

## **The By-Laws of Mulvane Christian Church**

This document represents the by-laws of Mulvane Christian Church (MCC) and is subject to the word of God and the sole authority of Jesus Christ as the head of the universal church (Col 1:16-18). Because our prayer is that MCC will continue to grow and thrive, this document is to be considered a valid amendable document and is subject to amendment as the needs of the church change.

These by-laws prescribe the governance of MCC as vested in its members and administered by the Elders, Deacons, the Church Board, and our pastoral staff. These by-laws shall be interpreted to be consistent with the constitution. Should any by-law be found to contradict a provision of the constitution, the constitution shall control.

### **Section I: Membership**

#### **Becoming a Member**

Any person henceforth who desires to become a member of MCC must complete the membership process as outlined in these by-laws.

To become a member of a church is to formally commit oneself to an identifiable, local body of believers who have joined together for specific, divinely ordained purposes. These purposes include receiving instruction from God's Word (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2), serving and edifying one another through the proper use of spiritual gifts (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31; 1 Pt 4:10-11), participating in the ordinances (Lk 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and proclaiming the gospel to those who are lost (Matt 28:18-20). When a person becomes a member of a church, they submit themselves to the care and the authority of the biblically qualified Elders that God has placed in that assembly (Heb 13:17).

A person desiring to become a member of MCC may contact the church office or any church leader and make their desire known.

New applicants are to be given a membership packet which includes an application for membership and a copy of the church's constitution and by-laws. Applicants are encouraged to take the time to read these governing documents before submitting their membership application to the church office.

#### **Membership Requirements**

After the membership application is submitted, the following pre-requisites must be met before moving forward.

1. The applicant must meet with an Elder or Pastor for a preliminary meeting. During this interview, the applicant must demonstrate that they understand, even in the simplest terms, the essential message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The applicant must be able to give reasonable evidence through testimony that they have been born-again and possess a relationship with Jesus Christ by faith. Should the applicant not possess a clear understanding of these fundamental beliefs, their application shall be placed on hold and an appointment scheduled with a Pastor or Elder to educate them on these essential doctrines before continuing.
3. Baptism is a requirement for church membership as it is an essential first step of obedience to Jesus following repentance and faith (Acts 2:38). If the applicant has never been baptized, an opportunity for them to do so will be offered before continuing with the membership process (see section VI). If an applicant claims to have already been baptized before coming to MCC, then three qualifications must have been met regarding the mode of baptism for it to be recognized as biblical and legitimate:
  - a) The baptism must have been by means of full immersion in water (Acts 8:36; Mk 1:4-10).
  - b) The baptism must have been performed in the name of the Holy Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).
  - c) The person being baptized must know they have been baptized as a testimony of their faith in Christ (Acts 2:38).<sup>1</sup>

If these qualifications have not been met, then the baptism cannot be considered valid and must be performed before continuing.

4. The applicant must read MCC's statement of faith and be able to affirm its statements without any mental reservation.
5. The applicant must read and agree to abide by MCC's governing documents and policies.
6. The applicant must attend MCC's new member orientation class to be scheduled at the teacher's earliest convenience.

If upon review, the Board of Elders determines that the applicant does not confess Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior, or if there is evidence of a rebellious and ungodly lifestyle, membership shall be denied.

### **Membership Admission**

Upon approval of a membership application by the unanimous vote of the Elders and the satisfaction of the membership requirements, the applicant shall be brought before the congregation and presented with a recommendation from the Board of Elders. At that time the

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<sup>1</sup> As opposed to an infant baptism or a baptism where the subject was incapable of expressing a personal faith.

congregation will be asked if they will welcome the new applicant as one of their own to love them with brotherly love, (Rom 12:10), encourage them (1 Thess 4:18), exhort them (Heb 3:13), admonish them (Col 3:16), and build them up for the increase of our common good in Christ (1 Thess 5:11). Once the congregation verbally affirms the applicant, their name shall be added to the roll of active membership at MCC.

### **Voting Members**

All church members who are in an active status and not under any disciplinary action (see section VII) shall be considered voting members and may vote on any matter that requires a congregational vote and, if a church officer, a board vote.

A church member who is under any form of church discipline shall have their voting rights suspended until the disciplinary process has concluded. At that time, the member shall be restored to full fellowship.

Children of members are considered non-voting members of the church until they become adults at the age of eighteen, at which time, if they desire, they may go through the process of becoming voting members. If upon reaching the age of eighteen they do not wish to become a full member of the church, their membership shall be removed from the rolls.

### **Rights of Members**

1. Members may be considered for appointments to all church offices they are biblically qualified to occupy.
2. Members may vote in all matters concerning a congregational vote including but not limited to the approval of the annual budget, the calling of church ministers, the election of church officers, and changes made to the constitution.
3. Members may participate in church committees.
4. With the Elder's permission, members have the opportunity to teach or lead various church ministries.

