

# Constitution of Mountainside Bible Chapel

## I. Introduction

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

## II. Organization

### A. Name of Entity and Principal Office

The name of this entity shall be Mountainside Bible Chapel, Inc. herein referred to as "MBC." The principal office for the transaction of the business of MBC is fixed and located at 165 US Route 9, Schroon Lake, NY 12870. The Board of Directors may at any time or from time to time change the location of the principal office.

### B. Purpose

1. MBC is organized as a church exclusively for religious, educational and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any further United States Revenue Law), for such purposes including, but not limited to the following.
2. MBC is organized to glorify God by conducting religious services and teaching and training people in the truth of God's Word, the Bible; calling people to repentance from sin and to faith in Christ; making disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ and edifying the Body of Christ (Matthew 28:16-20).

## III. Governance

### A. General

The foundation of church government is that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Each person in authority is to humbly seek the leading of the Lord through prayer, study of the Word, and consulting other godly individuals.

### B. Leadership Council

MBC will be led by its Leadership Council, which shall function as its Board of Directors. Subject to the limitations or restrictions imposed by the laws of the State of New York with regard to nonprofit organizations or by the Articles of Incorporation or this Constitution and Bylaws, the Leadership Council shall direct the carrying out of the purposes and exercise the powers of MBC.

### C. Composition of the Leadership Council

The Leadership Council shall be comprised of the following individuals, each of whom shall be voting members who serve for the period of time specified below:

1. Lead Pastor: The Lead Pastor shall serve as a member of the Leadership Council at all times during his tenure as Lead Pastor.
2. Additional Pastoral/Ministerial Staff: The Leadership Council, in its discretion, may install additional Pastoral/Ministerial Staff to serve as members of the Leadership Council.

3. Deacons: All Deacons shall serve as members of the Leadership Council during their term of active Deacon service.

4. The number of members on the Leadership Council shall not be less than five(5), the Lead Pastor and at least four(4) Deacons, each of whom shall be considered a member of the Board of Directors.

5. A simple majority of the Leadership Council will constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

#### D. Authority of the Leadership Council

1. Except as set forth below, the Leadership Council shall have full authority to conduct, manage, and control the affairs of MBC and to make rules and regulations not inconsistent with the law of the State of New York, the Articles of Incorporation or the Constitution. Specifically, the Leadership Council shall exercise generally the powers held by the Board of Directors of a nonprofit corporation and assure that the resources, property, facilities, and various ministries are in keeping with its purpose, vision, and values.

2. The following Major Matters must be brought before the Members for a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote (unless otherwise specified) at a duly called meeting of the Members:

a. Adoption of the annual budget

b. Extra-budgetary expenditures of any nature exceeding ten percent (10%) of the annual budget. This does not include projects funded by designated gifts.

c. Borrowing money, including establishment or alteration of a line of credit

d. Purchasing, selling or encumbering real property

e. Adoption and amendments to Constitution

f. Any matter required to be submitted to the Members by a specific provision of the Articles of Incorporation or the Constitution

#### E. Meetings of Leadership Council

1. Place and Time of Meeting: Regular meetings of the Leadership Council shall be held upon reasonable notice at any place and time that has been designated by the Leadership Council.

2. Special Meetings of the Leadership Council for any purpose may be called by the Lead Pastor or any two (2) members of the Leadership Council. Notice should be given at least three (3) days before the date of the meeting. Under unusual circumstances, direct verbal notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting should be given as far in advance of the meeting as is reasonable under the circumstances.

3. Remote participation in any meeting, regular or special, shall be deemed to be present in person at the meeting for purposes of meeting the quorum requirement.

4. Action without Meeting: Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Leadership Council may be taken without a meeting if all members of the Leadership Council individually consent in writing to that action. Consent includes any form of electronic text. Such action by written consent will have the same force and effect as a unanimous vote of the Leadership Council. Such written consent will be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Leadership Council.

## IV. Staff and Officers

### A. Lead Pastor/Elder/Overseer (President of Corporation)

1. The New Testament uses three titles for the same role. The word translated “Pastor” is literally the word *shepherd*. “Elder” is a word familiar to the Jewish Christians reminding them of the Old Testament leaders. “Overseer (Bishop)”, was used with Gentile audiences since it was the same word used of the city leaders.

The Lead Pastor is the spiritual leader of MBC. His essential duties are praying, studying the Word, preaching, teaching and giving spiritual direction. He is to lead first by example in living a life that is blameless, both publicly and privately. His leadership is to be humble, compassionate, and not domineering.

