

# **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS**

**Mt Freedom Baptist Church**

**A South Carolina Baptist Nonprofit  
Religious Corporation**

**ADOPTED: September 18, 2022**

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# CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

MT FREEDOM BAPTIST CHURCH  
MOUNTAIN REST, SOUTH CAROLINA

## CONSTITUTION

### PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern this body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches, associations, and conventions.

#### Article I - Name

This body shall be known as **MT FREEDOM BAPTIST CHURCH of Mountain Rest, SC**

Organized: July 29, 1998

Constituted: November 19, 2000

Articles of Incorporation date: November 8, 2001

Location: 478 Highway 107  
Mountain Rest, SC 29664

Mailing Address: PO Box 126  
Mountain Rest, SC 29664

Phone: (864) 638-6698

Web Site: [www.mtfreedombc.org](http://www.mtfreedombc.org) (added on 7/6/2022)

Associational Affiliation: Beaverdam Baptist Association, Seneca, SC

## Article II - Mission Statement

Mt Freedom Baptist Church exists to glorify God as a fellowship of believers, introduce people to Jesus inside and outside the church, and enjoy abundant life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We do this through our Core Values...

1. **Gospel Oriented** – Everything we think, say, or do is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Who we are, how we live, and why we exist is because of His finished work on the cross, in the tomb, and as the risen King. This knowledge is the foundation for our lives. The Gospel is not a compartment of our lives, but the life-giving source from which we daily consume.
2. **Community Centered** – God never intended for man to be alone. He understands how much we need each other and intends for us to live life together as a community of believers. We are to share in the messy, painful, and difficult circumstances we face on a day-to-day basis. Also, we are to share the merciful, grace filled, joyful, and peaceful times as well. We desire to be genuine, compassionate, loving, forgiving, and serving people, just like Jesus.
3. **Mission Driven** – We are to live each day on mission. From beginning to end, our day is to be lived with God’s Kingdom in mind. In Matthew 28 Jesus said to “Go into ALL the world”. Go into our local community, our state, our nation, and every corner of the world with the life-giving good news that can only be found in a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ!

## Article III – Church Covenant

We shall be joined as one by our church covenant.

The Mt Freedom Baptist Church membership covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members whom we hope will experience the fullness of God’s mercy, grace, and love as experienced through a genuine relationship with Jesus. The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the leadership and individual members of Mount Freedom Baptist Church.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for the church body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

Each of these functions is in accordance with the document’s overall vision to provide an accessible explanation of the Scriptures in hopes that Mt Freedom Baptist Church would grow in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ. The membership covenant is comprised of a section on the Church, the nature of covenants, a statement of basic belief, a statement of biblical doctrine, the obligations of leadership to the church body and the obligations of individual members to the church body.

## **What Is the Church?**

The church exists for the display of the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God's redemptive purposes in the world.

Since the beginning, God has been calling forth His people for the display of His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. Considering this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a group of believers in a locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 9) and the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Corinthians 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:3-8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

Membership at Mount Freedom Baptist Church is participation as a family member of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not. Because of the identification of Christ with His church, Christians are expected to display His gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him (Ephesians 4:1).

### **Statement of Basic Belief (Amended 9/18/22)**

Our church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of The Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 unless stated below with exception.

#### **The Bible**

We affirm the Holy Bible as the very Word of God written by human authors under the direction of God's Spirit. God's Word is perfect, complete, and wholly without error. God has given us His Word as the authoritative foundation for all our beliefs and conduct.

## **God**

We worship the only one true living God who reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. The three persons of our God are coequal facets of the One living God, who created and rules sovereignly over all things as detailed in Genesis 1 & 2. God is eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and always present everywhere. God is perfectly holy – unable and unwilling to abide with sin. God the Father is all-loving, desiring intimate fellowship with and devotion from all His creatures. He adopts as His own children all who believe the Gospel of Jesus (see below) and profess His lordship over our lives. By His Spirit, God the Father draws people to Jesus.

## **Jesus – God the Son**

Jesus the Christ is the eternal, holy Son of God. He is coequal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Word of God by whom God created all things. As foretold by the Biblical prophets, Jesus was conceived by God's Spirit in the womb of the Hebrew virgin Mary. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus of Nazareth dwelt and ministered among people on Earth for a time, died bodily on the cross, was resurrected in His glorified body on the third day, and is now glorified with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit just as He always was before He came to Earth in human form.

