

MORNINGSIDE BIBLE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

(Revision as of 06/06/2004)

PREAMBLE

Recognizing God's Word, the Bible, as our supreme authority and because Scripture commands, "That everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (I Cor 4:40), we hereby establish the following church constitution.

The objectives of the constitution are to convey the church's:

- Doctrinal position
- Mission and organization
- Offices (along with designated duties and responsibilities)

Changes to this constitution will require congregational approval.

ARTICLE 1: NAME AND PURPOSE

Section 1 - Name

This congregation of believers will be known as Morningside Bible Church.

Section 2 - Purpose

This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any comparable future United States Revenue Law). [The church's purpose includes, but is not limited to, establishing and maintaining religious worship, promoting personal evangelism, developing Christian discipleship, and encouraging Christian fellowship. This will be accomplished by building, maintaining and operating churches, schools and any other ministries that the church may be led of God to establish. It is also authorized to license, ordain and commission individuals to the Gospel ministry.]

Section 3 - Mission Statement

We exist to glorify God (I Corinthians 10:31) by:

- communicating the gospel (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8)
- maturing believers (Colossians 1:28-29; Ephesians 4:13-15) and
- equipping them for Christ-like service (Ephesians 4:11-12; I Corinthians 12:4-7).

ARTICLE II: DOCTRINAL POSITION

Section 1 - Doctrinal Summary

Based on the belief that the Scriptures are inerrant and inspired by God, we believe in one God, existing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, God's only Son, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and died a substitutionary, sacrificial death. He rose from the dead on the third day and offers salvation to sinful man through personal trusting faith. Those saved are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and become members of the true church, the Body of Christ, until He returns for His own. The complete Statement of Faith is contained in Appendix 1.

Section 2 - Ordinances

The church will periodically observe the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, at times deemed appropriate by the Teaching Pastor.

ARTICLE III: ORGANIZATION

Section 1 - Affiliation

This church is not subject or responsible to any outside organization or ecclesiastical body.

Section 2 - General Organization

This church acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as its only head and receives the Holy Scripture as the only infallible guide in matters of faith, church order and discipline. The operation of the church will follow the precepts outlined in this constitution which may not be changed without approval of the congregation. The immediate direction of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church will be the responsibility of the Elders. Elders will be responsible for the shepherding and oversight of the ministry of the church as servant leaders. The church will call a Teaching Pastor to provide primary spiritual leadership of the body. Deacons/Deaconesses will be responsible for direction and implementing specific ministries of service and support.

Section 3 - Financial Management

In matters of financial integrity, the church shall be above reproach. Procedures shall exist to ensure proper methods of collecting offerings and distribution of funds. Specific funds or categories for designated offerings may be created as needed, with a reasonable effort made to see that they are distributed as designated. Financial audits of the church and its ministries will be done on a periodic basis.

No part of the net earnings of the church will inure to the benefit of or be distributed to its members, officers or other private persons, except that the church will be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for the services rendered and to make payment and distribution in furtherance of the purpose and mission of the church. The church is authorized to provide support for any missions or benevolence programs it deems necessary to fulfill its mission.

Section 4 - Identification of Legal Officers Required by Incorporation

To accommodate legal relationships recognized outside the church, the Teaching pastor will be identified as president of the corporation, the Chairman of the elders will be identified as vice president of the corporation and a secretary will be selected annually by the elders from the non-vocational elders. Legal and contractual documents will be signed by personnel authorized by the Elders.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERS

Section 1 - Qualifications for Church membership

Membership is available to those who:

- Have trusted Christ as their personal Savior
- Are willing to support the ministry, mission statement and doctrinal beliefs of this local church

- Have been baptized subsequent to conversion

Those desiring membership in this local church must complete the following:

- Be interviewed and approved for membership by at least two Elders
- Sign the Membership Covenant

Section 2 - Congregational Responsibilities

Every member has a unique and valuable role in the life of this body. It is expected that each member will strive to become more and more Christlike, be purposefully and prayerfully involved in ministry, and give discerning and faithful support to the leadership.