He is ultimately responsible for the overall vision and direction of the church, for preaching and teaching the Word of God. He is also responsible to ensure that there is oversight of the administrative duties such as budgeting, personnel, and facility management of the church. He will give account to Jesus the Chief Pastor (Shepherd) of the church (1 Thessalonians 2: 8-12; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

2. Qualifications: The Lead Pastor must fulfill the Scriptural requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. He must fully agree with the Doctrinal Statement of MBC. He must be above reproach in his personal life and business affairs. He must demonstrate to the satisfaction of MBC, prior to his calling and acceptance into the position, that he possesses the spiritual gifts and abilities to fulfill the duties of the Lead Pastor.

3. Selection: The Leadership Council will serve as the Search Committee and establish a procedure to select a candidate and present a single candidate to the congregation. The calling of a Lead Pastor shall require an affirmative vote of three-fourths ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) of the Members present and voting at a duly called meeting. The vote will be by written ballot.

4. Termination: If the Lead Pastor is no longer qualified to serve as Pastor or is not adequately meeting his responsibilities, the Leadership Council may initiate dismissal proceedings by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) majority vote of the Leadership Council at a duly called meeting. The Lead Pastor may be present at this meeting, including the taking of the vote, and shall be afforded an opportunity to speak; provided, however, the Lead Pastor shall not be entitled to vote on this issue.

If the Leadership Council votes to terminate the Lead Pastor, it shall then present a recommendation to the Members at a duly called meeting for which at least two (2) weeks' notice has been given.

Once the Leadership Council has voted to dismiss the Pastor, he is to be relieved of his duties until the Members vote. The church will continue to pay his salary during this time.

A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of those Members present and voting in favor of dismissal shall be sufficient to terminate the Lead Pastor.

Upon termination, the Leadership Council shall take responsibility to see that the terminated Pastor and his family are adequately supported to make whatever transition may be necessary, including finances, counseling, discipleship, and restoration. The Leadership Council is to determine what is adequate.

#### B. Additional Pastoral Staff

MBC may call additional Pastoral Staff as needed. This process shall be led by the Lead Pastor and affirmed by the Leadership Council. The selection process for additional Pastoral Staff members shall be the same process as the selection of the Lead Pastor, and the additional Pastoral Staff member must meet the same qualifications as the Lead Pastor. The additional Pastoral Staff shall serve under the guidance and authority of the Lead Pastor and shall assist with the ministry of the church. Additional Pastoral Staff will have the same vacation, outside ministry and sabbatical benefits as the Lead Pastor. Additional Pastoral Staff may be terminated in the same manner as the Lead Pastor.

#### C. Ministerial Staff

MBC may call additional Ministerial Staff as needed. Ministerial Staff would include positions such as music, counseling, teaching. This process shall be led by the Lead Pastor and affirmed by the Leadership Council.

The selection process for additional Ministerial Staff members shall be overseen by the Lead Pastor and approved by the Leadership Council. The additional Ministerial Staff shall serve under the guidance and authority of the Lead Pastor and shall assist with the ministry of the church. Vacation and termination shall be overseen by the Lead Pastor and Leadership Council.

#### D. Additional Staff

Other Staff may be hired to fill positions to assist in the operation of the church. This is to be overseen by the Lead Pastor and affirmed by the Leadership Council. The additional Staff Members shall serve under the guidance and authority of the Lead Pastor. Vacation and termination shall be overseen by the Lead Pastor and Leadership Council.

#### E. Pastor Vacation, Outside Ministry, Sabbatical

1. Vacation Time: The Leadership Council is to set the starting vacation time for the Pastoral Staff with a minimum of three weeks of paid vacation. A week is added every five years to a maximum of six weeks.

2. Mission Trips and Outside Ministry:

a. Pastoral Staff visiting MBC supported missionaries is not considered time away from MBC. The church will be responsible for the ministry-related cost of the visit.

b. Pastoral Staff may be asked to minister in other churches and ministries. Each year, Pastoral Staff is given up to two weeks for ministry away from MBC. The Leadership Council may approve more time at its discretion. The ministry must be approved by the Leadership Council.

c. Additional fundraising may be necessary to cover the cost of a ministry. The method of fundraising must be approved by the Leadership Council.

3. Sabbatical: Every third year, Pastoral Staff shall be given an additional four weeks for spiritual refreshment and rest. The weeks are to be taken together and time away may be lengthened with vacation time. The timing must be approved by the Leadership Council.