## **God's Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit of God is the agent through whom our three-in-one God interacts with His creation. He is a coequal person with God the Father and Jesus – God the Son, sharing in God's holy, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, universal presence, and nature. The Holy Spirit convicts mankind of sin, thereby drawing people to repentance and salvation through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the instant someone honestly professes faith in the Gospel, God's Holy Spirit indwells the person of the new believer and begins a work of regeneration within them. He empowers, leads, comforts, and bestows within us the spiritual gifts used by God to build His Kingdom in and through our ministries. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us is the surety of our salvation in Christ until the day of our ultimate redemption and restoration into the presence of God.

## **Man**

God created mankind in His own perfect image with an eternal mind, soul, and body. God created man in complete innocence and endowed us with freedom of choice in all matters. By our own free will, mankind disobeyed God's command, and through this sin introduced disease, death, and all forms of evil into God's creation. Since that time, all people have been born with a sinful nature, which separates us from God. Only through God's grace can we be brought back into holy fellowship with Him.

## **Nature and Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe all people are created by God with equal worth and dignity regardless of race, gender, nationality, or any other personal attribute. We recognize that apart from Christ all of us are hopelessly sinful by our very nature, and therefore equally undeserving of God's love and

redemption. Therefore, we should treat all people in the same manner that we ourselves would wish to be treated – with the same Christ-like love that Jesus demonstrated for us all through His sacrificial death on the cross. We believe our earthly life begins at conception and continues until our divinely appointed time of death. We also affirm, at conception, God assigns each person exactly one of two immutable genders – male or female. We therefore abhor and eschew both aborting pregnancy and euthanasia of anyone for any reason. We therefore reject any and all forms of gender reassignment as these acts defy God’s intent.

### **Marriage**

God has ordained and condones only one form of marriage – between exactly one man and exactly one woman in a monogamous, life-long marriage covenant. God approves and encourages intimate sexual behavior only within the confines of such a marriage covenant.

### **The Gospel of Jesus Christ**

1. God created mankind in perfection for the purpose of loving, worshiping, and sharing fellowship with Him.
2. When mankind rebelled against God by our own free will, the curse of our sin separated us from God and brought death into God’s creation.
3. God in His sovereignty made a way for mankind to be redeemed out of death in our sins and restored into fellowship with God – The Gospel of Jesus Christ.
4. At the God-ordained time and place, God Himself came to dwell among people in the form of the man – Jesus of Nazareth.
5. Since Jesus was conceived by God’s Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, He was born as a person without the sinful nature into which all other people are born (including Mary herself).
6. Jesus of Nazareth lived His earthly life wholly without sin, thus enabling Him to become the perfectly sinless sacrifice required by God to restore mankind into fellowship with Him.
7. Jesus willingly shed His own blood and allowed Himself to be crucified so that He could take upon Himself the righteous judgement of death for the sins of all mankind.
8. Jesus died physically on His cross, becoming Himself the required redeeming sacrifice for mankind’s sins.
9. After His crucifixion, Jesus was buried in a tomb until His bodily resurrection by the power of God’s Spirit on the third day.
10. Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared a number of times to His disciples in His glorified body as recorded in the Bible’s gospel accounts.
11. Afterward Jesus ascended into Heaven where He has been restored to the full glory, He has shared with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit since before the beginning of creation.
12. Now seated at the right hand of the Father, Jesus serves as our mediator and reconciler between God and man.
13. Jesus promised in His Word that He will return someday to judge, renew, and rule eternally over His restored creation.

14. During His earthly ministry, Jesus promised that anyone who truly believes and professes this Gospel may share in His resurrection out of death, and His eternal glorification in the very presence of God.

### **Salvation in Christ**

By His sacrificial death and resurrection, Jesus redeems sinful mankind out of death. He who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for every believer, offers this salvation to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Our salvation in Christ consists of several factors:

1. Regeneration – our spiritual rebirth in the moment we first confess our faith in Jesus
2. Justification – God’s merciful forgiveness of our sins through Jesus’ substitutionary atonement on the cross
3. Sanctification – the work of the Holy Spirit in each believer perfecting us into the very image of Jesus the Son
4. Glorification – Our final and eternal redemption into the heavenly presence of God.

### **The Church**

As part of the Body of Christ, this local church body voluntarily bands itself together as an autonomous group of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation with lost mankind.