### **Responsibilities of Members**

1. Regular Attendance – In the New Testament era, the church met on the first day of the week (Sunday) to fellowship, worship, listen to the Apostles teaching, observe communion, give, and pray (Acts 20:7; 2:42; 1 Cor 16:2). We understand that people will have occasion to miss the Sunday service for a variety of reasons. Our expectation is not that members would have perfect attendance, nor is it expected that everyone would attend every single church function. However, it is expected that members will prioritize

corporate worship with their church family as a general pattern of Christian life (Heb 10:24-25).

2. Preservation of Unity – Jesus said, “*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*” (Jn 13:35). All members are tasked with preserving the peace and unity of the body, which means overlooking offenses when appropriate (Prov 19:11), bearing with and forgiving one another (Col 3:12-14), and pursuing biblical and God-honoring peacemaking when conflicts arise (Matt 5:9). Quarreling, gossip, and divisiveness should not mark the life of the believer (Eph 4:31).
3. Cheerful Giving – Our love for the Lord should manifest itself in every area of our lives, including how we make use of the finances he has entrusted to us. Members are encouraged to contribute to the financial support of the church and its ministries as an act of worship to the Lord (1 Cor 16:2). MCC does not place an expectation on a standard amount or a percentage of income people should give. The Apostle Paul instructs each person to “...give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor 9:6-7) We trust that if everyone is giving according to their conscience, their means, and obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit, then God will care for the needs of our church abundantly.
4. Use of Spiritual Gifts – The scriptures tell us that each Christian has been given a particular spiritual gift set that has been provided for the common good of the church (1 Cor 12:7). Members are encouraged to find places in which they are uniquely gifted to serve and make use of those gifts for our mutual edification.
5. Pursuit of Holiness – The life of the Christian should be marked by a progressive increase in Christlikeness and victory over sin (2 Cor 3:18). While we will never be totally free from sin on this side of eternity, we are called to fight sin and pursue Christ wholeheartedly in this life (Rom 12:2; Col 3:5-10). We are also called as a church body to encourage one another to this same goal (Heb 3:13; Gal 6:1).

### **Termination of Membership**

Termination of membership at MCC may occur in the following ways:

1. Death – The names of deceased members shall be removed from the active rolls and placed in the church’s memorial record.
2. Resignation – If a member no longer wishes to maintain their membership with the church, they may at any time resign their membership via written letter and submit it to the church office.

3. Relocation– If any member of MCC is relocating out of the area and will no longer be able to function as a member of the church, they are encouraged to resign their membership by written letter. Upon request, MCC will prepare a recommendation letter for members in good standing that may be given to other churches.
4. Discipline – To maintain the unity, holiness, and peace of the church, the scriptures give the church Elders the authority to remove members participating in unrepentant sin from the rolls and exclude them from fellowship. These actions are to be done only after all other scriptural avenues of restoration have been exhausted (Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:13; 2 Thess 3:6; 2 Tim 2:16-21). Members who have been subject to discipline may be restored to full fellowship if the Elders determine that they have repented of their sin and demonstrate behavior in keeping with their professed repentance.
5. Inactivity<sup>2</sup> - Inactivity is defined as a church member that is habitually absent from the regular worship services of MCC. Members volunteer to place their discipleship into the hands of the Elders of the church and participate actively in our community, including regular attendance at worship services.

The process of restoring an inactive member of the church community is as follows:

- a. The first step of restoring an absent member to regular fellowship should always be pastoral care. The intent of this process is never to kick someone out. We desire to provide a loving, gentle exhortation for a wayward person to come back to their family and participate with the people of God. Any member who is habitually absent from the regular worship services of MCC shall be contacted by a Pastor or Elder to check in on them, make sure they are alright, and evaluate their commitment to the church. They will be exhorted at that time not to neglect the gathering of God’s people for fellowship and worship (Heb 10:25).
- b. Should the member fail to return to regular fellowship, they shall be notified that if they do not return to regular fellowship within six months, they will be classified as an *inactive member*. Inactive members are still considered members of MCC but are temporarily unable to vote in any matters that require a congregational vote. An inactive member can be restored to full active status by a decision of the Elders once regular fellowship has resumed.
- c. It is not the intention of MCC that anyone should remain on the inactive membership list indefinitely. All reasonable attempts should be made by the

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<sup>2</sup> Excluded from this statement are those church members who through sickness, infirmity, or old age are considered “shut in” and cannot regularly attend church functions.

church leadership to connect with the absentee member and encourage them to return to fellowship. Should the member continue not engaging in the life of the church, after two years on the inactive list, they shall be removed from the membership rolls and notified of this change.

- d. Should the former member decide they would like to participate in the life of the church again, they must go through the standard membership process as outlined in the membership policy.

