Mount Hope

Baptist Church

##### Constitution, Covenant & By-Laws

**for**

**Christian Unity**

**This Church’s One Foundation**

**Is**

**JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD**

**Since 1835**

**MT. HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH**

**42507 Mount Hope Road**

**Ashburn, Virginia 20148-4511**

**703-729-2707**

*This Constitution supersedes and nullifies all earlier documents and becomes effective*

*February 26, 2017*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Constitution**……………………………………………….....… | 3 |
| **By-laws**………………………………………………..…..….… | 6 |
| **Article I: Membership**………………………………………………… | 6 |
| **Article II: Ordained Offices**……………………………………..…… | 8 |
| **Article III: Church Structure**………………………………………… | 14 |
| 1. *Church Corporation, Board of Directors*……………..….…… | 14 |
| 1. *Church Council*…………………………………………..……. | 16 |
| 1. *Church Teams*……………………………………………….… | 18 |
| 1. *Elections....................................................................................* | 20 |
| 1. *Decision-making powers*………………………………….…... | 20 |
| **Article IV: Temporary Committees**……………………….….….…. | 21 |
| **Article V: Meetings**…………………………………………………… | 22 |
| **Article VI: Amendments**………………………………………..…… | 22 |

**CONSTITUTION**

**PREAMBLE**

This Constitution is established to:

* preserve and secure the principles of our faith,
* insure this body is governed in an orderly manner,
* preserve the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church, and
* preserve the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches of the same faith.

1. **NAME**

This body shall be known as Mount Hope Baptist Church, having been initially organized on August 24, 1835, and incorporated on August 30, 2004.

1. **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Our purpose is to share the fullness of life in Christ by:

* engaging in worship,
* proclaiming the gospel of salvation and God’s love,
* equipping, discipling, and encouraging Christians,
* providing opportunity and facility for fellowship and growth,
* participating in the support of missions around the world, and
* ministering to the needs of our community.

1. **ARTICLES OF FAITH**

THE BIBLE (Holy Scriptures). We believe the sixty-six books of the Bible to be the complete, inerrant, and inspired Word of God. We believe the Bible is the supreme standard by which we should measure all human conduct, creeds and opinions. It is the standard by which we are to live our lives. (Hebrews 1:1-12; II Timothy 3:14-17; II Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 4:12)

GOD. We believe in and worship the one true and living God: the God of the Bible, the God who created everything that exists. We believe He is eternal (without beginning or end), holy, wise and all powerful, all knowing and present everywhere. We believe in the triune nature of God--that He exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Isaiah 44:6; Genesis 1:1-2; John 1:3; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 6:3; Romans 11:33-36; Genesis 17:1; Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 139:7-12; Matthew 28:19; John 16:15; Ephesians 2:19-22)

*GOD THE FATHER*. God the Father is mercifully concerned in the affairs of men, and He loves us each as individuals. He saves from sin and eternal death all who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ. (II Corinthians 5:18-19; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9)

*GOD THE SON*. God the Father sent His only son, who was with Him from the beginning in Heaven, to the earth to be born of the virgin Mary. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was both God and man, and lived a sinless life. He was put to death on a cross in the land of Israel, buried in a tomb, and resurrected by God the Father three days later. Jesus was observed by over five hundred people after his resurrection. After forty days He ascended from earth directly into the presence of God the Father. Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection provides for our salvation. Jesus Christ will visibly return to the earth according to His promise. (John 1:1-3; Luke 1:31-34; Matthew 1:20; Colossians 1:15-20; Colossians 2:9; Matthew 1:23; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; Mark 10:45; Acts 2:22-24; Ephesians 1:19-20; I Corinthians 15:3-8; I John 1:7; Matthew 24:30-31; Acts 1:11)

*GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT*. God the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He regenerates, seals, and sets apart the believer to a holy life. At regeneration (new birth), He baptizes the believer into the body of Christ and comes to indwell the believer permanently, teaching each believer, giving spiritual gifts to each one, and producing the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings unity in the church as each believer yields to Him. (John 16:7-8; Ephesians 1:13; II Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:5-6; I Corinthians 12:13; I Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 2:10b-11; Ephesians 5:17-18; I Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 5:22-23; I Corinthians 12:4, 12; Ephesians 5:18)