Jesus commanded two ordinances for His Church – baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Baptism – In obedience to the urging of the Holy Spirit, believers are immersed in water as a symbolic gesture displaying our faith in the crucified, buried, and resurrected Savior who put to death sin, buried the old life, and resurrected the believer to walk with Jesus as a new creation. Jesus Himself was baptized as our model, and just before He ascended back to His Father, He also commanded His disciples to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Christian baptism is an outward testimony of the inward change in a new believer’s heart by the indwelling of God’s Spirit. Therefore, we do not condone baptism of anyone unable or unwilling to profess belief in Jesus’ Gospel and request baptism for themselves (for example, infant baptism, proxy baptism, or “last rights”). Although we believe all Christian believers should be baptized in accordance with the ordinance of our Lord Jesus as a public declaration of our faith in His Gospel, we do not consider baptism a requirement for salvation in Christ.

The Lord’s Supper – Observance of the Lord’s Supper is a public act of obedience wherein every believer partakes in the bread and the fruit of the vine. The elements of this communion symbolically represent but aren’t actually transformed into Jesus body



and blood at the Lord's Supper. The bread and the cup remind us of Jesus' one-time, atoning and redemptive, sacrifice on the cross. By observing the Lord's Supper, we publicly announce to the world around us the full message of the Gospel; – that belief in Jesus is the only way of salvation. We also participate in the Lord's Supper with eager anticipation of Christ's return as He finalizes the redemptive plans of God and brings us into the full glory of His heavenly presence.

We disagree with the Southern Baptist Convention's Baptist Faith and Message (2000) section VII statement that baptism is a pre-requisite to partaking of the Lord's Supper. We believe all true, regenerated believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ should partake of the Lord's Supper by their own choice in remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Since no person can truly know the heart of another, only God and the believers themselves can or should determine who may partake in the Lord's Supper.

### **Church Covenant**

- a. Having been led as we believe by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior 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 and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.
- b. 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 sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church and to the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.
- c. We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seed the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.
- d. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian 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.
- e. 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.

## Polity and Relationships

- a. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership.
- b. All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.
- c. This 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 Baptist churches. Insofar as practical, this church will cooperate with and support the association, the state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

## Article IV - Membership Covenant

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Romans 8). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this covenant functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

Each member of Mt Freedom Baptist Church agrees...

- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by prayerfully considering individual participation in the ordinances prescribed to His Church: by being baptized after conversion and by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ Jesus through communion.
- to regularly participate in the life of MFBC by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community events, and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- to steward the resources God has given them, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary. (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11) It is by God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit one strives to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures.
- to practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within a

heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of marital status, one will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1- 8; Hebrews 13:4).

- to seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at MFBC before pursuing divorce (Matthew 19:1- 12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul’s concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6).
- to understand and affirm the following in reference to gender identification: all persons are created in God’s image and are made to glorify Him (Genesis 1:27; Isaiah 43:7); God’s design was the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6) which designate the fundamental distinction that God has embedded in the very biology of the human race; Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles as ordained by God are part of the created order and should find expression in every human heart (Genesis 2:18, 21–24; 1 Corinthians 11:7–9; Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Timothy 2:12–14); The Fall of man into sin and God’s subsequent curse have introduced brokenness and futility into God’s good creation (Genesis 3:1–24; Romans 8:20); Transgenderism differs from hermaphroditism or intersexualism in that the sex of the individual is not biologically ambiguous but psychologically ambiguous. As a result of this understanding, the members of MFBC affirm God’s good design that gender identity is determined by biological sex and not by one’s self-perception—a perception which is often influenced by fallen human nature in ways contrary to God’s design (Ephesians 4:17–18); and be it further known that we grieve the reality of human fallenness which can result in such biological manifestations as intersexuality or psychological manifestations as gender identity confusion and point all to the hope of the redemption of our bodies in Christ (Romans 8:23); and be it further known that we extend love and compassion to those whose sexual self-understanding is shaped by a distressing conflict between their biological sex and their gender identity; and be it further known that we invite all transgender persons to trust in Christ and to experience renewal in the Gospel (1 Timothy 1:15–16); and be it further known that we love our transgender neighbors, seek their good always, welcome them to our churches and, as they repent and believe in Christ, receive them into church membership (2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Galatians 5:14); and be it further known that we regard our transgender neighbors as image-bearers of Almighty God and therefore condemn acts of abuse or bullying committed against them; and be it further known that we oppose efforts to alter one’s bodily identity (e.g., cross-sex hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery) to refashion it to conform with one’s perceived gender identity; and be it further known that we continue to oppose steadfastly all efforts by any governing official or body to validate transgender identity as morally praiseworthy (Isaiah 5:20); and be it further known that we oppose all cultural efforts to validate claims to transgender identity; and be it finally known that our love for the Gospel and urgency for the Great Commission must include declaring the whole counsel of God, proclaiming what Scripture teaches about God’s design for us as male and female persons created in His image and for His glory (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 20:27; Romans 11:36).