## **Section II: Church Officers**

### **The Elders and Board of Elders**

MCC shall be a church led by the spiritual and administrative leadership of the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders is defined as a group of biblically qualified men who jointly pastor the local church through the practice of servant leadership (Mk 9:35). The scope of their authority concerns pastoral protection and care as well as the administrative, doctrinal, moral, and financial oversight over the flock of God (Titus 2:15; 1 Pt 5:2). In the New Testament, the terms “Elder” (*presbuteros*), “Overseer” (*episkopos*), and “Pastor” (*poimen*) all refer to the same office.

The office of Elder is an honor, privilege, and responsibility which God has laid upon the men of the church. It is to be entered into soberly and with serious consideration for the fact that those who lead and teach will be held to a stricter standard by God (Jas 3:1).

The New Testament forbids women to hold positions of spiritual leadership where they would assume teaching authority over a man (1 Tim 2:11-12). Therefore, Elders shall be selected from among the male members of the church.

To be considered, a man who desires the office of Elder must meet the following requirements:

- He must be a minimum age of thirty years old.<sup>3</sup>
- He must not be a recent convert to Christ.
- He must be a man who earnestly, though not perfectly, strives to meet the requirements of temperament and character outlined in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9: being above reproach, holy in conduct, devout, self-controlled, faithful to his wife<sup>4</sup>, sober, temperate,

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<sup>3</sup> This is admittedly not a requirement stipulated in the Bible. However, since Jesus began his ministry at age 30, it seems like a reasonable age for any man to possess the proper maturity to be considered as an elder candidate.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase “faithful to his wife” should not be taken to mean that a prospective elder candidate must be married to serve. If a candidate is unmarried, widowed, etc., then the same expectations apply as would befit any unmarried Christian man; chastity and honorable behavior towards other women as our sisters and co-heirs in Christ (1 Pt 3:7).

prudent, orderly, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, peaceful, patient, slow to anger, not a lover of money, and possessing a good reputation among non-believers.

The responsibilities of the Elders are, but not limited to:

- Prayerfully lead, direct, and protect the flock of God (1 Pt 5:2).
- Assist the pastoral staff in teaching.
- Assist the pastoral staff in making visitations.
- Oversee the process of church discipline.
- Commit to regular prayer for the people of the congregation.
- Shape and implement current and new church policy.
- Delegate appropriate responsibility to the Deacons.
- See to the integrity of the church's doctrine.
- Act as the primary accountability for the Senior Pastor.
- Other varied and assorted pastoral duties that arise in the life of a church.

MCC shall always require a plurality of Elders in leadership. The minimum number of voting Elders that the Board of Elders shall have at any time is three.

The Board of Elders always seeks a unanimous consensus on decisions whenever possible. However, if there is internal disagreement concerning a decision or direction of ministry, the Elders should seek outside counsel from the church board and other church officers. Concerning the final decision of the Elders, if no consensus can be reached, a vote will be taken, and the decision of the majority shall carry.

### **Senior Pastor**

The Senior Pastor shall be the Elder who is primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of the church as well as being responsible for the teaching and pastoral care of the congregation (Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28; 1 Thess 5:12-13). He shall be responsible for casting a vision for the direction of the ministry of the church, and he will work with the other Elders and Deacons to execute that ministry in a way that glorifies Christ and his gospel.

The Senior Pastor is *ex-officio*, a non-voting member of the Board of Elders and the Church Board.

The Senior Pastor shall be responsible for the continuing education and training of MCC's Board of Elders.

The Senior Pastor shall be MCC's primary preacher and, in consultation with the other Elders, shall have oversight of the preaching schedule.

The Senior Pastor is the supervisor of all paid and unpaid church staff.

The Senior Pastor's primary moral and spiritual accountability shall be to the Board of Elders.

The Board of Elders shall perform an annual performance review of the Senior Pastor's leadership and report its assessment to the Board.

A written job description detailing all the Senior Pastor's responsibilities will be kept on file in the church office.

### **Associate Pastor(s)**

Associate pastors will directly report to the Senior Pastor and be responsible for the areas of ministry placed under their supervision (e.g., youth, discipleship, operations).

The Associate Pastor's primary accountability shall be to the Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor shall perform an annual performance review of the associate pastor's accomplishments and report his assessment to the Board of Elders and the Board.

Associate pastors are *ex-officio*, non-voting members of the Board of Elders and the Church Board.

A written job description detailing all the responsibilities held by an associate pastor will be kept on file in the church office.

### **Deacons**

Since Deacons and Deaconesses both refer to the same office with the same responsibilities, they will henceforth be referred to in the by-laws as Deacons.

The office of Deacon (*diakonos*) was originally created to respond to the need for those who would commit to fulfilling the practical needs of the ministry so the apostles could continue their ministry of teaching the word of God and prayer (Acts 6:2). Deacons are the men and women on the front line of service in the church, setting the example for others in speech and action and displaying a servant's heart.

