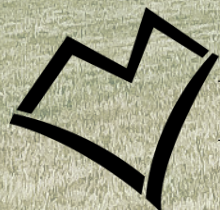


CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

mountvernon.church/beliefs

Approved February 2024



Mount Vernon
Baptist Church

Speaking God's Word. Sharing Christ's Love.

CONSTITUTION

OUR MISSION

The mission of Mount Vernon Baptist Church is to glorify God by bringing people to Jesus and membership in His family; leading them to magnify God through worship in spirit and in truth; developing them to Christ-like maturity; and equipping and empowering them for ministry through personal service in the church, community and world.

Mount Vernon Baptist Church is a community of faith serving God and the body of Christ by expressing the basic purposes of the church:

Mission (Evangelism)	“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” Acts 1:8 (NIV).
Membership (Fellowship)	“So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family” Ephesians 2:19 (NLT).
Magnify (Worship)	“O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together” Psalm 34:3 (KJV).
Maturity (Discipleship)	“So we continue to preach Christ to each person, using all wisdom to warn and to teach everyone, in order to bring each one into God’s presence as a mature person in Christ” Colossians 1:28 (NCV).
Ministry (Service)	“To prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” Ephesians 4:12 (NIV).

This document will serve as the Constitution of Mount Vernon Baptist Church located at 11220 Nuckols Road, Glen Allen, Virginia. It will describe the basic mission, beliefs, and polity that govern the ministry of the church.

OUR POLITY

Mount Vernon Baptist Church is a fully autonomous congregation serving under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. The procedures for receiving members and the organizational structure of the church are described in the Church By-Laws.

All internal groups created and empowered by the church will report to and be accountable only to the church unless otherwise specified by church action.

In the event that Mount Vernon Baptist Church experiences dissolution, properties and assets remaining after debts and obligations are satisfied will be donated to the Dover Baptist Association, a 501(c)(3) organization, for use in financing church planting. If for any reason Dover Baptist is not a qualified 501(c)(3) organization, all residual properties and assets will be donated to the Virginia Baptist Mission Board, a 501(c)(3) organization.

OUR AFFILIATIONS

This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation among Baptist churches. In so far as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the Dover Baptist Association, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, the Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia, and the Southern Baptist Convention along with other groups with whom cooperation may be seen to help further the ministry of the Gospel and the mission of our church.

The Statement of Beliefs contained in this Constitution & Bylaws does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe

I. THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21

II. GOD

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17

III. MAN

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11

IV. SALVATION

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. THE CHURCH

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3

Note: This article was amended June 14, 2023, by action of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention

VII. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. THE LORD'S DAY

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. LAST THINGS

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. EDUCATION

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. STEWARDSHIP

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. COOPERATION

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. PEACE AND WAR

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. THE FAMILY

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; Psalms 127; Psalms 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

BYLAWS

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

General

The members of Mount Vernon Baptist Church retain the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church. The congregation reserves the right to determine who will be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

Becoming a Member

Any person may become a member who has affirmed his or her faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, has received, read and agreed with the Church Statement of Beliefs, and has met one of the following three requirements:

1. Believer's baptism at Mount Vernon Baptist Church.
2. Statement of previous immersion baptism at another church of similar beliefs.
3. Letter of transfer from a church of similar beliefs.

Waiver of baptism granted when immersion is impractical because of physical limitation.

Voting at Business Sessions

Every member of the church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in business sessions provided the member is present or that provision is made for absentee balloting.

Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated in the following ways:

1. Death of the member
2. Transfer of membership to another church
3. Erasure upon request of the member
4. Exclusion by action of this church

Discipline

Should the conduct of a member become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the ministry staff and the deacons will take

every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accord with Matthew 18. As a last resort membership may be revoked upon

recommendation of the deacons and a two-thirds vote of members present at a business session.

CHURCH ORDINANCES

Baptism

This church will receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, and who indicates a commitment to follow Jesus as Lord. Baptism will be by immersion in water. The staff ministers or whomever else the church may authorize will administer baptism as an act of worship during any regular worship service of the church or at special services designed for that purpose.

The Lord's Supper

The church will observe the Lord's Supper at least monthly, commonly on the first Sunday of the month unless otherwise scheduled on the church calendar. The staff ministers, deacons, or whomever else the church may authorize will administer the Lord's Supper.

CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS

Regular Business Meetings

The church will hold regular business meetings three times each year, commonly in the months of February, June and October. The date of the three meetings each year will be posted in advance in appropriate church media. Routine business activities and organizational reports are addressed during these meetings. Should there be any matter of unusual interest to be brought before such regular meeting, notice must be communicated to the membership in as many ways as may be practical and timely. Such notice shall be given to the membership one week prior to that meeting unless such a hardship condition exists that would prevent the church from fulfilling its responsibilities to church members or the community.

