

## **Mountain Vista Baptist Church By-Laws**

### **Article 1: Church Leadership**

In Scripture, we find three distinct groups of people who exercise some form of leadership in the New Testament church: the congregation, consisting of all church members; elders, those men appointed to spiritual oversight in the church; and deacons, who serve the congregation in hands-on, practical ways. It is Mountain Vista Baptist Church's understanding that these groups work in concert to lead, in matters of doctrine and discipline, with the congregation vested with preeminent authority in major decisions.

In their role as overseers, the elders guide the church, particularly focusing on matters concerning teaching, preaching, and prayer. The elders direct the spiritual life of the church at the pleasure of the congregation, handling matters relevant to the Word and to prayer. The deacons are pictured not as a second legislative body but as a group of able servants, whose focus is facilitating ministry.

#### **Section 1: Pastor**

The New Testament uses various terms to describe a pastor: a shepherd who leads, feeds, and guides the flock committed to his care; an overseer who has an administrative role; and an elder, which describes the respect he should merit (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, I Peter 5:1-3, and Acts 20:17-32). Accordingly, the duties of the pastor are preeminently spiritual. The pastor is expected to devote himself to prayer and the ministry of God's Word (Acts 6:3-4). He is a preacher and a teacher of God's Word and the leader in evangelistic matters (I Timothy 4: 1-4). He is to equip congregants for ministry, seeking out and training lay leaders (Ephesians 4:11- 16, II Timothy 2:2). He is to seek God's direction for Mountain Vista Baptist Church and to communicate that direction to the congregation (Hebrews 13: 7, 17). He shall be an ex-officio member of every church organization and committee.

In the event of a vacancy, a pastor shall be selected from prospects brought to the attention of the congregation by the pastor search committee. The pastor search committee shall be appointed by the congregation upon recommendation of the nominating committee (if standing) and the elders. The pastor search committee shall comprise five active members who have agreed to serve in this capacity. Prior to beginning their search, the committee shall meet with the personnel committee and finance committee to assure that copies of current employment policies are available, and that adequate financial information is available. The pastor search committee cannot offer employment to a prospect; final determination of employment, salary, and benefits will be by vote of the congregation. The pastor search committee will present only one prospect at a time to the congregation for consideration. The calling of a pastor shall be considered by the congregation at an officially called business meeting, at which 25% of the active members must be present to constitute a quorum. 85% of those present must vote in the affirmative to call a pastor. If a candidate accepts the call, the candidate and his wife will become members of Mountain Vista Baptist Church and he will be added to the church Elders.

The pastor may relinquish his position by giving Mountain Vista Baptist Church a minimum of two weeks written notice. The pastor and MVBC may, by mutual agreement, waive the time requirement for the notice.

In the event it becomes necessary to remove the pastor from his position with MVBC, the elders, in cooperation with the chairmen of all standing committees, shall confer on the matter and bring a recommendation to the congregation for action. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose. In egregious circumstances, the elders and committee chairmen may waive the required two-week notice period for the announcement of the meeting but must give at least one week's notice. An elder shall serve as moderator of such meeting. The vote to dismiss the pastor shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting being necessary for the termination of the pastor.

The pastor of MVBC is an at-will employee and can be removed for cause, unchristian conduct (which may include breaches of clergy-confessor confidentiality), or other offenses as deemed sufficient by the congregation.

The pastor of MVBC will serve as a messenger at any local, state, or national cooperative affiliation meetings he attends.

## **Section 2: Associate Pastoral Staff**

Other pastoral staff positions shall be created as needed to fulfill the mission and ministry of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. The congregation of MVBC shall employ ministerial staff positions, and although the position may be supervised by the pastor, he does not have authority to dismiss that person. Such termination would require a recommendation by the Elders to the congregation at a duly called business meeting and a 66% vote of members present.

The pastor search committee shall be appointed by the congregation upon the recommendation of the nominating committee (if standing) and the elders. The search committee shall comprise five active members who have agreed to serve in this capacity. Prior to beginning their search, the committee shall meet with the Elders and finance committee to assure that copies of current employment policies and job descriptions are available, and that adequate financial information is available. The search committee cannot offer employment to a prospect; final determination of employment, salary, and benefits will be by vote of the congregation. The search committee will present only one prospect at a time to the congregation for consideration. The calling of an associate pastor shall be at a duly called business meeting and must be affirmed by a 66% majority of members present. Upon an affirmative vote and the candidate's acceptance he and his wife will automatically become members of Mountain Vista Baptist Church, and he will be added to the church Elders.