Deacons shall be selected from among the male or female members of the church. To be considered, a man or woman who desires the office of Deacon must meet the following requirements:

- They must be a minimum of eighteen years old.
- They must be a person who earnestly, though not perfectly, strives to meet the requirements of temperament and character outlined in 1 Tim 3:8-11: worthy of respect, sincere, not abusers of alcohol, not dishonest, doctrinally sound, not slanderers, sober-minded, and faithful.

The responsibilities of the Deacons are, but are not limited to:



- Provide logistical and material support to the Board of Elders.
- Act as ushers and greeters during church services.
- Provide visitation ministry to shut in individuals.
- Oversee the serving of communion to the church.
- Participate as members of the church board.
- Other varied and assorted servant duties that arise in the life of a church.

MCC requires a minimum of six Deacons, preferably at least three males and three females, to be serving at any given time.

### **Trustees**

The Trustees are men or women who will act as legal agents and signatories of the church in all matters of business under the leadership of the Elders. These matters include but are not limited to:

- Signing checks.
- Managing the church's financial position.
- Managing the church's insurance coverage.
- Selecting the church's accounting firm.
- Hold legal title to all church property.
- Advising the construction of the yearly budget.

While Trustees are not technically Deacons, they too are servants of the church in matters concerning operations and logistics. Therefore, they shall be held to the same moral standards of character as a Deacon. They must be a person who earnestly, though not perfectly, strives to meet the requirements of temperament and character outlined in 1 Tim 3:8-11: worthy of respect, sincere, not abusers of alcohol, not dishonest, doctrinally sound, not slanderers, sober-minded, and faithful.

The church shall have a minimum of three Trustees at all times.

### **Church Treasurer**

The Church Treasurer shall be responsible for keeping permanent records for all financial contributors showing their pledges and giving.

The Church Treasurer shall give an overview at each board meeting of the church's monthly finances.

The Church Treasurer shall be responsible for recording income, paying bills, organizing records of all financial transactions, and depositing all offerings in the bank each week.

### **Sunday School Clerk**

The Sunday School Clerk shall be responsible for recording the attendance for Sunday School classes.

### **Section III: The Church Board**

MCC invests its confidence in administrative and spiritual leadership in the office of Elder. However, it is prudent and beneficial for the administration of the church to have a regular council (hereafter referred to as “the board”) where the officers of the church gather to pray for the church, give department updates, vote on the initiatives put forth by the Elders, discuss upcoming ministry opportunities, and review the current vision for ministry set forth by the Elders.

Members of the Board shall be all listed officers of the church and all pastoral staff.

The Board shall be divided up into the following permanent sub-committees. The individual committees will be asked to offer a report of activities at each meeting of the Board. Examples of such committees are as follows:

- Pastoral
- Elders
- Worship
- Hospitality
- Sunday School Clerk
- CWF
- Security Team
- Buildings and Grounds
- Trustees
- Treasurer
- Outreach
- Deacons

Should unique or special circumstances arise that require the special attention of the church, the Elders may instruct the Board to call for the creation of a temporary committee to serve that purpose. This committee will be dissolved once the Elders and the Board consider their task complete. Examples of such committees are as follows:

- Pastoral search/pulpit committee
- Nominating committee

The Board shall conduct its meetings using Roberts Rules of Order. A record of the minutes of each meeting shall be maintained by the Board Secretary.

The Board shall allow its meetings to be open for the general congregation to attend.

### **Chairman of the Board**

The Chairman of the Board shall be an Elder of MCC and shall be responsible for organizing and directing the meetings of the Board and the congregation.

### **Vice-Chairman of the Board**

The Vice-Chairman of the Board shall be the Chairman of the Deacons. They shall fill the duties of the Chairman of the Board in their absence.

### **Chairman of the Deacons**

The Chairman of the Deacons shall be a Deacon who is responsible for organizing and executing the ministry of the Deacons.

### **Chairman of the Deaconesses**

The Chairman of the Deaconesses shall be a Deaconess who will work alongside the Chairman of the Deacons to help execute the ministry of the Deaconesses.

### **Buildings and Grounds**

MCC will appoint an individual who will take responsibility for organizing the care for the church building and grounds. While the head of Buildings and Grounds is not technically a Deacon, they are servant of the church in matters concerning operations and logistics. Therefore, they shall be held to the same moral standards of character as a Deacon. They must be a person who earnestly, though not perfectly, strives to meet the requirements of temperament and character outlined in 1 Tim 3:8-11: worthy of respect, sincere, not abusers of alcohol, not dishonest, doctrinally sound, not slanderers, sober-minded, and faithful.

### **Board Secretary**

The Board Secretary shall call the roll, establish the quorum, and keep the minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Board and the congregation.

## **Section IV: Execution of Church Government**

### **Decision Making Procedure**

The Elders shall have general decision-making authority over the life of the church. However, the goal of having both an Elder board and a church board is the pursuit of unity, harmony, and transparency among the church body. Therefore, the Elders will require the affirmation of their decisions by a vote of the Board in matters concerning:

- Decisions concerning the hiring and firing of non-pastoral staff.
- Decisions concerning the hiring and firing of senior and associate ministers.