Members of the congregation may request that any appropriate and reasonable item be brought before the Elders for review by submitting a request in writing to the Chairman of the Elders.

Section 3 - Congregational Approvals

Congregational approval (defined as a 2/3rds affirmation vote by voting members) will be required for the following items:

- Changes to the church constitution
- Elder selection
- Deacon/Deaconess selection

Any other items the Elders believe may substantially impact the direction of the ministry including capital, building, or indebtedness require a majority affirmation of members.

Congregational meetings should be properly scheduled with at least a two-week notice for meetings to consider changes in the constitution.

Any member in good standing and at least 18 years of age may participate in congregational votes.

Section 4 - Removal from Membership

Periodically the church membership rolls will be reviewed by the elders and those who have not been active in the church ministry for over one year may be removed from membership.

Section 5 - Discipline of Members

The purpose of church discipline is always to lead the erring individual to repentance and ultimately to full restoration, if possible. The Elders will ensure that Scriptural procedures are prayerfully and compassionately followed in the handling of discipline matters. If there is still no evidence of repentance, the person may be removed from the membership and fellowship of this church (2 Thess. 3:14-15, Matt. 18:15-17, Titus3:10-11) by the Elders.

Any person who seeks to harm the ministry by being disruptive or creating dissension or who poses a threat to others may be prohibited from involvement in any or all aspects of the ministry of the church by the Elders.

ARTICLE V: ELDERS

Section 1 - Duties and Responsibilities of the Elders

The Elders will be responsible for the primary oversight of the ministry. They will be men of prayer and the Word. They will collectively and individually be involved in oversight and shepherding ministries to the body as a whole or to a portion of the body.

Elders will address items and issues that impact the general ministry of the church and will not become involved in detailed operational issues that are the responsibility of the staff. As faithful shepherds, it is important for the elders to be sensitive to concerns and needs of the body and to listen well, while still understanding that they are ultimately accountable to God for their decisions and how well they display a spirit of servant leadership.

The Elders will be responsible for primary ministry oversight through the establishment of policies, provision for planning and establishment of priorities. The elders will be responsible for oversight of staffing, organization, financial and budget needs to support the vision of the church.

Section 2 - Elder Operations

Elders' meetings will be scheduled on a regular basis, normally no less than once per month. No official action can be taken without the participation of a majority of Elders. The elders will regularly review their operation in light of their constitutional role and responsibilities.

An Elder Chairman will be selected annually from the non-vocational Elders to facilitate the meetings. Since the Elders are to seek God's direction for the church, it is important they seek unity and consensus in their decision-making process. To that end, elders are urged to consider tabling matters on which they are unable to reach unanimity, in order to pray and seek further counsel. Decisions may be made by a simple majority. The Elders will always speak with one voice after reaching a decision.

Section 3 - Qualifications for Elders

Specific scripture references in I Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and I Pet 5:1-4 form the basis for the following list of characteristics desired in an Elder:

- **Character:**
He cannot be open to legitimate criticism of character and must have a good reputation with those outside the church. He must be a balanced person who is not given to extremes. He must be self-controlled, not quick-tempered and not ensnared by addictive behavior. He must be one who is respected, friendly and hospitable. He must be a gentle person who is not quarrelsome. He must be a truly godly man who loves what is good. He must be free from greed and the love of money, completely honest and upright in financial dealings.
- **Family:**
He must manage his own household well. If married, he must be faithful and dedicated to his wife. If he has children, he must be dedicated to seeing that they become obedient and respectful Christians. If there has been a biblically permitted divorce (Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9; I Cor. 7:10-15), it must have been so far in the past as to have been overcome by a long pattern of solid household leadership.
- **Leadership:**
He must lead in a humble manner. He must be an example to those he has been entrusted to lead, putting their interests ahead of his own. He cannot be a recent convert but must be a mature Christian. He must be able to teach and defend the faith, instruct in sound doctrine, and stand against those who oppose it.

