation harmful to others. Realizing that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we seek to avoid things that are harmful to the body, to exercise self-discipline, and to cultivate purity in our lives.

We pledge 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, and to be slow to take offense, always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the instruction of Scripture to secure it without delay.

Moreover, as soon as possible after moving from this place, we pledge to unite with some other church where we can carry out the principles of God's Word and the spirit of this covenant.

## **ARTICLE 4 – PRINCIPLES**

### **Section 4.1 – Polity**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation that are common among Southern Baptist churches.

### **Section 4.2 – Doctrine**

This church accepts the Bible, inspired by God as His revelation to man, as its sole authority. The Statement of Faith, as outlined in the *Baptist Faith and Message* and adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention 2000, represents in principle the doctrine of Mount Vernon Baptist Church.

## **ARTICLE 5 - MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 5.1 - Admission**

#### **Section 5.1.1 - Requirements**

Persons may be admitted for membership who (1) have confessed Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior, (2) have entered into the Church Covenant and been baptized by immersion, (3) have fulfilled requirements for membership preparation as specified in the Church Policy Manual, and (4) have been accepted of the church.

### **Section 5.1.2 - Restrictions**

Candidates for membership cannot vote or hold any elected position in the church until these requirements are met.

### **Section 5.2 - Classification**

Members shall be recognized as **voting** and **non-voting**, referring to their eligibility to vote on church matters. "Voting" is the normal, default classification of all members age twelve (12) and over. Children who have met all other requirements of membership shall be considered non-voting members until they have attained the age of twelve (12), at which time they will automatically be recognized as voting members. The non-voting classification for members over the age of twelve (12) is for instances when a member would ordinarily be removed from the membership rolls but special circumstances warrant continued membership. The most common such circumstance is a member who acknowledges that they no longer intend to attend or support MVBC, but they still desire to maintain MVBC membership until they join another church. A member shall not be reclassified from voting to non-voting without their acknowledgement and consent. A non-voting member shall be reclassified to voting upon their request and expression of intent again to attend or support MVBC. Maintaining accurate classification of members is the responsibility of the support staff and professional staff personnel responsible for the membership rolls.

### **Section 5.3 - Termination**

Termination of membership may occur for, but is not limited to, the following reasons: (1) Transfer - Upon request from other churches, transfer letters of recommendation for any member not under church discipline shall be granted by the staff member designated for this responsibility; (2) Request from the member; (3) Church discipline; (4) Inability to locate or communicate with a member over an extended period as defined in the Church Policy Manual; and (5) Death.

### **Section 5.4 - Church Discipline**

The application of discipline shall be carried out following biblical principles outlined in Scripture, and every situation should be addressed with prayer, grace, and love. Discipline policy is detailed in the Church Policy Manual.

## **ARTICLE 6 – CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

### **Section 6.1 - Senior Pastor**

### **Section 6.1.1– Responsibilities**

The Senior Pastor, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is considered the spiritual leader of the church. As such, the Senior Pastor shall lead the staff, the congregation, and the church organizations in performing their responsibilities.

### **Section 6.1.2 – Leadership**

The Senior Pastor is the leader of the pastoral ministries in the church. As such, he works with the Leadership Team, the Body of Deacons, and the church staff to:

1. Lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, ordinances, witness, education, ministry, and application.
2. Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
3. Care for the church's members and other persons in the community.

### **Section 6.1.3 – Administration**

The Senior Pastor is the leader of the church's professional staff and support staff. In addition, the Senior Pastor is an ex officio, non-voting member of all church committees and ministry teams. He may delegate to other members of the professional staff the responsibility to represent him on church committees and ministry teams. He may appoint ministry teams as necessary.

### **Section 6.1.4 - Senior Pastor Selection**

A Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be formed whenever a vacancy occurs. The search committee shall be formed by the Leadership Team, with the approval of the Body of Deacons and the Church in Conference, in accordance with procedures documented in the Church Policy Manual. Any candidate presented by the search committee shall first be approved by the Body of Deacons. In order to call a Senior Pastor, a special Church in Conference must be held after a minimum of two (2) weeks' written notice to all voting members. A quorum must be present, and the call must be approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the members present and voting at the conference.