## F. Officers

The Corporation Officers of MBC will be a President (Lead Pastor), Moderator, Secretary, Treasurer and such other Officers as the Leadership Council may select. Officers other than the President need not be members of the Leadership Council. All Officers shall be members of MBC and must be an example of Christ in both speech and conduct.

1. Selection: The Officers (other than the President) of MBC shall be appointed by a simple majority vote of the Leadership Council.

2. Responsibilities: Officers of MBC shall have the responsibilities assigned by the Leadership Council.

3. Vacancies: A vacancy in any office except that of President(Lead Pastor) because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or otherwise will be filled by a majority vote of the Leadership Council.

## G. Deacons

1. As servants, the Deacons commit to minister to the congregation and to minister with the Lead Pastor and other Pastoral Staff in the ministry to MBC. The Deacons must lead lives that are above reproach to serve as examples to the congregation and the community. The well-being of the congregation shall always be the primary concern of the Deacons.

2. Function: Deacons are the lay servant leaders of MBC, assisting the Pastoral Staff in the care, maintenance, and functioning of MBC. This is to enable the Pastoral Staff to give more attention to the ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-7).

3. Qualifications: A Deacon must be:

a. A Member of MBC for at least one (1) year prior to his nomination unless this requirement is waived by a simple majority (51%) vote of the Leadership Council.

b. Qualified as determined by the Leadership Council in accordance with Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

c. Committed to refraining from public criticism of MBC and be willing to settle all difficulties in a quiet and Christlike manner.

d. Committed to cooperating with MBC's Lead Pastor and assist in all activities related to the purpose, vision, values, and programs of MBC.

e. An example for all to follow in character that reflects the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:16-26.

f. Nomination: The Leadership Council shall choose suitably qualified candidates to be presented to the members. A single candidate will be presented for each position to be filled. The names and a brief

description of each candidate shall be published through ordinary MBC communication channels for a period of no less than two (2) weeks. During this time, the Leadership Council may receive comments concerning the candidate, in writing. Under no circumstances shall the Leadership Council receive or consider anonymous comments. A copy will be provided to the Candidate and comments will otherwise be treated as confidential.

g. Selection: After the candidate review period ends, the Leadership Council shall present the candidate for a vote by the Members at a duly called meeting. In order to be selected to serve as Deacon, a candidate must receive two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Members present and voting.

h. Term: A Deacon shall serve a term of three(3) years.

i. Number of Deacons: The number of Deacons shall be determined by the current Leadership Council with a minimum of four(4).

j. Officers

1. Lead Deacon: The Lead Deacon will assist the Lead Pastor in the oversight of the Deacons and will serve as the point of contact for the congregation. The Lead Deacon is to be selected by the Leadership Council.

2. Deacon Secretary: The Deacon Secretary will take the meeting minutes and oversee any communication from the Leadership Council.

k. Responsibilities: The Deacons are to:

1. Zealously guard the unity of the Spirit within MBC in the bonds of peace.
2. Establish and maintain personal relationships with the congregation of MBC.
3. Seek to know and meet the needs and struggles of the MBC congregation.
4. Serve MBC in relieving, encouraging, and developing all who are in such need.
5. Assist the Lead Pastor in the oversight of the ministries of MBC.
6. Administer the Compassion Fund for the relief of the needy within the congregation and the community.
7. Prayerfully counsel wayward Members and recommend appropriate action to the Leadership Council.

l. Dismissal

A Deacon who is consistently absent from Leadership Council meetings or who fails to perform the duties assigned or whose life no longer meets the qualification, may be removed at the discretion of the Leadership Council. The vote for dismissal will be with a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Leadership Council.

## V. Membership

### A. General

The membership of MBC shall consist of all persons from the congregation (anyone who attends MBC services), who have met the qualifications for membership, as described in this section.

## B. Candidacy for Membership

Anyone is welcome to become a candidate for membership at MBC. The requirements are a conversion experience, acceptance of the Doctrinal Statement of MBC and baptism by immersion. The process is to meet with a member of the Leadership Council who will then recommend the person for membership to the Council for approval by majority vote.

## C. Associate Membership

The community of believers that comprise MBC includes a number of individuals who participate in the life and ministry of MBC in a substantial and meaningful way while maintaining an ongoing relationship with another church body. Such individuals will be allowed to become an Associate Member by following the process outlined in Candidacy for Membership. Associate Members shall have all of the rights and responsibilities of Members.