An Elder must demonstrate spiritual maturity and wisdom, desire to serve as an Elder and be actively serving in a ministry to the body. He must demonstrate a servant spirit and fully support the doctrines

and mission of the church. He and his wife must be exemplary members and active participants in the ministry and must be willing to commit the time needed to serve.

Section 4 - Selection of Elders

New Elders will be selected by a process that involves their recognition by leadership and affirmation by the congregation. At any time, but at least once each year, there will be an active search initiated by the Elders for men who meet the criteria stated for Eldership. Members of the congregation may at any time recommend names of potential candidates to the Elders. The Elders will carefully examine each candidate and those found to meet the criteria for Eldership will be recommended to the congregation for affirmation.

There will not be a preset number of Elders. The Teaching Pastor and those serving in other pastoral staff positions, will be recognized as elders, with their qualifications determined at the time they are called to this ministry. Eldership will be recognized only if conferred through this local body.

The term of office will be three years plus any partial year if initially elected mid-year. Qualified Elders shall be eligible to serve consecutive terms.

Section 5 - Elder Accountability

The Elders will periodically (and such determination is made by a majority of elders) review the qualifications of each Elder. If in the opinion of a majority of the elders, an elder ceases to be scripturally qualified, he will be dismissed. While I Tim. 5:19 protects elders from unsubstantiated accusations; they are not to receive immunity from legitimate indictments.

ARTICLE VI: TEACHING PASTOR

Section 1 - Qualifications of the Teaching Pastor

The Teaching Pastor must meet the spiritual qualifications of an Elder (Article V, Section 3) as well as any specific criteria set forth by the Elders.

Section 2 - Duties and Responsibilities of the Teaching Pastor

The Teaching Pastor will be the primary spiritual leader and shepherd of the ministry. He will be responsible for spiritual direction, content of public services and the general teaching ministry of the church. He will be the primary person responsible for articulating ministry vision. The Teaching Pastor will be recognized as an Elder by nature of his position. The Teaching Pastor will exercise his leadership in conjunction with counsel from the staff and Elders.

In his role as the principal shepherd of the church, the Teaching Pastor is responsible for ensuring that the spiritual needs of individuals are being met. Therefore, he will oversee those responsible for such areas as teaching, counseling and church discipline. The Teaching Pastor will shepherd the Pastoral Staff and work closely with them on matters of spiritual direction and teaching.

Section 3 - Selection of the Teaching Pastor

When calling a Teaching Pastor, the Elders will direct the search process. They will establish a pastoral search committee who will assemble a list of qualified candidates. The committee will thoroughly investigate and screen them prior to recommending a candidate to the Elders. After an in-depth evaluation, the Elders must be in one accord before recommending a candidate to the congregation for approval. Multiple candidates will not be presented to the congregation at one time. The congregation will

call a Teaching Pastor upon an eighty- percent affirmative vote of voting members at a properly announced meeting.

Section 4 - Dismissal of the Teaching Pastor

If a majority of Elders calls for dismissal of the Teaching pastor, written notice will be provided to the congregation and a congregational vote will be scheduled. The Teaching pastor may be placed on a paid leave of absence pending the congregational vote. If a majority of church members in attendance who participate in the congregational vote calls for his dismissal, his services will be terminated.

ARTICLE VII: PASTORAL STAFF

Section 1 - Qualifications of Pastoral Staff Members

Pastoral Staff members must have personal characteristics consistent with scriptural qualifications for Elders stated in Article V, Section 3.

Section 2 - Duties of Pastoral Staff Members

The Pastoral Staff will coordinate and direct their specifically assigned areas of ministry, collectively covering the entire scope of church activity and involvement. The number of Pastoral Staff positions and general definition of responsibilities for each will be approved by the Elders. The Teaching Pastor will recommend any major changes in Pastoral Staff positions or responsibilities (based on an analysis of ministry needs) and submit them to the Elders for approval.

