

# MORNINGSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

*Revised: September 7, 2014*

## **PREAMBLE**

For the preservation and security of the Doctrinal Statement and church Covenant, and to the end that this assembly of baptized believers may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the New Testament Order; we therefore band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ and adopt for our government, plan of worship, and service the following Constitution and prescribed Bylaws.

## **ARTICLE 1 NAME**

This local church shall be called Morningside Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina, as duly chartered and incorporated by the laws of the State of South Carolina, November 24, 1958.

## **ARTICLE 2 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this local church is the salvation of the lost souls, the edification of the Christians through the teaching of God's Word, the encouragement of members to do the work of the ministry, the worldwide proclamation of God's saving grace through the shed blood and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary, the promotion of godly worship, the defense of the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3), and cooperation with Christian activities functioning in harmony with God's Holy Word, until Jesus comes for His church.

It is the intent of this church to function freely as a missionary, evangelistic, premillennial independent Baptist church, recognizing no ecclesiastical authority higher than the local assembly. Further, we will operate in true Biblical, Baptist, autonomous fashion. We have taken a stand against all worldly philosophies that seek to destroy true Biblical Baptist Christianity.

The Authorized King James Version is to be used in the pulpit and by all teachers and workers. No other version or translation is to be used in preaching or teaching in English language ministries. The Pastor shall approve any translations used in non-English speaking ministries.

## **ARTICLE 3 DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

- We believe in the Holy Scripture, accepting fully the writings of the Old and New Testaments as the very Word of God, verbally inspired in all parts in its original autographs, our infallible and authoritative rule of faith and practice.
- We believe there is one God eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of Christ; His virgin birth; His shed blood for atonement; His bodily resurrection; His ascension into Heaven there to be our Intercessor; His lordship over all creation.
- We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, makes believers children of God through the new birth, assures them of Heaven, and by His indwelling enables Christians to live a godly life.
- We believe that all men are sinners by nature and choice, sinful and lost, and have within themselves no possible means of salvation without Christ.
- We believe in salvation by grace through faith; that salvation is the free gift of God, not by any virtue or works of man, but received only by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and all true believers possess the gift of eternal life, a perfect righteousness, sonship in the family of God, and the divine guarantee that they shall never perish.
- We believe in the existence of Satan, the deceiver and god of this present world; that he was defeated and judged at the cross, and therefore his final doom is certain.
- We believe in the second coming of Christ; the time being unrevealed but always imminent; that when He comes He will first by resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living remove from the earth His waiting church; then pour out the righteous judgments of God upon the unbelieving world, afterwards descend with His church and establish His glorious and literal kingdom over all the nations for a thousand years.
- We believe that the spirits of the saved at death go immediately to be with Christ in Heaven; that at His second coming their works will be judged and rewards determined; that the spirits of the unsaved at death descend immediately into Hell until the final day of judgment, at which time their bodies shall be raised from the grave, judged, and cast into the lake of fire, the place of final and everlasting punishment.
- We believe in the priesthood of all believers, that Christ is our Great High Priest and through Him every born-again person has direct access into God's presence without the need of a human priest; that the believer has the right and responsibility personally to study and interpret the Scriptures guided by the Holy Spirit.
- We believe that a New Testament church is an organized body of born-again baptized believers practicing scriptural ordinances and actively engaged in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- We believe in the separation of church and state; that God has ordained both, and has delegated authority to each; the authority of one must not interfere with the other; however, this does not mean that the state is to be non-religious nor does it mean that the church and its members may not be involved in the political processes of this nation.
- We believe the officers of the church are Pastors and Deacons. In Scripture the Pastor is also referred to as an Elder. The two terms describe the same office.
- We believe the two scriptural ordinances given to the local church are baptism by immersion of believers only, and the Lord's Supper to be partaken of by obedient Christians.
- We believe that God, in His infinite wisdom and goodness, created man and woman with their own unique characteristics, designed the covenant relationship of marriage

between them for their good (Gen. 2:18; Prov. 2:17), and intended marriage to be between only one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4–5). Therefore, we believe that God disapproves of and forbids attempts to alter one's gender by surgery or attire (Gen. 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Deut. 22:5; Rom. 1:26–29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1–8; Heb. 13:4); and that He disapproves of and forbids intimate sexual activity outside of marriage as He designed it, making fornication, adultery, incest, polygamy, group marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, transgenderism, and pornography sinful perversions of God's gift of sex (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22–23). Marriage ceremonies performed in any facility owned, leased or rented out by this church will be only those ceremonies sanctioned by God, joining one man with one woman as that gender was determined at birth.