- Decisions concerning the implementation of or amendments to church policy.
- Changes to the church by-laws.
- Proposed changes to the church constitution.
- Proposed changes to the church's doctrinal or mission statement.

The Elders will be allotted a yearly budget for discretionary spending decided in conference with the Trustees and based on the current fiscal health of the church.

## **Proposals and Policy**

### Proposals

Proposals are defined as a business or ministry opportunity that will require the use of the church's financial resources that are outside of the existing fiscal year budget.

Proposals under \$250 shall not require a written submission but may be verbally approved by the Elders. Proposals over \$250 must be submitted to the Elders in writing and detail the total cost, proposed use of the money, and the benefit to the ministry of the church.

### Policy

Church policy statements are written documents meant to set down the agreed-upon practices that are in the best interest of the church. All church members, staff, ministers, and officers must adhere to church policy.

Implementing a new church policy should proceed according to the following guidelines:

1. The need for a new church policy may be suggested by any officer of the church at any regular meeting of the Board. At that time, the Elders will either take responsibility for it themselves or delegate the research and writing of the policy to others.
2. Once complete, the policy will be submitted to the Elders for review.
3. Following approval, the policy will be sent to the members of the Board with a recommendation from the Elders. The policy will then be reviewed and discussed at the next scheduled Board meeting.
4. After all questions of the Board members have been satisfied and suggestions made, the Board will vote on the policy. Should the Board reject the policy, it shall return to the Elders for further review, revision, prayer, and consideration.

A full record of all currently active church policies shall be kept in the church office.

## **Terms**

Elders shall be elected to serve a term of three years. After serving their initial term of three years, they may have the option of renewing their commitment as Elders for one year at a time.

Deacons/Deaconesses shall be elected to serve a term of three years. After serving their initial term of three years, they may have the option of renewing their commitment as Deacons for one year at a time.

Trustees shall be elected to serve a term of three years. After serving their initial term of three years, they may have the option of renewing their commitment as trustees for one year at a time.

The Sunday School Clerk shall be elected to serve a term of one year at a time.

### **Elections**

During the March meeting of the Board, the Board shall call for the establishment of a nominating committee. The committee shall be chaired by an Elder of the church and consist of one Deacon, one Deaconess, and three members of the congregation. The purpose of the nominating committee is to prayerfully discuss and consider who from the congregation would be both called and qualified to serve as church officers.

Elections to affirm or reject candidates will be held during the church's annual congregational meeting. Candidates will be approved or rejected for their office by a majority vote of the membership.

Following the election of church officers, at the next scheduled board meeting, the church board shall vote to appoint a Chairman of the Board from among the Elders. At that time, they shall also appoint the chairs of the Deacons and Deaconesses.

### **Resignation of a Church Officer**

Any resignation from any church office or staff position must be submitted in writing to the chair of the Board. MCC requests that, if possible, a minimum of thirty days' notice be given to ensure a smooth transition and preserve the continuity of church operations.

Since taking a church office is an act of worship to Christ and a commitment of service to the body of Christ, MCC strongly encourages its officers to keep their commitment and serve out their terms. However, from time-to-time for reasons of fidelity to family, protection of physical or mental health, or circumstances beyond reasonable control, it may be necessary that an officer must resign their responsibilities mid-term. Those officers who must resign should submit their resignation to the Chairman of the Board as soon as possible.

If the resignation of an Elder or Deacon leaves enough remaining officers to meet the minimum required by the by-laws, then no replacement officer will be appointed until the next annual election.

## **Removal of a Church Officer**

### Elders

Elders who know they have disqualified themselves for ministry through their behavior should ideally confess their sins and resign to focus their attention on their families, repentance, prayer, and seeking spiritual counsel. Even so, given the deceptive nature of human sin, provisions must exist in governing documents detailing how to remove Elders who have disqualified themselves from service.

An Elder may be removed from their office by the majority vote of the other members of the Board of Elders. Any Elder may call for a vote concerning formal removal of an Elder from leadership in the church. Should the vote pass, the Elder in question will be immediately suspended from their position pending an affirming vote of the Board. The Chairman of the Board shall call for an emergency meeting of the Board where the Elders will explain to the Board their reasoning for dismissing the offending Elder. At that time, a vote will be taken to affirm or reject the Elder's decision. Should the vote pass, a letter should then be drafted by the Elders and sent out to the congregation explaining why the Elder was removed from leadership and what next steps will be taken to ensure the integrity of the Elder board.

### Senior Pastor

If the Senior Pastor has disqualified himself for ministry through his behavior, he should ideally confess his sins and take a leave of absence to focus his attention on his family, repentance, prayer, and seeking spiritual counsel. The other Elders will then conference and prayerfully decide whether the Pastor's behavior is sin that disqualifies him from ministry.