Section 3 - Selection of Pastoral Staff Members

The filling of Pastoral Staff positions will be directed by the Teaching Pastor. After an in-depth evaluation, the Elders must be in one accord before recommending a candidate to the congregation for approval. Multiple candidates will not be presented to the congregation at one time. The congregation will call a pastoral staff member upon an eighty- percent affirmative vote of voting members at a properly announced meeting.

Section 4 - Dismissal of Pastoral Staff Members

If a non-vocational Elder or Teaching Pastor calls for the dismissal of a particular member of the Pastoral Staff, the Elders will schedule a vote on the matter. If a majority of the Elders concurs in calling for his dismissal, his services will be terminated.

ARTICLE VIII: DEACONS & DEACONESSES

Section 1 - Qualifications of Deacons and Deaconesses

Those being considered as a Deacon/Deaconess will be carefully examined to determine their spiritual maturity, wisdom and servant spirit. Specific scripture references in I Tim 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3 form the basis for the following list of characteristics desired in a Deacon/Deaconess:

- Character:
They cannot be open to legitimate criticism of character. They must be faithful, sincere, respected and not ensnared by addictive behavior or given to gossip. They must be free from greed and the love of money, completely honest and upright in financial dealings.

➤ **Family:**

A Deacon must manage his own household well. If married, he must be faithful and dedicated to his wife. If he has children, he must be dedicated to seeing that they become obedient and respectful Christians. If there has been a biblically permitted divorce (Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9; I Cor. 7:10-15), it must have been so far in the past as to have been overcome by a long pattern of household leadership.

If married, a Deaconess must be faithful and dedicated to her husband. If there has been a biblically permitted divorce (Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9; I Cor. 7:10-15), it must have been so far in the past as to have been overcome by a long pattern of faithfulness.

Those serving as Deacons/Deaconesses must meet the spiritual qualifications of a Deacon/Deaconess. They must demonstrate a strong interest and desire in meeting the temporal needs of the congregation, collectively or individually. They must be exemplary members of the church and be willing to commit the time needed to serve.

Section 2 - Duties and Responsibilities of Deacons and Deaconesses

As a visible manifestation of the spiritual ministry called for in Scripture (Acts 6:1-6), Deacons/Deaconesses will direct and implement specific ministries of service and support. They will form a core group that will coordinate the activities of members of the church involved in ministries of service. They will identify and periodically review areas of need within the congregation, specifically focusing on those with special needs, such as single mothers, widows, those in an emergency financial crisis, etc. They will be responsible for the distribution of benevolence funds. They will coordinate and direct those involved in support activities during public services, specifically focusing on assistance with ordinances, collection and counting of the offering, greeting and ushering. They may appoint individuals over each of these areas of responsibility and periodically review encourage and guide them. The Chairman of the Deacons/Deaconesses will closely coordinate the activities of Deacon/Deaconess ministries with the Pastoral Staff and Elder Board. Deacons/Deaconesses will function under the authority of the Elder board. Deacon/Deaconess meetings will be scheduled on a regular basis, normally no less than once a month.

Section 3 - Selection of Deacons and Deaconesses

New Deacons/Deaconesses will be selected by a process that involves their recognition by the leadership and affirmation by the congregation. At any time, but at least once each year, there will be an active search initiated by the Deacons/Deaconesses for individuals who meet the criteria stated for Deacons/Deaconesses. Members of the congregation may at any time recommend names of potential candidates to the Deacons/Deaconesses. The Deacons/Deaconesses will then carefully examine each candidate and those found to meet the criteria for Deacon/Deaconess would be recommended to the Elders for approval and to the congregation for affirmation.

There will not be a preset number of Deacons/Deaconesses. Service as a Deacon/Deaconess is open to all who are qualified and who desire the office, including those employed or compensated by the ministry.

The term of office will be three years plus any partial year if initially elected mid-year. Qualified Deacons/Deaconesses shall be eligible to serve consecutive terms.