- to refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish (Romans 14:14-23).
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit.
- to follow the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another – the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
- to receive righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- to do the following when one sins: confess sin to God and to fellow believers, repent and seek help to put sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church while diligently striving for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).

## BY-LAWS

### Article I - Church Membership

#### Section I                      General

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the condition of such membership. Membership in this church shall consist of all persons who have met the qualifications for membership, agree with the membership covenant and are listed on the membership roll.

#### Section II                      Qualifications of Membership

1. A personal and public commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
2. Baptism by immersion in obedience to Jesus' command and as a testimony of salvation.
3. By receipt of a letter from another church of like faith and practice.
4. A commitment to abide by the church and individual member covenants found in Article IV of the Constitution.

#### Section III                      Types of Memberships

To properly reflect the membership of the church, a roll shall be maintained. This roll shall be updated periodically.

1. **Resident Active:** Members who attend and contribute financially and spiritually to the work and ministry of the church and its mission and special programs on a quarterly basis or in like contribution.

2. **Resident Inactive:** Members who live within Oconee and adjacent counties who do not meet the requirements of a "resident active" membership.
3. **Non-resident Active:** Members who live outside Oconee and adjacent counties who attend when in the area and continue to support the church financially and/or its programs and its mission.
4. **Non-resident inactive:** Members who live outside Oconee and adjacent counties who do not attend or support the church, its programs, nor its mission.

#### Section IV                      Responsibilities of Membership

The responsibilities of membership are described in the membership covenant (Refer to Article IV of the Constitution)

#### Section V                      Voting Rights

Every member, in good standing (active members), shall have a right and privilege to vote at all elections, regular and special business meetings, and at any church conference on all questions submitted before the congregation for the purpose of voting into approval. The Church Clerk and Moderator shall have the names of all those eligible to vote at any given meeting during the vote. Every active member (in good standing) of the church is entitled to vote in all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present or provision has been made for absentee balloting. All such votes shall reflect the will of the congregation through the yea's and nays, except in major financial decisions and personnel matters, which shall be by secret ballot. (Matthew 5: 37) The rules of order for all regular and special business meetings shall be the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order. A copy shall be made available to the moderator, pastor, the chairman of the deacons, and available in the church office to the membership.

#### Section VI                      Termination

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- (1) Death
- (2) Transfer to another Baptist Church
- (3) Exclusion (discipline) by action of this church:  
Should a member become an offense to the church and its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his/her covenant vows, or nonsupport of the church, the Elders may recommend to the church to terminate his/her membership by a two thirds (2/3) vote of the church but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment. (Matthew 18)
- (4) Affiliation with a church of another faith or denomination.

## Article II - Church Leadership

The Lord Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of this congregation. It is before Him that all other leadership must submit (Eph. 1:22, 23; Matt. 23:8–11; 1 Peter 5:4, Heb.13:20-21). He communicates His will for the church through the Bible and through prayer. He gives additional guidance by means of the specific leading of the Holy Spirit who indwells the heart of each believer. He also shepherds the flock through the leaders of the Church, to whom He has given specific gifts. The specific leaders in the church are the Lead Pastor, Elders, and other designated church ministry leaders. All who serve as leaders of the church shall be active members of the church and in good standing.

### Section I                      Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament Church. He will lead the congregation, the church staff, pastoral ministers, and the Elders to perform the appropriate tasks which fulfill the Great Commission outlined in Matthew 28:19-20 and the Great Commandment from Matthew 22:36-40.

#### 1.        Election

The Lead Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. Prior to the election of a Lead Pastor, the Elders, as soon as possible, shall seek out an Interim Pastor. He shall serve until a full-time Lead Pastor is called and affirmed by the congregation. All matters of compensation will be determined in advance through the dialog between the elders and the candidate(s).

Once an Interim Pastor is in place, a Pastor Search Team, as determined by the elders and affirmed by the church shall function as the Pastor Search Team. Their unanimous recommendation shall constitute a nomination. The team shall bring to the consideration of the church only one man at a time. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least two weeks' notice to the active membership shall be given. An affirmative vote of eighty-five percent (85%) of the members' present shall be necessary for election. Absentee ballots will not be allowed for the calling vote of a new Lead Pastor. Prior to being presented as the prospective Lead Pastor, a thorough examination by the Elders and the church body shall be conducted (the process being determined by the leading of the Holy Spirit). The "Call Event" will include the candidate's participation in an entire worship service.