## D. Responsibilities of Members: Members are expected to:

1. Faithfully attend services and other meetings of MBC.
2. Serve the body with their gifts, talents, and abilities.
3. Give financially to support the ministry.
4. Avoid all backbiting and gossiping and be zealous in our effort to preserve the unity in the bonds of peace.

## E. Rights of Members

1. Any Member may participate in the ministries of MBC, vote at business meetings, hold office, exercise leadership, and serve as they are called and gifted by the Holy Spirit.
2. Any Members at least eighteen (18) years of age and in attendance at regular or at called business meetings are entitled to vote.

## F. Membership Roll

The Leadership Council, acting through its designees, shall keep an accurate and up-to-date roll of all members. This roll shall be updated at least annually.

## G. Unity

MBC places a high value on unity within the body of believers that comprise its Members, regular attenders and guests. This commitment is a direct reflection of the clear mandate of Scripture to avoid divisions and discord (I Corinthians 1:10, Romans 16:17 and Proverbs 6:16-19).

1. SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES: We believe that the Scriptures teach the following principles:
  - a. Unity is a core value within MBC and is a vital aspect of our witness to a lost and dying world (see John 13:35).
  - b. Agreement on the core doctrines of the faith (see Romans 16:17-18).
  - c. Avoid division over preferences (see Romans 16:17-18).
  - d. Agreement to arrive at the same position by agreeing on the facts (see Romans 16:17-18).

e. Leaders are charged with a heavy responsibility to protect MBC from those who sow discord and create division (see Proverbs 6:16-19).

2. COMMITMENT TO UNITY: In view of these clear Scriptural principles, it is incumbent upon the leaders of MBC to exercise spiritual discernment to recognize and respond to circumstances that threaten unity within the church body. This commitment will be expressed through:

a. An expectation that communications between and amongst the Members be carried out in a spirit of love and seasoned with grace.

b. Prompt and effective intervention by the Leadership Council to resolve disagreement consistent with the spirit of Matthew 18.

c. Implementation of church discipline when necessary to preserve or restore unity within the church body.

#### H. Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated upon the occurrence of one (1) of the following events or situations:

1. Upon the death of the Member.

2. By resignation when the Member asks to have his or her name removed from the Church membership roll.

3. When a Member ceases to fulfill membership duties as outlined in the responsibilities section. The Leadership Council will be responsible for determining if there is a reasonable cause or an issue that needs to be addressed. There will always be an attempt to rectify the situation.

4. Upon the completion of disciplinary action of MBC (in accordance with the procedures set out in this Constitution). The vote for dismissal will be with a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Leadership Council.

#### I. Discipline of Members

1. All disciplinary actions are considered to be ecclesiastical matters under the Constitution in keeping with Scriptural mandates for righteous living and conduct.

2. Due process will be provided to any Member to be heard by the Leadership Council either orally or in writing at the time and place set by the Leadership Council prior to any disciplinary action.

3. If the actions of a Member damage the church's witness and/or welfare, the Leadership Council will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem redemptively in accordance with Matthew 18: 12-17 and Galatians 6:1.

4. If, at any point during the church discipline process, the errant Member withdraws his or her membership, the discipline process shall then cease and no information concerning the process will be disclosed after the withdrawal of the Member.



## VI. Business Meetings and Records of the Church

### A. Regular Meetings

MBC shall hold business meetings at least three times annually (tri-annually) to conduct church business and to communicate progress in the ministries of the church. An Annual Meeting early in the year, then status meetings in May and September. These regularly scheduled meetings may include reports from the various ministries of the church. Advance notice of each business meeting is to be made to Members at least two (2) weeks before the meeting. The notice shall contain the time, date, and place of the meeting. Notice will be disseminated through current channels to make the best effort to communicate to all.

### B. Special Meetings

A special meeting may be called by the Leadership Council by giving notice publicly of such a meeting and the purpose for which it is called to the Members at least one (1) Sunday and by other communication means not less than 14 days prior to said meeting. In case of an emergency, when 14 days' notice is not possible, every reasonable effort will be made to communicate with the Members.

### C. Procedure of Meetings

The Moderator should be familiar with Robert's Rules of Order and conduct business meetings in an orderly manner consistent with the spirit of Robert's Rules of Order. The Corporation Secretary or designate shall keep the minutes of each meeting. A quorum is the number of members attending a properly called meeting. In other words, there is no minimum requirement for a meeting to officially commence provided the meeting was properly called.