## **Section 3: Support Staff**

Support staff positions may be created to assist with the administrative needs of MVBC. The positions will be filled with qualified individuals who shall be employees of MVBC. Supervision of the support positions shall be carried out by the pastor.

Support staff positions may be created to assist in the ministries of MVBC. Those hired in ministry roles are not automatically Elders of the church. The title Pastor is reserved for those on staff that also hold the role and title of Elder within the church. Elder roles are voted on by the congregation at the recommendation of the Elders.

Under no circumstances will Mountain Vista Baptist Church employ two or more members of the same family. Family is defined as the employee's spouse, child, child's spouse, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sister, or brother. Family member also means individuals in the following relationship with the employee's spouse: child, child's spouse, parent, or grandparent. It also includes those persons in a "step" relationship.

### **Section 3: Elders**

The elders shall consist of the pastor and all those whom the congregation of Mountain Vista Baptist Church has elected to the office. Elders shall serve without a term of office but may be removed from the position of elder upon majority vote of the congregation. Elders may not serve concurrently as a deacon. Elders shall exercise all duties which properly belong to the office but shall at all times be subject to the majority vote of the congregation, unless otherwise stated. There may be as many elders serving MVBC as deemed necessary to accomplish said task.

Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of Mountain Vista Baptist Church and the implementation of church discipline; they are also responsible for watching over the souls of the members as those who must give an account to God for this responsibility. The elders shall exercise the oversight of MVBC in all its ministrations and functions. They shall submit to one another and the church as long as the oversight is in accordance with the explicit or implicit principle of Scripture. They shall evaluate and hold one another accountable to the office of elder and to the call of obedience as followers of Christ (Matt 18:15-20, I Thess 5:12-13, II Thess 3:6, 14-15, I Tim 5:19-20, Tit 3:10-11, Jam 5:14, Heb 13:7).

An elder shall be a male member of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. He shall demonstrate mature judgment, unquestioned Christian character, loyalty to the Word of God, the ability to teach sound doctrine, and a devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and the spiritual welfare of MVBC. His life must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9. He must discharge his duties as set forth in Acts 20: 17, 28ff; I Peter 5:1-4, and Hebrews 13: 17.

It shall be the duty of an elder to be diligent and faithful in attendance to worship services, in attendance to meetings requiring his presence, and in faithful giving of his finances.

An elder shall support the pastor in ministries, encourage the pastor in his work, be diligent in his prayers for God's leadership and protection, and meet regularly with the other elders and pastors.

The positions of director and president for church officers shall be held by elders; the elders shall appoint two men to these roles.

Elders shall be ex-officio members of all committees.

#### **Section 4: Deacons**

The deacons shall consist of all whom the congregation of Mountain Vista Baptist Church has elected to the office. Deacons shall organize themselves to assure they provide a supportive role as they coordinate various ministries that relate to the physical needs of the congregation. Deacons, once elected, shall serve until they choose to step down from the office, but may be removed from the position of deacon upon majority vote of the congregation. Deacons may not serve concurrently as an elder. There may be as many deacons serving MVBC as deemed necessary to accomplish said tasks (Acts 6:1-7, I Tim 3:8-13).

Dacons, at their discretion, may gather volunteers in support of their work as they minister to the various needs of the congregation.

Dacons shall be men and women who are members of the congregation, whose life demonstrates personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and the welfare of the members of the congregation. They shall also demonstrate being able to comfort the oppressed.

Dacons shall be diligent and faithful in attendance to worship services, in attendance to meetings requiring their presence, and in faithful giving of their finances.

Dacons handle the collection, and distribution of all benevolence funds.

#### **Section 5: Personnel Agreements and Policies**

All paid staff positions shall work under the general guidance of written position descriptions and job performance standards. Each paid support staff member shall receive an annual performance evaluation. The position description may be modified as needed.

All paid staff positions shall be so employed by written agreement which details to whom the position reports, compensation, and associated benefits.

The personnel committee (if in effect) and the finance committee will meet annually to discuss those portions of the employment agreement that are affected by the finances of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. Proposed changes to salary and benefit packages shall be made to the congregation jointly by the personnel committee (if in effect), the finance committee, and the elders at the annual presentation of MVBC's budget.