#### 2.        Removal of the Lead Pastor

a.        If at any time the pastor should conduct himself in any manner which brings the church into disgrace, or his actions have the potential to do so; or should the pastor fail in his performance of responsibilities; the Elders serving as supervisory body of the Lead Pastor will request resignation by detailing reasons.

b.        If a satisfactory resignation agreement cannot be reached, the pastor may be removed with the unanimous recommendation of the Elders and an 85% approval from present members of the congregation. Absentee ballots will not be allowed for the removal vote of a Lead Pastor.

### 3. Requirements and Responsibilities

All requirements and responsibilities for the lead Pastor are in the MFBC Policies and Procedures manual.

## Section II Other Pastoral Staff

### 1. Election

The Pastoral Staff shall be called and employed as the Lead Pastor and Elders determine the need. A job description shall be written for each staff position when the need for a staff member is determined. (This description will be added to the MFBC Policy and Procedures manual as needed)

### 2. Removal of Pastoral Ministers

a. If at any time a pastoral minister should conduct himself in any manner which brings the church into disgrace, or his actions have the potential to do so; or should the minister fail in his performance of responsibilities; the Lead Pastor serving as supervisor will request resignation by detailing reasons.

b. If a satisfactory resignation agreement cannot be reached, the Pastoral Minister may be removed by the agreement of the Lead Pastor and Elders.

### 3. Requirements and Responsibilities

All requirements and responsibilities for the lead Pastor are in the MFBC Policies and Procedures manual.

## Section III Elders of the Church

It is our desire to let the Bible define our Church government. New Testament churches were jointly pastored by a biblically qualified council of shepherd-elders, rather than by a single person. The Scriptures consistently show that a plurality of godly men are to share in the responsibility of leading and shepherding each individual Church (Acts 15, James 5:14, Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:5, 1 Peter 5:1), though the Elders within each Church may differ in their specific functions and giftedness. Based on the New Testament, we believe that in the early Church the presbuteros (elders), episkopos (overseers or bishops) and poimen (pastors) were one and the same, and that their role was to shepherd the Church humbly and ably as a team, under the headship of Jesus Christ. As such Elders of MFBC are responsible for and ultimately accountable to the congregation they serve.

### 1. Guiding Principles:

- a. Plurality/Accountability - New Testament churches were led by a plurality of leaders, most often referred to as Elders, who met the qualifications outlined in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 (see also: Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23). The Elder model of church government is not only biblical, it is also practical. Instead of placing leadership responsibility on one man or group-rule; qualified leaders who demonstrate leadership gifts and Christ-like service are entrusted with seeking God's direction for the church (Romans 12:8). Plurality also provides increased

accountability among leadership. The Lead Pastor serves as the Team Leader of the Elders but is also accountable to the entire team.

- b. Unity/Consensus - God's will is singular by nature. When the Elders are in touch with the Holy Spirit, God's direction will not differ, and a unified consensus will be the result. In Acts 15:25 (NASB), the leaders at the Jerusalem Council knew they had heard God's will when they "became of one mind." The Elders must strive toward a unified consensus. For this to be a practical reality, it is imperative that biblically qualified leaders are appointed. The Elder body is not to simply follow the majority opinion on any issue, but to lead the church in seeking God's voice and direction. Through a unified consensus the Elders will communicate their convictions regarding the Lord's leading to the congregation.

## 2. Affirmation - A Voice Instead of a Vote:

The Bible teaches that prayer (hearing from God) and adherence to God's Word are keys to the Church's decisions, not majority rule. When churches limit members to a single vote on major issues, their voice may never be heard above most of the congregation. Each believer has direct access to God through prayer and His Word (1 Peter 2:5). Thus, each Member of the church body should have a voice, regardless of their role in the Church or the majority opinion. The expression of a member's voice is not for the purpose of complaint or merely to express an opinion, but rather, to affirm, apply, and investigate God's leading. There are few times when the congregation will vote. Instead, we lean intentionally into the biblical model of Romans 12:8 which states that leaders are to lead.

## 3. Decision-making:

The New Testament does not detail rules and regulations outlining the process of decision-making. It is clear however that the leadership body takes the lead for the congregation and seeks to engage the congregation. Depending upon the circumstances, leaders will wisely use different procedures and strategies to lead the congregation through decisions and problem solving. The New Testament is clear that Christ-like love, humility, and prayer should guide all deliberations and affirms that those who lead will have to give an account for those they serve. (Hebrews 13:17).