### **Section 6.1.5– Discontinuance of Relationship**

The Senior Pastor may resign by submitting his letter of resignation, giving thirty (30) days' notice, to the Chairman of the Body of Deacons, or the church may terminate his services, also giving thirty (30) days' written notice. The thirty-day notice requirement may be omitted by mutual consent of the Senior Pastor and the Body of Deacons. In order for the church to terminate the services of the Senior Pastor, a special Church in Conference must be held after a minimum of two (2) weeks' written notice to all voting members. A quorum must be present, and the termination must be approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the members present and voting at the conference.

## **Section 6.2 – Professional Staff**

Professional staff may consist of:

a) Ministerial: Ministerial staff shall include licensed and/or ordained staff who are called by the church to perform such duties as are relevant to their respective ministry service, such as, but not limited to, administering the ordinances, wedding ceremonies, funerals, counseling, and ministry coordination within their area of responsibility.

b) Managerial: Managerial staff shall include those staff members who generally serve as department heads or who possess specific skills in specialized areas necessary for the efficient ministry and organizational functions of the church. Though not ordained and/or licensed ministers, these individuals are considered a part of the called professional ministry staff.

### **Section 6.2.1 – Professional Staff Selection**

The establishment of professional staff positions shall be determined by the Personnel Committee and the Senior Pastor, subject to the provisions and limitations of the authorized budget account and the approval of the Leadership Team.

Candidates who are to fill a new professional staff position, or fill a vacancy, shall be recommended by the Senior Pastor and Personnel Committee and then approved by the Leadership Team and the Body of Deacons. Such persons shall then be called by a majority vote of the voting members of the church at a Church in Conference.

### **Section 6.2.2 – Professional Staff Policies**

Personnel policies relative to professional staff are found in the Church Policy Manual.

## **Section 6.3 - Officers**

### **Section 6.3.1 - Deacons**

The role of a deacon at MVBC shall be to function as a New Testament Deacon who serves the Lord by conducting the caring ministry of the church – doing benevolence work, visiting the sick, being alert to the spiritual needs of the congregation – for the purposes of freeing the Senior Pastor and ministerial staff to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word, promoting unity within the church, and facilitating the spread of the gospel.

#### **Section 6.3.1.1 - Responsibilities**

##### **Section 6.3.1.1.1 - Pastoral Assistance**

The Body of Deacons shall counsel with the Senior Pastor and assist him in promoting the worship, ministry, and education services of the church. They shall freely and privately confer with the Senior Pastor about relief of any spiritual or material needs among the members.

#### **Section 6.3.1.1.2 - Benevolence and Service**

The Body of Deacons shall focus on the caring ministry of the church, such as visiting the sick, providing help for members in need, and ensuring the presence of a vital greeting ministry.

#### **Section 6.3.1.1.3 – Prayer and Evangelism**

The Body of Deacons shall ensure a vital prayer ministry within their body and throughout the church. With a focus on prayer, the Body of Deacons shall work to promote unity within the church by being alert to the spiritual needs of the church and ensuring effective communication to all members.

#### **Section 6.3.1.1.4 – Lord’s Supper**

The Body of Deacons shall assist the Senior Pastor and ministerial staff in serving the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, calling upon any other ordained deacons for assistance, if necessary.

#### **Section 6.3.1.1.5 - Administration**

The Body of Deacons shall consider and approve or disapprove the recommendations of the Leadership Team or other church committees or organizations that are brought before them as required by these Bylaws or the Church Policy Manual.

#### **Section 6.3.1.2 – Organization**

The Body of Deacons shall organize, as they determine, in a manner that most effectively utilizes their individual spiritual gifts and allows them to address the issues that come before them and to minister to the church. The Body of Deacons shall annually elect officers, as detailed in the Church Policy Manual.

#### **Section 6.3.1.3 – Number and Terms**

The Body of Deacons shall consist of **at least** 12 deacons for a church membership up to 600 members. Between 601 and 750 members, the Body of Deacons shall consist of **at least** 15 deacons. Between 751 and 900 members, the Body of Deacons shall consist of **at least** 18 deacons, and so on, adding 3 deacons when total membership passes another 150 threshold. One-third (1/3) of the total number of deacons shall be elected annually (the annual term shall be the same as the church organizational year) for a term of three (3) years. No deacon shall be eligible for re-election until the lapse of at least one year, except that a deacon serving one year or less of an unexpired term may be re-elected to a succeeding regular term.