The Senior Pastor's primary source of accountability is the Board of Elders. If the Senior Pastor is deficient in his duties, unfaithful to the Scriptures, an incompetent and ineffective leader, or is persisting in unrepentant sin, the Elders may vote to remove him from his position. Should the vote pass, the Pastor will be placed on immediate paid suspension pending a vote of the Board. The Chairman of the Board should call for an immediate emergency meeting of the Board where the situation will be explained, and a vote will be taken. Should the Board vote pass, the Pastor will be dismissed from his position. At that time, a letter should then be drafted by the Elders and sent out to the congregation explaining why the Pastor was removed from leadership and what next steps will be taken.

### Deacons and Other Officers

Deacons and other officers who know they have disqualified themselves for ministry through their behavior should ideally confess their sins and resign to focus their attention on their families, repentance, prayer, and seeking spiritual counsel.

A Deacon or other officer may be removed from their office by the majority decision of the other members of the Board of Elders. At any Elders meeting, any Elder may call for a vote concerning formal removal of a Deacon or officer of the church. Should the vote pass, the Deacon or officer in question will be suspended from their position pending an affirming vote by the Board. At the next scheduled Board meeting, the remaining Elders shall explain to the Board their reasoning for dismissing the offending Deacon or officer. At that time, a vote will be taken to affirm or reject that decision. Should the vote pass, a letter should then be drafted and sent out to the congregation explaining why the Deacon was removed from their office.

### **No Confidence**

Should there be a dereliction of duty among the ruling<sup>5</sup> Elders such that it could be reasonably stated that the Elder board has been corrupted, leading the church into financial ruin, teaching doctrinal heresy, or committing any form of abuse (spiritual, verbal, sexual, etc.), any officer of the church may call a vote of no-confidence at any regular meeting of the Board. Should the vote of no-confidence pass with a majority vote of the present and voting Board members, the current sitting Board of Elders shall be dissolved and have their ruling authority removed from them.

The Chairman of the Deacons will become the Chairman of the Board. In conference with the other members of the Board, shall appoint the constitutionally required minimum of three (3) interim Elders. They will serve in a limited function until the next annual church officer election. The interim Elders shall not be any of the former Elders removed from the previous Board. The interim Elders shall have the power to oversee the day-to-day matters of church governance but shall not modify church doctrine or institute new policy.

This provision should only be used as a last resort in an emergency to remove a compromised, unqualified, or incompetent Elder board. This provision is an attempt to honor and obey God's design of Elder leadership in the church while still having reasonable checks and balances. Since the consequences of enacting this provision would likely be traumatic to the church community, this provision should only be used when all other attempts at reason, correction, and restoration have failed.

### **Vacancies**

A vacancy in a church office may be filled by an appointment. Should an officer need to be replaced, a qualified and appropriate candidate will be selected by the Elders and confirmed by a

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<sup>5</sup> When the Bible uses the term "ruling" regarding Elders (1 Tim 5:17), it is speaking of the ecclesial authority given to the Elders of the church by God to govern the affairs of God's people. This does not mean the Elders are kings of the church who can use their authority abusively and without consequence. Their "rule" is only valid so far as they are being faithful to scripture. Elder rule is always tempered by the high standards of transparency, accountability, and the sober responsibility the Bible speaks of. All Elders are accountable to Christ (1 Pt 5:4), held to a higher standard (Jas 3:1), and expected to not be self-serving but rather humble servants of the church (Mk 9:35).

vote of the Board. They shall serve out the remainder of the year until the next annual elections, at which time they will need to be voted in if they wish to continue to serve.

### **Church Finances**

The management of the church's financial positions shall be primarily the responsibility of the trustees under the leadership of the Elders.

The counting and recording of any offering shall be the responsibility of either Trustees or Elders of the church. At least two individuals shall always be present during the collection and counting of any church offering.

### **Insurance**

MCC will purchase and maintain insurance, at its expense, to protect itself and its officers, Pastors, and staff against any expense, liability or loss. The responsibility of selecting an appropriate insurance carrier shall fall under the responsibility of the Trustees.

### **Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of MCC begins July 1<sup>st</sup> and ends June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Hiring a Senior Pastor**

Should the church find itself without a Senior Pastor, the Elders will instruct the Board to assemble a Pulpit Committee that will take responsibility for the search for a new minister. The Pulpit Committee should consist of at least one Elder of the church, two Deacons, and up to four members.

The process of hiring a Senior Pastor shall be ordered as follows:

1. Before beginning the search, the Pulpit Committee should confer with the trustees to determine what range of salary and benefits the church is able to offer any prospective candidates.
2. The Pulpit Committee shall assign duties to its members, such as advertising the open position, collecting and reading resumes, checking references, listening to sermons, and scheduling interviews.
3. Once a potential candidate has been interviewed by the Pulpit Committee, at that time, the committee will decide if any follow-up interviews should be scheduled.
4. If the committee is satisfied, they will pass their recommendation on to the Elders. The Elders will then schedule a subsequent interview with the candidate.