New business items are to be presented first for review by the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council will refer them to the appropriate Partnership Committees to whose work they pertain. Motions presented from the floor of a business session that have not been reviewed by the Leadership Council will be referred automatically to the Leadership Council for consideration and a recommendation for action at the next-scheduled regular or special business meeting.

Special Business Meetings

The Leadership Council may call special business meetings. A one-week notice must be given for called business meetings unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The notice will include the subject, date, time and place; and must be posted on the church website and communicated to the membership in as many ways as may be practical and timely. Special Business Meetings are limited to the subjects specifically addressed in the notice of the meeting.

Quorum & Voting

A quorum for voting consists of those members who attend the business meeting, provided that it is a regular meeting or a special business meeting that has been properly called.

Parliamentary Rules

Business meetings will be conducted under the appropriate guidance of the church Moderator, and following in general the principles of Robert's Rules of Order, Revised as the authority for procedure. The Moderator is empowered to interpret and apply rules of procedure and decorum as needed to meet the needs of the church, and to maintain a fair and Christian atmosphere in all proceedings.

CHURCH OFFICERS

Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor is responsible for leading the congregation to function as a New Testament church. The Senior Pastor will lead the congregation and the church staff to fulfill the purpose and mission of the church.

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

A Senior Pastor Selection Committee representative of the congregation as a whole will be recommended by the Leadership Council and elected by the church to seek a suitable candidate, and its recommendation will constitute a nomination. The committee will bring to the consideration of the church only one name at a time; an affirmative vote being three-fourths of those present.

The Senior Pastor will serve until the relationship is terminated by his own request or by a recommendation for dismissal approved by a two-thirds vote of the Deacons and the Leadership Council and a two-thirds vote of the church in a specially called business session. Upon termination, the Senior Pastor will receive compensation consistent with church personnel policies.

Additional Pastoral & Ministerial Staff

Additional pastoral & ministerial staff will be called and employed as the church determines the need for such positions. Prospective pastoral & ministerial staff members will be employed through the approval and invitation of the Personnel Partnership Committee consistent with the church budget and in consultation with interested church members and ratification by the Leadership Council.

Pastoral & ministerial staff members will serve until the relationship is terminated by his or her own request or recommended by a two-thirds vote of the Personnel Partnership Committee and Deacons, and ratification by the Leadership Council. Upon termination, the staff member will receive compensation consistent with church personnel policies.

Interim pastoral & ministerial staff members may be employed by the church staff in consultation with and with the approval of the Personnel Partnership Committee. These agreements must be consistent with the church personnel budget.

(Ministerial = nonordained • Pastoral = ordained)

Director of Finance (Treasurer)

The church will employ a Director of Finance. The Director of Finance will oversee the day to day financial operations of the church. This includes the establishment and maintenance of proper accounting procedures for all receipts and disbursements. The Director of Finance will provide monthly financial reports to the Finance & Property Partnership Committee as well as regular reports to the church as appropriate. The Director of Finance will also work with the Finance & Property Partnership Committee and appropriate staff in preparing, reviewing, and administering the annual church budget. The Director of Finance may serve as the Treasurer.

Moderator

The church will annually elect a moderator to preside at church business meetings. He or she may serve consecutive terms. In the absence of the moderator, the pastor or the chairperson of deacons will preside, or, in their absence, an acting moderator may be elected.

Clerk

The clerk will be employed by the church. The clerk will be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church except as otherwise provided. The clerk will be responsible for keeping a register of names of members with dates of admission together with a record of baptisms, dismissals, deaths, and erasures. The clerk will issue letters of transfer, preserve on file all communications and written official reports. The clerk will be responsible for preparing the annual letter of the church to the Dover Association. All church records are church property and will be kept on the premises. The clerk will prepare for presentation the minutes for the last business meeting.

Treasurer (as needed)

The church will elect a treasurer for a term of three years. The treasurer may be re-elected to serve a second consecutive term before becoming ineligible to serve for one year, after which eligibility is renewed. The treasurer may be an employee of the church, in which case term limits do not apply. It will be the duty of the treasurer, in conjunction with the Director of Finance and the Finance & Property Partnership Committee to see that all church funds, either special or budgeted, are properly handled and properly disbursed, and that proper accounting records of all financial transactions have been made and that proper financial procedures are being maintained.

Trustees

The church will elect three trustees to serve as legal officers for the church. They will serve for five-year terms, and are eligible to continue serving for consecutive terms. They will hold the church property in trust. Upon a specific vote of the church authorizing each action, they will be given the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer church property. When the signatures of trustees are required, they will sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal documents related to church-approved matters.