- a. Elders may invite others to meet with them for the purpose of seeking additional information and wise counsel.
- b. Elders may establish other teams to assist in overseeing and conducting the work of the church. These bodies will remain "recommending teams" who remain under the authority of the elders except in those areas in which the elders grant "decision making authority".
- c. For major decisions, the Elders may choose to call the church together to communicate their thoughts or concerns birthed from their prayer for God's direction. The Elders will welcome respectful communication from Members in writing and/or in special sessions to hear from membership. The Elders will continue to humbly listen, faithfully pray, and seek God's leading. As appropriate, they may bring recommendations to the church in which they seek the affirmation of the gathered Church body. Affirmation by the Church body may be publicly indicated by voice poll, by standing or raising of hands or by written affirmation



during a special business meeting. While a vote is not required for all actions, the Elders/Pastor(s) may request such a vote.

#### 4. Elder Selection:

We acknowledge that God calls and gifts the elders of the church. Ultimately Elders are selected by the Holy Spirit and the church must follow a process of “discovery” in determining those whom the Spirit has selected. That process of discovery is as follows:

- a. Nomination - When elders were first selected in scripture (by Moses, by Paul, by Titus, etc.), the leader at the time selected them. Subsequent elder selections are not mentioned. Believing that Elders are “Elders of the Church” it is MFBC’s conviction that Elder selection should be a collaborative process involving the church body and its current leaders. The nomination process will begin with the church and will be solicited every two years or as deemed necessary by the Spiritual Leadership Team as additional Elders are needed. The membership will be reminded that only those qualified should be nominated (see below).
- b. Examination - The Lead Pastor and in-place Elders will determine which nominees will be considered as candidates. These candidates will be interviewed, observed, and evaluated to consider their spiritual qualifications and willingness to serve. Those whom they feel led to consider as Elders will be placed before the Church for **21 days** of public examination and a season of prayer and fasting. During that time any Church member who believes a candidate to be unfit for service must first approach the candidate with his/her concern according to Matthew 18. If the concern is not resolved, the member may present in writing to the Lead Pastor any concerns, based upon scripture as to why a candidate may not be qualified to serve as an Elder at this time. All written concerns must be signed as no anonymous concerns will be considered. Existing Elders and the lead Pastor will investigate all concerns and address such concerns privately with each candidate as necessary. At any time, a candidate, the lead Pastor, or the in-place Elders may terminate the process for candidacy.
- c. Appointment - At the end of the **21 days**, the Spiritual Leadership Team, by consensus, will determine which candidate(s) to present to the church for appointment. Those appointed will then be tested. (Any candidate who the Spiritual Leadership Team has determined is not to be recommended for appointment will meet with the team for communication purposes).
- d. Testing - With a goal of not “laying on hands too hastily” (1 Tim 5:22), those “nominated, examined and appointed” will serve for a trial period of **three months**. This is to give the elder candidate, the Lead Pastor, in-place Elders, and the church ample opportunity to evaluate if a candidate is the right fit. Ultimately either the candidate or the Spiritual Leadership Team may determine that final affirmation is not appropriate.
- e. Affirmation - The process that began with the church ends with the church. Those candidates to be added to the Elder Team will be submitted to the church for affirmation and the laying on of hands. During a specifically scheduled worship service, the candidates will share their testimonies, will be prayed over, and affirmed by the church; followed by the laying on of hands by any previously

ordained members of the church.

5. Qualifications:

- a. The Elder shall first and foremost meet the scriptural qualifications as specified in I Timothy 3, I Timothy 5, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5.
- b. The Elder shall be a man who has been an active member at MFBC for at least one year and consistently demonstrates an active Christian lifestyle.

6. Term of Service:

The scriptures do not indicate a term of service for strategic leaders. Once affirmed as an elder, the elder should be honored and recognized as such for a period no longer than six years. An Elders term will officially begin on January 1 in the year of affirmation.

- a. Exceptions – An Elders term will end if Biblical reasons why the man should no longer be recognized as an Elder are evident, or the man no longer participates as an active member of the Church. Since the scriptures do not address a “term of service”; there may also be a season where an Elder takes a period off from being an active member of the Elder Team. As such an elder may request a sabbatical in which they resign from active service and become inactive. (An inactive Elder can return to service with the unanimous approval of the Elders, and re-appointment by the pastor.)
- b. Sabbaticals - To provide continuity of leadership and opportunity for rest from the weight of leadership; each Elder will be given a one-month Sabbatical for every two years of service. However, this will be applied with flexibility as there may arise within that six-year term of service a time in which an elder may require and request an additional sabbatical.
- c. Annual Evaluation - To maintain a high level of commitment and effectiveness, each year the current elders will be asked to reaffirm their desire, ability, and spiritual readiness to serve for another year. The Elders shall ask of one another (formally or informally) the following questions:

Do they continue to meet the qualifications of an elder as outlined in scripture?