5. Should the Elders feel the Lord's leading in moving forward, an invitation will be extended to the candidate to conduct in-person interviews and preach in view of a call.
6. Upon the final review and recommendation of the Elders, a congregational meeting will be held the Sunday following the candidate's visit for members to vote on whether to offer a call.

### **Hiring Associate Pastors**

Should the church be in a position where the hiring of another minister is justified (e.g., youth, operations, etc.), the Elders shall instruct the Board to assemble a committee that will take responsibility for the search for a new Associate Pastor. The committee shall be led by the Senior Pastor of the church and be made up of two Deacons and up to four members.

The process of hiring an Associate Pastor shall be ordered as follows:

1. Before beginning the search, the committee should confer with the Trustees to determine what range of salary and benefits the church is able to offer any prospective candidates.
2. Once a potential candidate has been interviewed by the committee, the committee will decide if any follow-up interviews should be scheduled.
3. If the committee is satisfied, they will pass their recommendation on to the Elders. The Elders will then schedule a subsequent interview with the candidate.
4. Should the Elders feel the Lord's leading in moving forward, an invitation will be extended to the candidate to conduct in-person interviews and present themselves in the context of the ministry they will be supervising.
5. Upon the final review and recommendation of the Elders, a congregational meeting will be held the Sunday following the candidate's visit for members to vote on whether to offer a call.

### **Hiring Staff**

The hiring of non-pastoral staff will be under the purview of the Senior Pastor, who is responsible for church office operations. The Senior Pastor will act in consultation with the Elders in deciding on a suitable candidate, the Trustees to determine what range of salary and benefits are available, and the Board concerning a final vote to confirm the Elder's decision.

### **Meetings**

#### Elders

The Elders shall endeavor to meet at least twice a month to discuss the affairs of the church. If more than two Elders cannot attend a scheduled meeting, the meeting shall be rescheduled for another time where a majority can be present.

### The Church Board

The Board shall endeavor to meet every month immediately following a Sunday service unless rescheduled by the Chairman of the Board. Emergency board meetings may be called by the Chairman of the Board for special needs as they arise.

A quorum of board members must be met before holding any meeting of the Board. A quorum will be considered achieved when there are at least fifteen (15) board members present.

### Congregation

A quorum of church members must be present before proceeding with any congregational meeting of the church. A quorum will be met when at least one-quarter of the recorded church membership is present.

The annual business meeting of the congregation shall be held between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup>. The following items of business shall be discussed at the annual congregational business meeting.

1. Election of church officers.
2. Approval of the annual church budget.
3. Other appropriate matters of church business as determined by the Elders.

### Church Committees

Individual committees should endeavor to meet at least once per quarter at a time scheduled by the committee chair.

## **Section V: Church Services**

### **Worship Services**

The church shall meet regularly for worship each Sunday morning.

The authority to cancel Sunday worship services due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstance shall be the responsibility of the Elders of MCC.

### **Special Services**

Special services outside of regular Sunday worship will be scheduled by the Elders and announced to the congregation.

MCC shall appoint one or two members to act as the directors of wedding and funeral operations for the church.

Weddings and funerals shall be performed according to the standards and requirements outlined in church policy.

## **Section VI: Church Ordinances**

### **Baptism**

MCC practices believer's baptism. We believe that the ordinance of baptism is only to be performed for individuals who are mature enough to understand the gospel message and who have responded to it with personal saving faith.

The qualifications for baptism are based less on age and more on an individual's capacity to comprehend and express their faith. Once these qualifications are met, that person may then be fully immersed into a body of water in the name of the Holy Trinity as a testimony to their faith in Christ's burial and resurrection (Rom 6:4).

The practice of believer's baptism at MCC shall adhere to the following guidelines:

- Baptism is to be performed in the name of the Holy Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).
- Baptism is to be administered through the means of full immersion in water.<sup>6</sup>
- Baptism is to preferably take place in the church baptistery, but may also be performed in secondary locations (e.g., pools, rivers, lakes, etc.) with special permission from the Elders.
- Baptism may be performed by an Elder of the church or any other baptized Christian with permission and guidance from the Elders.
- Before being baptized, each person seeking to be baptized must complete the MCC baptism class to be scheduled at the Pastor's convenience.
- Each baptized person shall receive a signed certificate of baptism upon completion.

### **Child Dedication**

Since MCC practices believer's baptism, we do not offer baptism to children who are too young to understand the gospel and confess faith in it for themselves. Instead, we encourage parents of young children to present their children for a child dedication service. This practice is rooted in the dedication of the prophet Samuel by his mother, Hannah, as an infant (1 Sam 1:21-28).