#### **ARTICLE 4 CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We endeavor, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also endeavor to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of, and use of, intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We further endeavor to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover endeavor that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

#### **ARTICLE 5 GOVERNMENT**

The government of this church, under the Head of Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is vested in the qualified voting members of the church.

By action of the church in electing its officers, the immediate direction of spiritual and temporal affairs of the church shall be committed to said officers and Deacons during the term of office as further provided elsewhere in this Constitution.

Morningside Baptist Church acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as its only Head, and receives the Holy Bible as the only infallible guide in matters of faith, church order and discipline, and is amenable to no Ecclesiastical Body.

## **ARTICLE 6 THE OFFICERS**

### **Sec. 1 Pastor**

The Pastor shall be chief executive officer in the church, moderator of all church meetings, ex-officio head of all departments of church work and all activities. He shall serve on a permanent basis. The Pastor shall be the only leader of the flock (undershepherd). There can never be two leaders. It shall be the duty of the Pastor to preach the Word and administer ordinances, to take and have charge of all services, and to watch over the spiritual interests of the church. The Pastor is to protect the "flock" from "wolves" that would slip in in "sheep's" clothing to devour the "flock."

All employees, salaried or otherwise, including associate workers (if any) shall be directly responsible to the Pastor. The employment or termination of the employees shall be in the hands of the Pastor within the limits of the budget, in counsel with the Deacons.

Upon the death, resignation, or dismissal of the Pastor, the church shall seek a candidate who wholeheartedly subscribes to the Constitution and Bylaws of this church. The Deacons shall serve as the pulpit committee for the selection of a candidate to present to the congregation for a vote. No candidate shall be presented to the congregation without at least a two-thirds vote from the Deacons. The deacons must give notice for two consecutive Sundays before a congregational vote may be taken. The vote must be two-thirds majority of votes cast by those who are qualified to vote under the provisions of the Constitution, and provided there be present a quorum (Article 9, Section 6). The Pastor shall be called to an unlimited tenure to be terminated only by his resignation, death, moral or doctrinal departure from the Word of God and this Constitution and Bylaws, or his inability or unwillingness to fulfill his responsibilities as the undershepherd of this flock, at which time the church acts according to above order. (The Pastorship of Morningside Baptist Church is a calling, not just an election of another officer to fill an office.)

The Pastor shall be responsible under the leadership of the Lord for inviting all guest speakers that shall "fill" the pulpit (evangelists, missionaries, Bible teachers) in order to maintain a well-rounded spiritual program for the whole church.

## **Sec. 2 Deacons**

Deacons shall be elected and ordained upon the basis of qualifications as set forth in the New Testament. The number of Deacons to be elected shall be determined by the need as determined by the Pastor and Deacons upon growth of the church. Their term of service shall be for a period of three years. A man may not succeed himself in this office for a period of one year.

Qualified voting members of the church may submit recommendations for Deacons. From these recommendations the Pastor and Deacons will determine the final slate of Deacon candidates to be placed on the ballot.

When each language ministry votes on their list of deacons, the total number of deacons needed to be elected by each language ministry will be noted. The deacon nominees with the most votes up to the number of needed deacons for each language ministry will be elected.

The Deacons shall constitute the Pastor's advisory council and, under his leadership, have the general oversight of the affairs of the church. With the Pastor they shall seek the highest spiritual good of the church. They shall assist in the observance of the Lord's Supper, and in other duties as apply to the New Testament office (Acts 6:1-7, and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 especially).

The Deacons shall visit the members, care for the sick, widows, needy and distressed members of the church, and shall be actively involved in the church's soul winning visitation program.

The Pastor may delegate to the Deacons many matters that would involve the Pastor and take vital time and attention to prayer and study the Pastor needs.

Deacons are to receive and distribute the funds of the church within the duly constituted treasury and budget.

The Deacons shall have charge of the temporalities of the church, and make funds available for repair, upkeep, maintenance and conservation of the church property within the limits of church income and budget.

## **Sec. 3 Trustees**

Four Trustees shall be selected annually by the Deacons. The Trustees shall be empowered to execute deeds, deed of trust, mortgages, liens, promissory notes of other pecuniary obligations, and to transfer, assign, and convey all church property of any part thereof upon officially recorded instructions of the church in conference.

All powers and duties of the trustees shall be compatible with the laws of the State of South Carolina under whose laws the church is duly incorporated.

## **Sec. 4 Church Clerk**

The duties of the clerk shall be maintained by the church secretary. It shall be his or her duty to keep a correct record of all proceedings of regular and special business meetings of the church, in a book provided for that purpose. He or she shall sign letters of dismissal of members, and keep a correct roll of membership; also cooperate in keeping records and papers belonging to the church safe in the church's bank.