Volunteers and staff will undergo a full background check in order to protect our members and children.

All volunteers and employees of Mountain Vista Baptist Church must sign and date an agreement of alignment with the beliefs, practices, Constitution, and By-Laws to be considered for employment and continuance of employment and volunteering.

## **Article 2: Church Discipline**

### **Section 1: Formative Discipline**

Formative discipline is set forth through the teaching of God's Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of the members of the body of Christ. It has as its goal the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love (Ephesians 4: 11-13, Romans 12: 1-16, I Corinthians 12: 4-27). Formative discipline has a sanctifying influence. Every member should be satisfied with the ministry God has given them, and thus we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 4:7-12). Formative discipline utilizes the talents of each member, whether young or old, for the edification of all.

Formative discipline begins with each member of the congregation as we recognize that it is our obligation to honor, serve, worship, praise, and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ in all that we say and do (I Corinthians 10:31). Jesus Christ is the head of the church and its Lord and Lawgiver (Ephesians 1:22; Isaiah 33:22); and those who truly love Him will endeavor to keep His commandments (John 14:15). In His Holy Word our Lord has entreated all believers to perform certain duties one toward another, such as but not limited to:

1. to love one another without offence or hypocrisy (John 13:34-35, Romans 12: 9, 13:8-10)
2. to labor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)
3. to endeavor for the edification and spiritual benefit of the whole body that each may grow to be a holy temple in and for the Lord (I Corinthians 14:12, 26; Ephesians 4:12, 29; 2:21-22)
4. to watch over one another for good (Philippians 2:3-4)
5. to pray with and for one another (James 5:16)
6. to not neglect the assembling of ourselves together, for the celebrating of divine worship, and thereby to promote one another's spiritual benefit (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42)

Formative discipline will enable the entire congregation to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **Section 2: Corrective Discipline**

Corrective discipline will become necessary when a member is actively involved in or harboring sin. Reasonable efforts shall be made through counsel and admonition to resolve difficulties, correct errors, and remove offenses before any further action is taken. No offenses shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Christ have first been followed

(Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-18). Corrective discipline always has for its goal the glory of God, the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender, and the welfare and purity of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. Corrective discipline may include:

- **Exclusion/Inactive:** If a member is habitually absent from the fellowship of MVBC without just cause, or is unwilling to settle differences on scriptural grounds, or requests severance of membership, he may be excluded from membership at the recommendation of the elders and by majority affirmative vote of the congregation.
- **Restoration:** If a member's personal life, whether publicly or privately, does not reflect a life devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ and the member's life brings discredit to MVBC, but the member is willing to undergo counseling and further scriptural instruction, the elders may provide a restorative process.
- **Revocation:** If restoration is not secured by the processes required in Matthew 18:15-18, further steps must be taken to correct offenders. Written charges shall be given to the accused offender if he requests a hearing. The elders shall meet with the accused, unless the accused refuses to appear. After a fair and impartial hearing of all the witnesses accessible, and all facts ascertainable, the elders must form a judgment. If they believe the accused to be guilty and deserving of severe scriptural discipline, they shall make a recommendation at an officially called business meeting that the offender's membership be revoked. The congregation shall have the right to revoke membership by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting. Revocation has as its goal the glory of God, the restoration of the offender, and the purity of the body of Christ.

It is the duty of Mountain Vista Baptist Church to forgive. Restoration to membership is a desired outcome, but not a duty. Persons requesting to have all rights and duties of membership restored must meet with the elders and give evidence of repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). The elders shall make a recommendation to the congregation, which shall have the right to restore membership to a person by a majority vote of the members present and voting at an officially called business meeting.

### **Section 3: Council of Appeal**

Any matter involving controversy within Mountain Vista Baptist Church, among the officers, or between the congregation and the officers or employees, if it threatens to cause dissension and injury to the welfare of MVBC, must be called to the attention of the elders. If the elders fail to resolve the difficulty so as to allay dissension, any such matter may be taken to a Council of Appeal.

A Council of Appeal shall be formed at the request of the elders or by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at an officially called business meeting. The Council shall consist of the elders and an equal number of other members in good standing to be chosen by the congregation. The congregation shall also appoint a chairman from those on the Council to preside at its meetings. A member who is a principle, a witness, or who may otherwise be involved in the matter being brought before the council shall not be elected to serve on the council. No family member of a principle shall be elected to the council.