Are they effective in their service as an Elder with respect to?

(1) active ministry and shepherding relationship with a portion of the flock?

(2) devotion to prayer and the Word of God?

(3) a willingness to set aside personal opinions and pursue a unified answer from God with the rest of the Church Leadership Team?

(4) healthy relationships with the other Elders?

(5) availability for and participation in the Elder meetings?

(6) faithful financial support of the church ministries, beginning with the tithe?

If the evaluation of an elder is unsatisfactory; the elder in question will be requested to take a one-year sabbatical. Throughout that year, through prayer, open dialog, and on-going pastoral care; it will be the goal to restore the Elder to active status.

7. Termination of Elders
  - a. Death.
  - b. Request of the Elder.
  - c. In accordance with scripture, should the need arise; an elder may be removed from service by the unanimous decision of the remaining elders. (1 Timothy 5:19).
  
8. Duties and Responsibilities
  - a. Elders are to lead the church, along with the Lead Pastor and pastoral team, through example. An Elder shall view himself as a spiritual servant-leader of the church and his performance be worthy as an example of such leadership.
  - b. Elders shall assist the Lead Pastor and the Spiritual Leadership Team in the spiritual leadership of the church, always seeking the influence of the Holy Spirit. They shall assist the Lead Pastor in administering the ordinances of the church. They shall assist the Lead Pastor in the problems, needs, plans, purposes, opportunities, difficulties, and material and spiritual concerns of the church and community in closest confidence, with combined wisdom and in much prayer for guidance.
  - c. The elders will partner with the Lead Pastor and the Spiritual Leadership Team in equipping the church to provide pastoral care to one another. The Elders will lead by example in caring for the membership, praying for the church, and being present with those in crisis.
  - d. The Lead Pastor, the Pastoral Staff and Elders will comprise the Spiritual Leadership Team.
  
9. Specific Powers of Church Leadership Team **[Elders and Pastor(s)]**
  - a. General Corporate Powers - Subject to the provisions and limitations of the South Carolina Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law and any limitations in the articles of incorporation and these by-laws, the activities, business, and affairs of the church shall be conducted and all corporate powers shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Spiritual Leadership Team.
  - b. Specific Powers - Without prejudice to the general powers set forth above, and subject to the same limitations, the Church Leadership Team shall have the power to:
    - (1). Select and remove all agents, and employees of the church, except the Lead Pastor, and prescribe any powers and duties for them that are consistent with law, with the articles of incorporation and these by-laws; and
    - (2). Change the principal executive office or the principal business office of the church in the state of South Carolina from one location to another, and
    - (3). Exercise all other powers conferred by the South Carolina Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law or other applicable laws.
    - (4). Exercise financial decisions not to exceed fifty percent (50%) of the projected quarterly budget per individual line item and not to exceed fifty percent (50%) of the projected overall annual budget per individual line

item.

Section IV Trustees

Trustees shall include a minimum of two and a maximum of three church members to serve as legal representatives and signature-agents of the church. One member of the Elder Team, as appointed by the Elder Team, shall serve as a Trustee of the church. The Trustees shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, and purchase of real estate property for the church, or legal documents related to church approved matters.

Section V Treasurer/Financial Liaison

1. Election  
A Treasurer/Liaison shall be selected annually by the Church Leadership Team.
2. Duties
  - a. The Treasurer/Liaison shall, alongside of the Pastors/Elders assist in supervision of the process by which the church receives and pays such money or things of value paid or given to the church.
  - c. The Treasurer/Liaison shall make available a written financial report each quarter to the church. (Unless these documents are produced by an employee of the church.)
  - d. The Treasurer/Liaison shall meet with the Church Leadership Team at their invitation to provide up-to-date information regarding the financial situation of the church.

Section VI Moderator

1. Election  
The moderator shall be selected annually from the Church Leadership Team by the Elder Team.
2. Duties  
The Moderator shall be the presiding officer at the church business sessions. In the event of his/her absence the Elders shall choose an acting moderator.