During this ceremony, the Pastors and Elders will pray over both the child and their parents. The child will be dedicated to the Lord's service, and the parents will be exhorted to raise their child as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> The Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) means "to immerse."

Child dedication can be scheduled by contacting the church office.

## **Communion**

Communion will be observed weekly during the regular Sunday worship service. The elements of communion will be prepared before the service and passed out in an orderly and respectful manner. Serving communion will be primarily a responsibility of the Deacons, though others may be asked to participate.

MCC practices open communion. The scriptures exhort Christians to partake of communion in a worthy manner and with a clean conscience (1 Cor 11:27). Since the admonition in scripture is that each person would “*examine themselves*” (v. 28), communion will be offered freely to all regardless of the status of church membership. It is up to everyone to partake or refuse based on the state of their conscience before the Lord.

## **Section VII: Church Discipline**

### **Discipline of a Church Member**

When a person becomes a member of a local body of Christ, they are placing their Christian discipleship into the careful hands of the shepherds the Lord has placed over them (Heb 13:17). Part of helping people grow in the Lord is the exercise of biblically appropriate acts of discipline. The scriptures are quite clear that great harm is done both to the individual and the body of Christ when flagrant, open, and rebellious sin goes uncorrected and unanswered (1 Cor 5:1-7). Therefore, it is the responsibility of each Christian (Gal 6:1), the Elders (Matt 18:16), and eventually, the entire church as a community (Matt 18:17) to gently help shepherd the wayward person back to faithfulness. This process is the process of church discipline.

Church discipline should be enacted concerning sins of sexual misconduct, gossip, divisiveness, dishonesty, false teaching and doctrinal heresy, and other behavior inconsistent with the Christian life. The goal of church discipline is not castigation or humiliation, but rather restoration and reconciliation. Therefore, this process shall always be approached with humility, gentleness, love, and prayer for those involved.

The process of church discipline is laid out by Jesus in Matt 18:15-17:

1. The process begins when one Christian of the congregation sins against another individual or sins against the body of Christ. If the sin can be forgiven in grace without confrontation, then the offended party should do so. If it cannot be allowed to pass, then the offended party should privately bring the offense to the person’s attention. This allows them the opportunity to apologize and change their behavior.

2. Should the sinning individual refuse to repent, a second confrontation should occur with a second witness present urging the individual to repent and live consistently with their Christian profession.
3. Should the individual persist in their sinful behavior, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Elders who will investigate the accusation. Should the Elders determine there is no matter here worth pursuing, then no further disciplinary action will be taken, and the matter will be dismissed. Should the Elders be able to establish the truth of the accusations, at that point, the individual will be considered under disciplinary action, and they will temporarily be considered a “non-voting member” of MCC.
4. The Elders will arrange to meet with the individual and show them scripturally why they are in a state of rebellion against God.
5. Should the individual at that time fail to repent, or refuse to meet with the Elders, they will be found in violation of their church membership. The Elders will set a specific time frame for them to think about their decisions and pray.
6. If the individual has not reported back of their repentance and change of heart and behavior within the set time frame, then the individual shall have their membership terminated. The individual may or may not be banned from the church premises depending on the circumstances surrounding their dismissal.
7. The Elders will address the church and inform them that accusations were made, established on the basis of witnesses, and due to unrepentance and hardness of heart, the individual has been disfellowshipped from the congregation.
8. Should the individual come to their senses and eventually repent, they will be welcomed back with open arms, but if they wish to regain their membership, they will need to go through the membership process again as outlined in the church by-laws.

Any accusations against anyone in the church that are criminal shall immediately be reported to the proper authorities.

### **Discipline of a Church Officer**

For the most part, church discipline, as it pertains to church officers, is the same as discipline towards regular members with a few small differences. If one member has been sinned against by another, they should follow the same path of confrontation in love as outlined in Matt 18:15-18.

Charges of sin which are non-criminal are not to be entertained against church officers unless they come by the agreement of two or more witnesses (1 Tim 5:19; 2 Cor 13:1). Criminal charges shall be immediately reported to the proper authorities.

Elders, Deacons, and church officers are held to a higher standard of integrity and accountability. Therefore, those who are found guilty of persistent, stubborn sin should be rebuked<sup>7</sup> publicly by the Elders without showing partiality or favoritism (1 Tim 5:19-21; Gal 2:11).

The Elder Board should take sin seriously while also offering grace and the opportunity of counsel, restoration, and forgiveness (Gal 6:1).

Should the officer not be willing to turn away from their sin and repent, the other Elders should follow the process to remove that officer from their position.

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<sup>7</sup> To “rebuke” is simply to point out sin. The word does not carry any notion of intensity or severity of tone. Many have misunderstood rebuke as an emotional reaction, especially that of anger. Quite the opposite, all rebuke is to be done with gentleness and love (Gal 6:1). The chief aim of any rebuke is restoration and reconciliation.