A quorum for a Council of Appeal shall be all those on the Council, including the chairman. If a member of the Council is unable to attend a meeting after the process of hearing the conflict has begun, that member may be present at future meetings and hear the evidence given but will be disqualified to vote on the resolution of the matter.

The resolution of any matter heard by a Council of Appeal shall require a two-thirds vote of the Council. When a final decision is reached, the chairman shall make a presentation of the matter to the congregation at an officially called business meeting. The decision of the Council of Appeals is final, and the matter is closed.

### **Article 3: Facility Use**

Mountain Vista Baptist Church facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. The facilities are not open to public rental. Church facilities may not be used for activities that contradict or are deemed to be inconsistent with the church's faith, moral teaching, or the Constitution and By-Laws. The pastor and elders/deacons/officers are the final decision-makers concerning the use of church facilities.

### **Article 4: Debt**

MVBC will not approve or sign any contract which forces the congregation to take on debt. All approved contracts must be fully funded by the financial accounts of the church body.

### **Article 5: Committees**

Committees are established to fulfill needs of the body, and the purpose of a committee shall be specifically stated in the minutes of the meeting at which the committee is formed. Committee members shall be nominated and elected by the church body or appointed by the pastor or the elders at the church body's instruction. All committee members must be members of MVBC.

Committee members shall be diligent and faithful in attendance to worship services, and in attendance to meetings requiring their presence.

A committee that does not meet its intended purposes will be removed or restructured based on the recommendation of the chairman, vice-chairman, and Elders to the congregation at a properly called business meeting. A committee that repeatedly fails to meet its purpose at the recommendation of the elders will be dissolved upon a vote of the congregation at a properly called business meeting.

MVBC will nominate and vote for all members of the Finance Committee, Nominating Committee, Personnel Committee, and Education Committee. For all other committees, MVBC will only nominate and vote on the chairman and vice-chairman, who must both be members of

MVBC for at least one year prior to being appointed; the chairman and vice-chairman may then gather volunteers in support of the committee's work.

A committee report shall be presented to the church body in print at properly scheduled business meetings. In addition, a report shall be presented to the elders monthly for review.

Committees can include but are not limited to:

1. Financial Committee: responsible for the finances and budgeting of the church
2. Personnel Committee: responsible for working with staff and personnel to develop and maintain policies and procedures for staff and addressing the needs of staff members
3. Nominating Committee: responsible for reviewing potential members of all committees and assuring that minimum qualifications are met, prior to making recommendation to the congregation. This committee works in cooperation with the elders and deacons
4. Fellowship Committee: responsible for planning and executing functions relating to fellowship of the members and guests
5. Worship Committee: responsible for setting direction of music and service order, along with the elders
6. Missions Committee: responsible for developing outreach plans with the elders for our community and our involvement in world-wide missions
7. Education Committee: responsible for vetting curriculum and teachers, along with the elders

#### **Article 6: Financial Accountability**

A financial review shall be performed each year by an audit committee. If recommended by that committee, an audit will be performed by an external company that is not associated with MVBC or with our bookkeeper.

The audit committee shall be recommended by the Nomination Committee from members of MVBC. It is desirable, but not necessary, that those recommended have knowledge of financial matters. The committee shall be composed of three members, shall serve for three years, and shall be elected by the congregation at its annual business meeting. After the initial committee is established, one member each year will be replaced at the annual business meeting. Members of the audit committee cannot also be members of the finance committee.

If there is a vacancy of an audit committee position, a specially called business meeting will be announced for the replacement of that member.

#### **Article 7: Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and people in every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Psalm 139,



Jer 1:5, Gen 1:26-27).

## **Article 8: Marriage, Gender and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the creation of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25, Matt 19:5-6). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (I Cor 6:18, 7:2-5, Heb 13:4).

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage (I Cor 6:18-20, Matt 15:18-20, I Cor 6:9-10).

Mountain Vista Baptist Church will only allow its pastors and facilities to be used for biblical, heterosexual weddings and marriages.

Employees and volunteers of Mountain Vista Baptist Church must agree with and abide by this statement on marriage, gender, and sexuality to provide a Biblical role model to the church members and the community (Matt 5:16, Phil 2:14-16, I Thess 5:22).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31, Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of Mountain Vista Baptist Church.