MANKIND AND SALVATION. We believe that God created every person in His image, giving each person great value. In creating male and female, God defines marriage as the union between one man and one woman committed exclusively to each other for life, forming a unit within which children are to be raised. But mankind chose to sin and consequently experienced not only physical death but also spiritual death (separation from God). Sin has altered man’s practice of marriage but not God’s design or standard for marriage. All human beings are born with a sinful nature and commit acts of sin. But “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Christ’s shed blood provides for our salvation and the forgiveness of sin. This salvation is not the result of human works or merit, but of God’s grace. We believe, therefore, that those who have a personal faith in Christ shall be with Him in heaven forever. Personal faith means repenting of one’s sin, asking for forgiveness, believing that Christ’s death and resurrection is the only means of salvation, and making a personal commitment to accept Christ as Savior and Lord of one’s life. We believe that Satan, a fallen angel, and his followers seek to oppose God and His work with all their strength. However, the Holy Spirit in each believer protects them from eternal loss at Satan’s hand and is available to strengthen the believer against temptations. Unbelievers will be forever separated from God and face eternal suffering in the lake of fire. (Genesis 1:27; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3; James 1:13-15; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Ephesians 2:6-7; John 1:12; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 12:7-10, 12; I Peter 5:8; Ephesians 1:13; Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:14-15)

THE CHURCH (the Body of Christ). We believe that the Church (the Body of Christ) is composed of regenerate (born again) believers. The local church is a fellowship of believers united in the Holy Spirit and united together to worship God, provide fellowship among believers, teach the Scriptures, and proclaim the Gospel of Christ throughout the world. (I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 1:7-8; Matthew 28:18-20)

ORDINANCES.

*Baptism by Immersion*. We believe that Christian baptism by immersion shows our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior and is a symbol of our death to sin and resurrection to new life. (Romans 6:1-10)

*The Lord’s Supper*. We believe that the Lord’s Supper is the commemoration of His death and resurrection until He comes again and should always be preceded by earnest self-examination. (Matthew 26:26-29; I Corinthians 11:23-28)

1. **CHURCH COVENANT**

We, as brothers and sisters in Christ at Mount Hope Baptist Church, do covenant to be:

C ommitted and obedient to the Word of God and to gathering to worship God,

H onorable in all our dealings with all people,

R esponsible to Christ, the Head of our fellowship,

I ntentional in our attendance and giving,

S ensitive to the needs and feelings of others in our community of faith,

T houghtful and attentive of our actions and how they affect others and the testimony of Christ in order to promote the unity of Spirit,

L ovingly slow to anger and quick to mend,

I nvolved in sharing our gifts and happy to encourage the gifts and talents of others,

K ind, compassionate and caring for the needs and distresses of others, and

E ager to learn and to share God’s Word and love, thereby fulfilling our Lord’s “Great Commission.”

1. **CHARACTER**

DOCTRINE. This church receives the Scriptures as its authority in all matters of faith and practice, as indicated in our Articles of Faith (Constitution Article III).

GOVERNMENT: The government of Mount Hope Baptist Church is vested in the body of believers who are active members. It is not subject to the control of any ecclesiastical body, but recognizes and sustains the commitment to mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Southern Baptist Churches.

As Mount Hope Baptist Church is a registered Virginia State Corporation, all corporate related matters shall be executed by its Board of Directors as directed by the church membership, or as Virginia State Law requires. The Board of Directors shall be elected by the church membership and consist of a minimum of five directors. At least one director shall be an Elder. Directors shall serve for one 5-year term, with at least one year off before serving another. To preserve continuity, it is recommended that terms of Directors be staggered.

**BY-LAWS**

***ARTICLE I. MEMBERSHIP***

The membership of this church shall consist of persons who publicly confess Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord and have been baptized as believers.

1. **BECOMING A MEMBER:** Baptism at any age does not confer automatic membership.Any person desiring membership shall follow these procedures:
2. Present themselves for membership during any service of the church based on one of the following:
   1. A public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, followed by baptism.
   2. Letter of transfer from another church of like faith.
   3. Satisfactory statement of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and previous experience of believer’s baptism.
3. The minimum age for prospective members is 17.
4. Candidates shall be visited by the Pastor and/or Elder.
5. Each candidate shall complete a new member/discipleship class and be counseled by the Pastor and/or an Elder with respect to their salvation and baptism, as well as the responsibilities and privileges of membership in this church.
6. Upon completion of the above, the church will vote on the candidate’s request at a regular business meeting.
7. **DUAL MEMBERSHIP**
   1. It is desired that all persons who choose to unite in membership at Mt. Hope do so with sole membership; however, there may be a rare occasion when a person desires membership at Mt. Hope and wishes to retain membership at another church for a valid reason. The purpose of dual membership is to enable and encourage such a person to use his/her gifts at Mount Hope. In such cases, the following requirements must be met:
      1. The candidate must have been attending Mt. Hope faithfully for six months and be a member in good standing of another like-minded, Bible-believing church.
      2. The candidate must meet with the Pastor and Elders to explain the reason for requesting dual membership.
         1. If the Pastor and Elders are not satisfied that the reason qualifies, they will meet with the candidate again without delay to explain their conclusion.
         2. If the Pastor and Elders are satisfied that the reason does qualify, they will inform the candidate without delay. When the candidate has met the qualifications of Section A (Becoming a Member), a recommendation will be brought to the church body at a business meeting.

2. An active church member who becomes a full-time student in another community may join a local church in that community and retain Mt. Hope membership.