COUNCILS & COMMITTEES

Leadership Council

The church employs pastoral & ministerial staff to give leadership to the development and implementation of a New Testament program of ministry consistent with the church purpose, vision and mission. However the staff does not serve in isolation. Instead, they work in partnership with volunteer members of the church serving on Partnership Committees and Ministry Teams. These groups are organized around the purposes of the church to provide on-going program evaluation, goal setting, brain-storming, budgeting, prioritizing, and presentation to the church of a comprehensive program of ministry.

Leadership, coordination and direction for the Partnership Committees and staff are provided through the work of the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council is led by the Senior Pastor and is composed of the chairperson chosen by each Partnership Committee, together with the church pastoral & ministerial staff liaison assigned to each committee. The Leadership Council will oversee the work of the various partnership committees, representing the church membership between business meetings. In this capacity the Council will coordinate the work and approve the policies and procedures developed in the Partnership Committees. The work of the Leadership Council will be formed around the vision and mission of the church, and the development of an annual budget and calendar to achieve that vision.

Partnership Committees

The Partnership Committees will be composed of at least six volunteer members. They will be recommended by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church to three-year terms, with one-third of the committee rotating off each year. In order to share the opportunity for service, members who rotate off of a Partnership Committee will be ineligible to serve on the same committee for a period of at least one year. Each committee will select their own chairperson who will serve on the Leadership Council. Members of Partnership Committees will be expected to be members of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, to affirm the church's basic missions and purpose, and to reflect the characteristics of mature Christian faith.

Ministry Teams

Ministry Teams work under the supervision of the Partnership Committee appropriate to their purpose and in harmony with the policies and procedures that govern church ministries. The Partnership Committees may appoint and establish any number of Ministry Teams as needed. Ministry Team members serve annual terms and may renew their covenant for service yearly without limit. The invitation to serve on Ministry Teams is based upon calling, interest, and willingness to serve in the ministry area involved. The members of Ministry Teams should reflect honor to Christ and a consistent Christian witness.

It is the desire of Mount Vernon Baptist Church that every member have the opportunity to serve in the Body of Christ and for God's glory. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV).

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is a special committee formed each year for the purpose of presenting to the church nominations of persons to serve on Partnership Committees and in church officer positions. The Nominating Committee is composed of five members selected annually by the Leadership Council from the congregation at large and presented to the congregation for approval. They will serve one-year terms but may serve successive terms for as many as three years.

THE PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEES

Missions Partnership Committee

Purpose: Mission (Evangelism)

The church is called to share God's Word through evangelism and missions. We are ambassadors for Christ, and our commission is to share the love and Good News about Christ with the world. The Missions Partnership Committee is charged with developing and maintaining a comprehensive mission program including local, regional, and international missions. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV).

The Missions Partnership Committee mandate includes both the distribution of mission resources and the provision of opportunities for direct action by Mount Vernon Baptist Church members at all levels of our mission effort. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" Acts 1:8 (NIV). This committee will be composed of at least nine members.

Deacon Partnership Committee

Purpose: Membership (Fellowship)

As Christians, we are called to belong as well as believe. We are meant to belong to Christ's family and be members of his body. The Deacons are charged with helping people connect with God and each other through Jesus Christ and His church. "So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family" Ephesians 2:19 (NLT).

The Deacons provide pastoral care by ministering to the congregation through the support of the worship ministries, along with ministries of intercession, and of encouragement. They are called and trained to work alongside the staff as lay ministers, seeking to provide caring ministries to the church following the guidelines of their historic biblical office.

The Deacons are led by a Deacon Partnership Committee composed of at least nine members who serve three year terms. They are nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church. They choose their own chairperson and other officers as needed from among committee members.

The Deacon Partnership Committee appoints deacons as team leaders for one year renewable terms to carry on their ministries. The Team Leaders and Deacon Partnership Committee are empowered to enlist any and all ordained deacons or lay members in their ministry each year, and may recommend to the church additional candidates for Deacon ordination as the need and opportunity arises.

The Deacons serve a vital role in assisting the church pastoral & ministerial staff in ministering to the needs of the church body. In this role, they maintain close communication with both the membership and the staff ministers. In so doing they seek to fulfill the biblical mandate, "Help carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2 (TEV)

Worship Partnership Committee

Purpose: Magnify (Worship)

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" Psalm 34:3 (KJV). "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving". Psalm 69:30 (KJV).

The Worship Partnership Committee seeks to honor God and facilitate His worship through a balanced worship program of ministry as expressed through all public worship services and the ministries of music, drama, the arts, and proclamation, and the ministries which support them. One of the main tasks of the Worship Partnership Committee is to evaluate the weekly worship services and special productions. Other tasks include giving guidance and oversight on programming, budget, technical equipment, training of technical teams and artists, policy and procedures as well as overseeing major productions.