### **Sec. 5 Other Officers and Leaders**

All other officers and leaders shall be appointed with the approval of the Pastor.

### **Sec. 6 Standard for Church Leaders**

All church leaders shall be expected to adhere to the Standard for Church Leaders.

## **ARTICLE 7 MEMBERSHIP**

### **Sec. 1 Qualifications**

In order to qualify for membership at Morningside Baptist Church, a person must:

1. Have placed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, followed by baptism by immersion, and
2. Subscribe to the church's Doctrinal Statement, Covenant, and Constitution and Bylaws.

Having met these qualifications and upon recommendation from pastoral staff or Deacons, a person may be presented to the congregation for church membership. A person must receive a majority vote from eligible voters present and voting in order to be received as a member.

### **Sec. 2 Associate Membership**

An associate membership roll shall be maintained by this church for those who desire the fellowship of this church who yet desire to maintain active membership in a like body of believers outside this city. An associate member shall not be entitled to hold any office or vote in church matters.

The qualifications and process for associate membership are identical to those for regular members (See Article 7, Section 1).

### **Sec. 3 Dismissal of Members**

A member's name may be dropped from the roll of the church for the following reasons:

1. Transfer of membership to another church of like faith and practice.
2. Death of a member.
3. As a result of becoming inactive according to Article 7, sec. 4.
4. As a result of church discipline according to Article 7, sec. 5.

5. At the individual's request for personal reasons.

#### **Sec. 4 Inactive Members**

The Pastor and Deacons may place on the inactive membership list any member who absents himself from the services of this church for an entire quarter (three consecutivemonths).

Inactive members forfeit all voting rights as long as they remain on the inactive list.

Inactive members desiring to be reinstated on the active membership roll may do so upon recommendation by the Pastor and Deacons. At this time voting rights will be reestablished.

The Pastor and Deacons may remove from the membership of Morningside Baptist Church any individual whose name remains on the inactive list for a period of six months.

#### **Sec. 5 Church Discipline**

It is the duty of the church to exercise discipline of any member who persists in sin and disobedience (Mt. 18:15-20; II Thes. 3:6, 14). The sinning member is to be excluded from the Lord's Table and removed from the membership roll (I Cor. 5:11-13). The purpose of this action is to maintain the purity and testimony of the local assembly and for the restoration of the disciplined member to proper fellowship with Christ and the local church (I Cor. 5:5-7).

Should it become necessary to exclude a member from the membership of the church, the procedure as given in Matt. 18:15-17 will be carried out by the Pastor and Deacons, and the actual exclusion will be a matter of church business at a special meeting called for that purpose.

The attitude of the church toward any person excluded from its membership shall be one of love and prayerful compassion (II Thes. 3:15). Forgiveness and restoration shall be speedily granted to a disciplined member who shows true repentance and evidence of a godly life (II Cor. 2:7).

### **ARTICLE 8 ORDINANCES**

We believe, according to Scripture, that Jesus Christ commanded the observance of two ordinances before He ascended unto His Father in Heaven; namely Baptism (Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:23-30).

#### **Sec. 1 Baptism**

We believe that all truly born-again believers are to follow the Bible example of the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17). As we believe that He was immersed, so we conclude that we are to be immersed after this example. Although salvation is not contingent upon baptism (Eph. 2:8,9), we believe that every born-again believer will gladly follow the Lord in Scriptural baptism as soon after conversion as possible as a public confession of the salvation experience: a complete break with all known sin and the world, and a sincere intent to reckon oneself dead unto sin and alive unto God (Rom. 6:3-5). This ordinance openly signifies that the believer is truly crucified with Christ and buried with Him, being dead to sin and resurrected with Him by the power of God to newness of life through Him (Acts 2:38-41).

## **Sec. 2 Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is a commemorative ordinance to be observed by the church in memory of the Savior (I Cor. 11:24). "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19).

Only baptized believers have a right to partake of the Supper (Acts 2:41,42).

The fellowship of this table will be observed normally once a month or at other times as deemed wise by the Pastor and Deacons.

A careful examination of the heart should have been made by each believer, for the unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper brings damnation (judgment) upon himself (I Cor. 11:28-30).

## **ARTICLE 9 BUSINESS MEETINGS**

### **Sec. 1 Rules of Order**

1. The Pastor, or in his absence, the chairman of the Deacons, shall act as moderator of all business meetings of the church, or he shall appoint another member of the Deacons to act as moderator.
2. It shall be the duty of the moderator to keep order.
3. The meeting shall be opened and closed with prayer.

4. The order of the business shall be:

1. Reading of the minutes of previous meeting if called for by the moderator.
2. Reports of committees.
3. Unfinished business.
4. New business.
5. A motion before the church must be disposed of before another motion can be entertained, unless the motion is to amend, postpone, adjourn, or call for the previous motion.
6. Every member who speaks shall rise and first address the moderator.