## VII. Facility Use

MBC makes its facilities available for events as an expression of its religious mission to demonstrate love for and engagement with the community (Mark 12:31; Matthew 28:16-20). However, MBC only makes its facilities available for activities that are consistent with the purpose, vision, and values of MBC. Allowing activities or ceremonies contrary to the mission and Doctrinal Statement would violate the church's beliefs and religious practices, would render assistance to beliefs and practices contrary to its own, produce confusion and scandal among its members, and send an inconsistent message to the community (2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). Therefore, approval of the Leadership Council or their designee must first be secured for the use of any property, buildings, or equipment for activities other than meetings or events planned by MBC.

## VIII. Miscellaneous Provisions

### A. Finances

No part of the net receipts or donations to MBC shall be used to the benefit of or be distributable to its pastors, deacons, members, officers or other private persons except as authorized in furtherance of its religious, educational and charitable purposes.

#### B. Indemnification of Directors and Officers

MBC may, to the maximum extent permitted by the laws of the State of New York, indemnify each of its Officers and Directors against expenses, judgments, fines, settlements and other amounts actual and erasable incurred in connection with any proceeding arising by reason of the fact any such person is or was a Director or Officer of MBC and will advance to such Director or Officer expenses incurred in defending any such proceeding.

#### C. Confidentiality of Certain Records

The following records shall be deemed *confidential* and shall not be made available to the membership: records of any individual donor's gifts (other than to that donor), private notes of the Pastoral Staff and Leadership Council, and any record of attorney-client communications.

#### D. Arbitration

Because lawsuits between or among believers are prohibited by Scripture, disputes should be worked out between or among Christians and without legal action (See Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6). By becoming a Member, Members agree to submit any disagreement, claim, or action with or against MBC to Christian arbitration. If that fails, Members agree to arbitration through the American Arbitration Association, or any arbitration service mutually agreed to by MBC and the aggrieved Member. (For clarity, this does not include criminal acts.)

#### E. Execution of Documents

The Leadership Council may authorize in writing any Officer or Officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of and on behalf of MBC and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless authorized, no Officer, agent or other person will have any power or authority to bind MBC by any contract or engagement or to pledge its credit or to render it liable for any purpose or to any amount.

#### F. Annual Accounting Period

The Fiscal Year for this corporation will begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December.

#### G. Amendment of Constitution

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Members present and voting at a Regular Business Meeting of MBC provided such amendment shall have been presented in writing at least one (1) month prior to the vote.

#### H. Constitution Maintenance

The Scriptures do not change, but methods do change. The Leadership Council should regularly review the Constitution to ensure the ministry's effectiveness.

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## IX. Doctrinal Statement

### A. The Scriptures

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments to be the full record of God's self-disclosure to humankind. Different men, while writing according to their own styles and personalities, were supernaturally moved along by the Holy Spirit to record God's very words, inerrant in the original writings. Therefore, those applying themselves to study its literal, historical-grammatical context can accurately understand God's Word. Scripture is fully trustworthy as our final authority and sufficient authority for all of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

### B. The Triune God

We believe in the one living and true God, eternally (John 17:3) existing in perfect unity as three equally and fully divine Persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). Each member of the Godhead, while executing distinct but complementary roles in redemptive history, has precisely the same nature, attributes, and being and is equally worthy of the same glory and honor and obedience (John 1:1-4; Acts 5:3-4).

### C. God the Father

We believe God the Father created all things for His glory according to His own will (Revelation 4:11), through His Son, Jesus Christ. He upholds all things by the Word of His power and grace, exercising sovereign headship over all creation, providence, and redemption (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3).

### D. God the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, moved by love in accordance with the will of the Father, took on human flesh (John 1:1, 14, 18). Conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the virgin Mary. He, being fully God and fully man (John 14:8-9), lived a sinless life and sacrificially shed His blood and died on the cross in our place, accomplishing redemption for all who place their faith in Him. He arose visibly and bodily from the dead three days later and ascended into heaven, where, at the Father's right hand, He is now Head of His Body the Church, the only Savior and Mediator between God and people, and will return to earth in power and glory to consummate His redemptive mission (1 Timothy 3:16).