Adult Discipleship Partnership Committee

Purpose: Maturity (Discipleship)

The church is commanded to edify and train God's people for service. Discipleship is the process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This process begins when a person becomes an intentional follower of Jesus Christ, and continues throughout the rest of his or her life.

"So we continue to preach Christ to each person, using all wisdom to warn and to teach everyone, in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature person in Christ" Colossians 1:28 (NCV).

In accordance with God's guidance, the purpose of the ADPC is to establish and support adult ministries resulting in personal growth, increased outreach, attendance and Christ-like service to God, provide guidance and oversight, to include budgetary review and approval of designated ministry teams and coordinate with other MVBC Leadership and Partnership Committees to accomplish Church goals and objectives. The ADPC seeks to achieve the above purposes, facilitate the growth and ensure the high quality of the MVBC Adult Education Program by actively supervising and coordinating the recruiting, training, equipping, and operation of MVBC Ministry Teams and respective programs such as: Adult Bible Fellowship, ABF Leadership Team, Men' and Women's Ministries, Marriage Ministry, Singles Ministry, Seniors Ministry, Health & Wellness Ministry, Recreation Ministry, Sunday & Wednesday Night Studies

Student Ministry Partnership Committee

Purpose: Maturity (Discipleship)

Student Ministries relate to a special group of Mount Vernon Baptist Church family members who are in the transitional phase ranging from sixth grade through college. The Student Ministries Partnership Committee seeks to manage ministry experiences for this group on the basis of the fundamental purposes of the church. The tasks of the committee include giving guidance on student programming, budget and financial matters, and policy and procedures.

Children's Ministry Partnership Committee

Purpose: Maturity (Discipleship)

Children's Ministries relate to children from birth through fifth grade. The Children's Ministries Partnership Committee seeks to provide ministry for this group on the basis of the fundamental purposes of the church. The tasks of the committee include giving guidance on children's programming, budget and financial matters, policy and procedures.

Ministry Partnership Committee

Purpose: Ministry (Service)

Ministry is demonstrating God's love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus. The church exists to minister to people. The church exists to minister to all kinds of needs: spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical. One of the purposes of the church is "To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" Ephesians 4:12.

This committee seeks to train and equip God's people for ministry and works of service within the church by encouraging them to discover their unique S.H.A.P.E. (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences) for ministry, and to find a place to serve Christ and the church.

Areas serviced include, but not limited to: Assimilation, Ushers, Greeters, Outreach, Communications

Administrative Ministries

Purpose: Support Operations

The operations area of Mount Vernon Baptist Church supports and makes possible the achievement of the fundamental purposes of the church. Their span includes finance & property development and personnel administration. Their mandate is to fulfill the biblical injunction, "...make sure that everything is done in a proper and orderly fashion" 1 Corinthians 14:40 (NJB).

Finance & Property Partnership Committee

The Finance & Property Partnership Committee (FPPC), composed of at least nine appointed volunteer members, Senior Pastor, Director of Finance and Treasurer coordinates and oversees a broad range of finance, property and administrative functions. Through this Committee and its Subcommittees, the church maintains excellence in finance, property management and administrative services.

This Committee is responsible for:

- Monitoring and recommending to the church annual budgets, policies and actions that ensure proper use of gifts and sound principles of financial management.
- Working with the Director of Finance in the preparation and presentation to the church of all appropriate financial reports.
- Maintaining, implementing and insuring compliance with the Financial Policies and Procedures Manual.
- Maintaining financial oversight of all church ministry businesses including Memorial Park and the Mount Vernon Preschool.
- Overseeing the design, construction and maintenance of all church buildings.
- Maintaining all church property including landscaping and grounds maintenance.
- Selecting and engaging CPA firm for annual "Review" or "Audit" of Financial Statements.
- Selecting banks for deposits and loan relationships including terms of loans.
- Maintaining policies that relate to facilities use, fees, and services (which are posted on the church web site).

Personnel Partnership Committee

The Personnel Partnership Committee represents the church in all matters relating to employed personnel administration. Its work includes such areas as determining staff needs, employment, compensation, policies, job descriptions, and personnel services. This partnership is specifically responsible for overseeing the personnel budget each year in cooperation with the Finance & Property Partnership Committee which sets budget targets. The Personnel Partnership will include at least nine members.

Amendments

Changes in the Constitution and By-Laws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church or special called business meeting for that purpose, provided each amendment will have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting, and copies of the proposed amendment will have been available to each member at least thirty days in advance.

Approval of amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws require an affirmative vote by two-thirds of those present.



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