7. The church in conference shall entertain no proposition for discussion which has not been presented for the consideration of the Deacons.
8. On any point of order a member may appeal from the moderator to the church, whose decision shall be final.
9. All motions shall be carried by the vote of the majority of voting members present, unless stated otherwise in the by-laws.

## **Sec. 2 Business Meetings and Elections**

Special business meetings may be called at any time by the Pastor or Deacons; no meetings are to be called without the knowledge of the Pastor.

The purpose of business meetings shall be announced at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. Unannounced meetings may be called provided an effort is made to notify the voting membership of such a meeting. If such an unannounced meeting should be called, a quorum of the qualified voting membership must be present in order to conduct business. (See Art. 9, Sec. 6)

The annual election of officers shall be during the annual business meeting, normally held on the first Sunday in December.

At the annual business meeting, the Pastor and Deacons shall present for approval of the congregation a budget for the next financial year.

The Pastor and Deacons shall serve as a nominating committee for all general elections.

All matters pertaining to the purchase, sale, or mortgaging of property shall be voted on by the congregation.

## **Sec. 3 Qualifications of Voters**

All members 18 years of age and older and having been active in the fellowship with the members of Morningside Baptist Church for the past 90 days before election time may vote. No one will be allowed to vote by proxy.

## **Sec. 4 Vacancies**

Vacancies of elected officers will be filled for the remainder of that officer's term by appointment by the Pastor in counsel with the Deacons.

## **Sec. 5 Amendments**

These Bylaws may be amended in any regular or called business meeting of the church by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast, provided a quorum is present (see Art. 9, Sec. 6) and provided it does not infringe upon the doctrinal principles, the “stand,” the covenant; the independency of this church as stated in this Constitution; and provided notice of such amendment, stating the proposed change, shall have been given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays.

## **Sec. 6 Quorum**

A quorum is defined as a majority of the qualified voters of the church membership. A quorum is necessary only:

1. to call a Pastor. (Art. 6, Sec. 1).
2. for an unannounced business meeting. (Art. 9, Sec. 2).
3. for amendments to this Constitution. (Art. 9, Sec. 5).

## **ARTICLE 10 FINANCIAL POLICY OF MORNINGSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **Sec. 1 Tithes and Offerings**

Tithes and offerings shall be recognized as our plan of finance. All members shall be encouraged to give at least a tenth of their income to the church. We believe this is taught in the Word of God.

### **Sec. 2 Church Treasurer and Treasury**

- The Treasurer shall function as the Financial Administrator and shall be a church member in good standing. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Pastor in counsel with the Deacons and shall serve a continuous term until relieved by the Pastor in counsel with the deacons.
- The Treasurer shall supervise the payment of all accounts consistent with the budget of the church or special vote of the church.
- The Treasurer shall oversee the disbursement of all funds. If cash is paid on any occasion a receipt is required for the record.
- The Treasurer shall keep a record of all gifts and tithes identified by the givers who desire a record for income tax purposes. All contribution records shall be confidential.
- The Treasurer shall keep an accurate record of receipts and disbursements and report the financial statement to the church quarterly and annually or as deemed wise by the Deacons. The Treasurer’s books must be available for audit or inspection at any time the Deacons may deem necessary.

There shall be one treasury utilized for the receipt and distribution of funds in the name of Morningside Baptist Church.

Any non-budgeted expenditure exceeding 0.1% of the prior year General Fund offerings must be specifically approved by the Deacons. Any non-budgeted expenditure exceeding 0.4% of the prior year General Fund offerings must be specifically approved by the congregation at a properly called business meeting. The above amounts shall be calculated by the church Treasurer and announced to the congregation by January 20 each year.

Sunday School classes and other church groups are to refrain from taking offerings for any cause without the consent of the Pastor or Deacons.

No member is to make purchases in the name of the church except upon proper authorization, within the limits of the church budget, by the Deacons or as it may be further decided upon by the church.

The calendar year shall be our financial year (January 1 to December 31).

#### **ARTICLE 11 MISSIONS**

The church shall maintain an active home and foreign missions program; it shall encourage its members to surrender for missionary service; it shall support missions financially and with prayer. Members shall be encouraged to promise by faith to financially support the work of missions.

The church shall entertain missionaries for the purpose of considering them for support; the Pastor and Deacons shall present these candidates to the church for a vote as they feel led by the Holy Spirit.

Open Door Baptist Missions is a ministry of Morningside Baptist Church and serves missionaries sent from Morningside Baptist Church as well as other like-minded, fundamental churches.