### E. God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ during this age. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He draws the unredeemed to repentance and faith, and at salvation imparts new spiritual life to the believer, bringing that person into union with Christ and the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, seals, fills, guides, instructs, comforts, equips, empowers, permanently indwells at salvation, and bestows spiritual gifts to the believer for Christ-like living and service (John 16:8, 13:15; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:22, 4:11-12; Romans 8:9-17, 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 12:4-5, 11-13, 19; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

### F. Humankind

We believe in the historicity of the early chapters in Genesis. And believe that God created humankind—male and female—in His own image and likeness, free of sin, to glorify Himself and enjoy His fellowship. Tempted by Satan, but in the sovereign plan of God, humans freely chose to disobey God, bringing sin,

death, and condemnation to all humankind. All human beings, therefore, are totally depraved by nature and by choice. Alienated from God without defense or excuse, and subject to God's righteous wrath, all of humankind is in desperate need of the Savior (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 1:18, 32).

### G. Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as the substitutionary atonement in our place, and that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the sole and complete payment for sins, fully satisfying God's righteous wrath, for each person that turns from sin in repentance and places their faith in Christ alone by grace alone. At salvation, each person is made a new creation by the Holy Spirit, declared righteous before God, and secured as an adopted child of God forever. Genuine faith continues in obedience and love for Jesus Christ with a life eager to glorify God and persevere to the end (Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

### H. The Church

We believe that upon placing one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the believer is made part of the Body of Christ, the one universal Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The Scriptures exhort believers to gather locally in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, fellowship, the ordinances of baptism and communion, service to the local body through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts, and outreach to the world to make disciples (Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 28:18-20). We believe that the sign gifts have ceased as they were an authentication of the message to the early church while the Scriptures were being written (1 Cor. 13:8). Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the Church under the watchful care of the church leaders. A church's members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (Ephesians 4:16).

### I. Baptism and Communion

We believe that Christian baptism is a public declaration of the believer's salvation in Christ, identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection symbolized by immersion in water. The Lord's Supper is the united commemoration by believers of Christ's death until He comes and should be preceded by a careful self-examination. The elements of communion symbolize the broken body and blood of our Savior. (Acts 2:41; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29).

### J. Christian Living

We believe that the Christian is to intentionally pursue a relationship with Christ by walking in the Spirit and always be growing in Christlikeness. The marks of Christlikeness are listed as the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-24). The believer will also seek to maintain a standard of purity in thought (Philippians 4:8), speech (Colossians 4:6, Galatians 6:1), and actions (Colossians 3:5-10; James 1:22-27). The believer also participates in community with other believers as illustrated by the "One Another" commands of Scripture. Each believer is supernaturally gifted by God and is to use these gifts to serve the local body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:11-27). The believer will also seek to make disciples in following God's example. God loved the world so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die. Jesus did not come to condemn the world but provide salvation (John 3:16-18).

#### K. Missions

We believe it is the aim, duty, and privilege of every believer and local church fellowship to glorify God by responding as active participants in the Great Commission call of Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations. We believe the primary focus and priority of this call is centered on efforts that establish, strengthen, and reproduce biblically based churches, which then plant churches that plant churches for future generations and God's glory.

#### L. Things to Come

We believe in the imminent rapture for believers, those who are dead in Christ and those who are alive. This blessed hope has vital bearing on the personal life, service, and mission of the believer (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We believe that Christ will come to earth and sit on the throne of David and establish His messianic kingdom as promised in the Old Testament and described in Revelation 20:1-7. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The lost will be raised to judgment and experience eternal wrath in hell. The saved will be raised to eternal joy in the new heaven and new earth in the manifested presence of God (Acts 1:3, 9; Hebrews 7:25-26).

#### M. Marriage and Sexuality

We believe that marriage is the exclusive, covenant relationship between one man and one woman and that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman joined in marriage. We believe that marriage is symbolic of the mysterious union between Christ and the Church. We also believe that God creates each person with an immutable biological sex—male or female—and that these two distinct sexes together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen.1:26-27, 2:24, 19:5, 13, 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; I Cor. 5:1; 6:9; Eph. 5:23-32; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)

#### N. Human Dignity

We believe that God endows all human life with inherent dignity at every stage of development and that human life should be respected from conception to natural death. Further, because we are created in the image of God, we believe that every person must be afforded compassion, kindness, and respect. We also believe that the greatest commandments are (1) to love God and (2) to love our neighbors as ourselves. Therefore, we believe that we should demonstrate love toward all people. (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5, 139:14-16; Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 1:44, 6:31)

#### O. Biblical Authority

This statement of faith is not a complete or final explanation of our faith. Rather, it is a summary of our core beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning faith and life, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Leadership Council is this church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.