#### **Section 6.3.1.4 – Nomination and Election**

Deacons shall be nominated by the Body of Deacons from potential nominees solicited from the voting members of the church. They shall be elected by the Church in Conference. The procedures and requirements for the nomination and election of deacons shall be detailed in the Church Policy Manual.

#### **Section 6.3.2 - Treasurer and Assistant Treasurers**

The Treasurer and two Assistant Treasurers shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church in Conference prior to the beginning of their term in office. The term in office shall be the same as the church organizational year, and they may serve successive terms. The duties of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurers shall be detailed in the Church Policy Manual.

#### **Section 6.3.3 - Clerk**

The Church Clerk shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church in Conference prior to the beginning of the term in office. The term in office shall be the same as the church organizational year, and the Church Clerk may serve successive terms. The Church Clerk shall be responsible for keeping an accurate record of all actions of the Church in Conference. The position of Church Clerk may be assigned to a member of the church staff if deemed appropriate by the Senior Pastor.

#### **Section 6.3.4 - Moderator**

The Moderator shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church in Conference prior to the beginning of the term in office. The term in office shall be the same as the church organizational year, and the Moderator may serve successive terms. The Moderator shall be responsible for conducting all meetings of the Church in Conference. In the absence of the Moderator, the Chairman of the Body of Deacons shall preside. In the absence of both, the Vice Chairman of the Body of Deacons shall serve as Moderator. The duties of the Moderator shall be detailed in the Church Policy Manual.

#### **Section 6.4 – Leadership Team**

##### **Section 6.4.1 – Organization and Purpose**

The Leadership Team shall consist of the Senior Pastor, members of the professional staff as may be designated by the Senior Pastor, and the Deacon officers. The Leadership Team shall be responsible for the administrative functions of the church.

##### **Section 6.4.2 - Function**

The Leadership Team shall work with the professional staff, deacons, standing committees, ministry teams, and church officers and organizations to address ongoing church business and

church ministry needs. The Leadership Team shall review and coordinate program plans recommended by church officers, standing committees, and ministry teams by considering the allocation of human resources, calendar time, and other resources according to program priorities, and shall evaluate program achievements in terms of church goals and objectives. The Leadership Team shall seek the approval of the Body of Deacons and/or the church on all actions so specified by these Bylaws or the Church Policy Manual.

### **Section 6.4.3 – Pulpit Supply**

In the temporary absence of a Senior Pastor, the remaining members of the Leadership Team shall work with the professional staff, as necessary, to ensure the pulpit is filled for worship services. In the event of a permanent vacancy, the Leadership Team shall (1) work with the professional staff to ensure the continued ministries of the church, (2) designate an interim staff leader, (3) initiate the formation of and provide the oversight for a Senior Pastor Search Committee as detailed in the Church Policy Manual, and (4) establish and implement a plan for the provision of an interim pastor, or pastors, to fill the pulpit and for the provision of other administrative and/or pastoral duties that may be required during the interim period.

## **ARTICLE 7 – SUPPORT STAFF**

### **Section 7.1 – Support Staff**

#### **Section 7.1.1 – Support Staff Selection**

The Senior Pastor and professional staff shall employ support staff subject to the provisions and limitations of the authorized budget account and the approval of the Personnel Committee.

#### **Section 7.1.2 – Support Staff Policies**

Personnel policies relative to support staff are found in the Church Policy Manual.

## **ARTICLE 8 – COMMITTEES and MINISTRY TEAMS**

### **Section 8.1 – Standing Committees**

The church shall have the following standing committees: Finance, Missions, Personnel, and Nominating. The structure and function of each of these committees shall be detailed in the Church Policy Manual. The members of each of these committees, whether nominated or appointed as specified in the Church Policy Manual, shall be elected by the Church in Conference prior to beginning their term in office.

### **Section 8.2 – Ministry Teams**

The church shall have such ministry teams as determined by the Senior Pastor, the Leadership Team, or the Body of Deacons.