Section VII Clerk/Secretary

1. Election  
The Clerk shall be selected annually by the Church Leadership Team.
2. Duties
  - a. The Clerk shall keep, in a suitable book, a record of all the actions of the church in business sessions. The Clerk shall also keep a register of the following

in relation to members of the church: names of members, records of baptism, dates of admission, transfers of membership, dismissals, and deaths.

b. The Elders, in times of need, may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to the church Clerk/Secretary.

### Article III – Ordinances

#### Section I                    Baptism

A person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord. Baptism in a Baptist Church shall be by total immersion in water, administered by ordained ministers or whomever the church may authorize, as an action of worship.

#### Section II                    Lord's Supper (Communion)

Is a symbolic act of obedience by partaking in a meal which serves the bread and the cup in commemoration of the death of Jesus Christ and is done in remembrance of His burial and resurrection. Any born again believer may participate. The Lord's Supper will be observed on fifth Sunday mornings and at other special occasions as designated by the pastor or the Elders.

### Article IV – Membership Meetings

#### Section I -                    Worship Services

The church shall meet as scheduled on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening for worship of Almighty God. Prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, service, and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services. The Lead Pastor, Elder, or selected Pastoral Minister shall direct and/or lead each service for the church.

#### Section II -                    Special Services

Revival services and any other church meeting(s) deemed essential to the advancement of the ministry of the church may be scheduled throughout the year.

#### Section III -                    Regular Business Meetings

The church shall hold regular business meetings on the ~~fourth~~ second (amended by vote 7/25/2021) Sunday in January, April, July and October.

#### Section IV -                    Special Business Meetings

The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. A two-week notice must be given for the specially called business meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The notice shall include the subject, date, time, and place; and it must be given in such a manner that all resident active members have opportunity to know of and attend the meeting.

#### Section VI -                    Quorum

The quorum consists of those members (in good standing) who attend the business/special called meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called. A quorum of eleven (11) eligible, active members must be established before matters of voting for approval may take place.

#### Section VII - Parliamentary Rules

Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business/special meetings of the church.

#### Article V – Church Finances

##### Section I - Budget

The Budget and Finance Team shall prepare and submit to the Elders and selected Stewardship Team members for initial approval an inclusive budget, indicated by items and the amount needed and sought for all local and other expenses. Once approved by the Elders and Stewardship Team the budget will be presented to the congregation for final approval. It is understood that membership in this church involves financial commitment to support the church and its causes with regular and proportionate gifts. The church will provide special envelopes to be used for the collection of tithes and offerings. All cash collections, not enveloped, will be considered as tithe to the church, unless otherwise noted by the providing person.

##### Section II - Accounting Procedures

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer, or financial secretary, and be properly recorded on the books of the church. A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the Stewardship Team.

##### Section III - Operational/Fiscal Year

The operational church year shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31. The church fiscal year shall also begin January 1 and end on December 31.

#### Article VI – Church Policy and Procedure Manual

A special team, appointed by the Elders, shall develop, and maintain a church operation manual to include church policies and procedures, an organization chart, and job descriptions for the Lead Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Pastoral Ministry Leaders, and Elders. The manual shall be kept in the church office and made available for use by any member or perspective member of the church. The Church Leadership Team shall review the manual at least annually, with authority to recommend changes for the church

to consider.

Addition, revision, or deletion of items contained in this manual requires:

1. Recommendation by a church officer or organization to whose area of assignment the policy relates.
2. Discussion followed by recommendation to the church by the Church Leadership Team, and
3. Final approval by the church through a two-thirds (2/3) vote of approval.

## Article VII – Records and Reports

A special team, appointed by the Elders, shall develop a record and report management system. A thorough explanation of the management system shall be included in MFBC policies and procedures manual. Records management can be defined as "the application of management techniques to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of records undertaken to reduce cost and improve efficiency of recordkeeping." The church Clerk shall be responsible for maintaining all active and stored records and reports and shall dispose of all outdated records and reports.

## Article VIII – Amendments and Addendums

### Section I - Amendments

Changes in the constitution and bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting, provided each amendment has been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed amendment has been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting. Amendments to the constitution shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of church members present and voting. Amendments to the bylaws shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of church members present and voting.

### Section II – Addendums

Addendums are items to be added to the MFBC Constitution and By-Laws for correction of terms, to include in-advertent omissions, or provide new information relevant to the document. Addendums are used to clarify, explain, or add to this document and must be approved and accepted as an official amendment as outlined in Section I of Article VIII of the Church By-Laws.