The Deacons/Deaconesses will annually select a deacon as their Chairman (I Tim. 2:12).

Section 4 - Dismissal of Deacons and Deaconesses

If a majority of Deacons/Deaconesses believe a specific Deacon/Deaconess is no longer qualified, the matter will be referred to the Elders. If a majority of the Elders believe a specific Deacon/Deaconess is no longer qualified, the Deacon/Deaconess will be dismissed.

ARTICLE IX: COMMITTEES

Section 1 - Committees

Standing (permanent) committees may exist to support the activities of the Elders by offering a more efficient and practical means of handling specific functions of the ministry. Ad-hoc (temporary) committees may be created as needed to do such things as: study specific questions for the purpose of presenting recommendations, carry out specific short-term tasks, or assist the Pastoral Staff or the Elders in completing a specific task. Each committee must have a clearly stated purpose as well as a definition of what they are to report and what authority they have been delegated.

ARTICLE X: GENERAL ITEMS

Section 1 - Amendments

Elders, acting in one accord, may suggest changes, deletions or additions to this constitution. Proposed changes must then be made available in writing to members, at least two weeks prior to the congregational vote. If a two-thirds majority of church members who participate in the congregational vote approves the changes, the constitution will be amended.

Section 2 - Dissolution of the Church

Upon the dissolution of the church the elders shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all the assets of the church to such organization or organizations which are organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future comparable United States Internal Revenue Law), as the elders shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to organizations that agree with the church's Statement of Faith.

Section 3 - Authorization and Approval of the Constitution

This constitution supersedes all other previous constitutions. The effective date of this constitution is

APPENDIX 1: STATEMENT OF FAITH *MORNINGSIDE BIBLE CHURCH*

Article I - The Scripture

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God and without error in the original writings, and that they are supreme and final authority.

Article II- God

We believe in one God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Article III - Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary and is fully God and fully man.

Article IV - Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, one with the Father and the Son, the indweller of every believer whereby each is sealed unto the day of the redemption of the body.

Article V - Devil

We believe in the existence and operating power of a real and personal being called Satan or the Devil. He is opposed to all righteousness and has exalted himself against all that God is and has.

Article VI - Hell

We believe in a literal hell, the place of eternal punishment for the wicked dead.

Article VII - Heaven

We believe in a literal place called heaven where God's immediate presence is manifested, where the angels are, and where the redeemed shall ultimately be, from whence Christ descended and ascended again, where He makes intercession for the saints, and from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

Article VIII - Man

We believe that God created man in his own image and in a state of innocence, but that through temptation he willfully transgressed and became dead in trespasses and sins, whereby his posterity inherits a corrupt nature, being born in sin and under condemnation.

Article IX - Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; that He arose from the dead in His glorified body, ascended into heaven and as our great High Priest and Advocate he ever lives to make intercession for us; that all who believe on His name are justified on the ground of His shed blood and receive the gift of eternal life by the grace of God.

Article X - Regeneration

We believe that regeneration is a divine and progressive work of the Holy Spirit whereby God imparts life to one dead in trespasses and sin.

Article XI - Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is a divine and progressive work of the Holy Spirit whereby God, upon the ground of the finished work of Christ on the cross, His present intercessory ministry, and His Divine Word, sets the believer apart and works out, in, and through him by means of a submissive will that which is well pleasing to Himself through Jesus Christ. This work culminates in the redemption of the body.

Article XII - The Church

We believe in the one true church, the mystical Body and Bride of the Lord Jesus, composed of believers from Pentecost to the Rapture, into which believers are instituted for the purpose of fellowship, worship and service. In the matters of administration and policy, it is self-governing.

Article XIII - Baptism

We believe that Christian baptism by immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the Bible mode of baptism and testifies of the believer's faith in, and identification with, the crucified, buried and risen Savior.

Article XIV - The Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance whereby believers show forth the Lord's death till he comes.