## **ARTICLE 9 - MEETINGS**

### **Section 9.1 - Worship Services**

The church shall meet regularly for worship, preaching, teaching, prayer, and evangelism. These meetings shall be open and shall be conducted under the direction of the Senior Pastor or his appointee. The Leadership Team, working with the Body of Deacons and the professional staff, may authorize a change in the meeting time for worship. The Senior Pastor or the Chairman of the Deacons, or their appointees in their absence, may cancel any service in case of emergency circumstances.

### **Section 9.2 - Special Services**

Special services essential for the promotion of the objectives of the church shall, upon recommendation of the Senior Pastor, the Leadership Team, or the Body of Deacons, be placed on the church calendar.

### **Section 9.3 - Church in Conference**

The Church in Conference shall be held quarterly. In addition, a special Church in Conference may be called by the Senior Pastor, the Leadership Team, or the Body of Deacons after notice at all worship services on the preceding Sunday or by sufficient notice as defined elsewhere in these Bylaws.

### **Section 9.4 - Parliamentary Rules**

#### **Section 9.4.1 - Special Rules of Order**

Voting shall be by voice or show of hands; however, in the calling of any member of the ministerial staff or upon request of a majority of the membership present and voting,

Voting shall be by written ballot with no proxy or absentee voting being permissible. All written ballots must be signed by the voting member for verification of voting member status. Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, all matters of business shall be carried by a majority vote of the members present and voting.

#### **Section 9.4.2 - Quorum**

In order to conduct business at a Church in Conference, there must be present a quorum defined as no less than 5% of the Voting Members on the rolls. When the matter at hand is the extending of a call to or the termination of the Senior Pastor, a quorum shall be no less than 20% of the Voting Members on the rolls.

### **Section 9.4.3 - Robert's Rules of Order**

*Robert's Rules of Order* (latest edition) shall be the guide for parliamentary procedure for all business unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws.

### **Section 9.5 - Convention and Associational Meetings**

Church representation at Southern Baptist Convention, Georgia Baptist Convention, and Atlanta Association of Southern Baptist Churches meetings shall be as detailed in the Church Policy Manual.

## **ARTICLE 10 – ORDINANCES**

### **Section 10.1 – Baptism**

The Word of God directs us to observe the ordinance of baptism. (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:12) A person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord by grace through faith, who professes Him publicly, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord shall be received for baptism. Baptism shall be by immersion in water and administered by the Senior Pastor or whomever he shall authorize.

### **Section 10.2 – The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience to Christ. (Matthew 26:26-28; I Corinthians 11:23-29) By partaking of the bread and the cup, we commemorate the atoning death of Jesus Christ and anticipate His second coming. The Lord's Supper shall be observed as an act of worship by all believers at any worship service. The Senior Pastor, ministerial staff, and Body of Deacons shall be responsible for the Lord's Supper.

## **ARTICLE 11 – CHURCH YEAR**

### **Section 11.1 – Church Fiscal Year**

The church fiscal year shall begin October 1 and end September 30.

### **Section 11.2 – Church Organizational Year**

The church organizational year shall begin September 1 and end August 31. All church officers, organizations, ministry teams, and standing committees shall serve on the organizational year basis unless otherwise specifically stated in these Bylaws or the Church Policy Manual.

## **ARTICLE 12 – CHURCH POLICY MANUAL**

### **Section 12.1 – Policies and Procedures**

Church policies not covered in these Bylaws may be found in the Church Policy Manual. The Church Policy Manual may not contain any policies or procedures that are in conflict with these Bylaws. The Church Policy Manual shall be kept in the church office and shall be available for review upon request by any member of the church.

### **Section 12.2 – Changes to the Church Policy Manual**

Changes in church policies and procedures may be proposed by any church member. Any changes must be reviewed by the Leadership Team and recommended for approval to the Body of Deacons. Approved changes will be reported in writing to the Church in Conference. Specific procedures for submitting and routing proposed changes shall be found in the Church Policy Manual.

## **ARTICLE 13 – AMENDMENT PROCEDURE**

Amendments to these Bylaws, if approved by the Body of Deacons, may be made at any meeting of the Church in Conference, provided a copy of each proposed amendment is made available to the voting members of the church in writing at least thirty (30) days before the meeting. In order to be approved, a quorum must be present, and the amendment(s) must have the concurrence of two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present. Specific requirements for the preparation, submission, and review of proposed amendments shall be detailed in the Church Policy Manual.