1. **DUTIES OF MEMBERS**
   1. Follow Christ and the principles of Scripture.
   2. Faithfully attend the services of this church.
   3. Exercise consistent stewardship of time, talents, and finances.
   4. Enter into the spirit of the Church Covenant.
2. **VOTING RIGHTS**
   1. All active members 17 years of age or older may vote on the transactions of this church.
   2. Active members are those who participate in the life of this church by substantially fulfilling the duties of members as stated in Article I, Section C. 1-4. Those who are unable to participate because of physical limitations shall maintain their right to vote.
3. **TERMINATION** 
   1. Membership in this church shall be terminated by:
      1. Letter of transfer, upon the vote of the church taken at a business meeting.
      2. Personal request by the member.
      3. Upon becoming a member of another church (confirmed by the Pastor or Elders).
      4. By vote of the church as a result of disciplinary action.
4. **DISCIPLINE** 
   1. If a member is involved in open or flagrant sin, the Pastor or Elders shall follow the steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. The primary aim shall be to encourage repentance and reconciliation.
   2. If, after all reasonable efforts have been made, obedience to Christ requires exclusion of the member, the Elders shall prayerfully bring to the congregation a recommendation for termination of membership. The church may vote on such a recommendation at a business meeting; however, the vote may not take place at the same meeting at which the recommendation is made.
   3. Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by a majority vote of the church, upon evidence of his/her repentance, reformation, and reconciliation.
5. **RECORDS** 
   1. The Church Clerk is responsible for maintaining the membership list.

***ARTICLE II. ORDAINED OFFICES***

The ORDAINED OFFICES of this church are Pastor, Elder, and Deacon.

1. **PASTORS/ELDERS - QUALIFICATIONS**

“Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.” I Timothy 3:2-7 NIV

“An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to much wine, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” Titus 1:6-9 NIV

1. *Above Reproach*. Pastors/Elders must be blameless, presenting no patterns of scriptural disobedience or grounds for accusation.
2. *Husband of One Wife*. Pastors/Elders, if married, must be devoted husbands.
3. *Temperate*. Pastors/Elders must be self-controlled, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.
4. *Self-Controlled*. Pastors/Elders must be sober, not given to quick, superficial decisions, but rather seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit.
5. *Respectable*. Pastors/Elders must demonstrate moral excellence and ethical living.
6. *Hospitable*. Pastors/Elders must be willing to share their blessings with others.
7. *Able to Teach*. Pastors/Elders must be able to communicate the truth of God and exhort sound doctrine. II Timothy 4:2; 2:24
8. *Not Substance Abusers.* Pastors/Elders must be free from addictions, and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
9. *Gentle*. Pastors/Elders must be characterized by forbearance and tenderness, not having a quick temper.
10. *Uncontentious*. Pastors/Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish arguments.
11. *Free from the Love of Money*. Pastors/Elders must not be stingy, greedy, or out for selfish gain. They should not be preoccupied with amassing material things, but rather should be generous and cheerful in giving.
12. *Manage Own Household*. Pastors/Elders must have a well-ordered household and a healthy family life.
13. *Not a New Convert*. Pastors/Elders must not be new believers, but must have been Christians long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of their faith.
14. *Good Reputation with Outsiders*. Pastors/Elders must be well respected by unbelievers as men of character who demonstrate moral and ethical living.
15. *Not Overbearing/Self-Willed*. Pastors/Elders must not be stubborn, insensitive or domineering, but be willing servants.
16. *Not Quick Tempered/Violent*. Pastors/Elders must be able to control their tempers and be patient in difficult situations.
17. *Pursue Honest Lifestyle*. Pastors/Elders must be known by their truthfulness and trustworthiness.
18. *Love What is Good*. Pastors/Elders must desire the will of God in every decision and what is honorable, worthy and respectable.
19. *Just*. Pastors/Elders must be fair and impartial, basing their judgments on scriptural principle.
20. *Devout*. Pastors/Elders must be reverent, continually desiring to be separated from sin. They must be devoted to prayer, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their own spiritual walk. Acts 20:28
21. *Holding Fast the Faithful Word*. Pastors/Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
22. **ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES OF PASTORS & ELDERS**
    1. *Shepherd the Flock*. Serving in all humility, Pastors/Elders are to guide, direct, guard, and protect the members of the body. They are to be aware of the needs of the congregation and assist in meeting those needs through the body. They are to oversee the life of the church with compassion and wisdom. Their aim is to help believers mature in Christ through works of service that build up the body of Christ. Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3; Ephesians 4:13-15
    2. *Lead through Example*. Pastors/Elders are to be Scriptural role models, setting a pattern before the flock of a rightly ordered life, determined to glorify God. I Peter 5:2 & 3
    3. *Teach and Exhort*. Pastors/Elders are to see that the flock is fed through insightful and accurate biblical instruction and admonition. I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9
    4. *Refute Those who Contradict Truth*. Pastors/Elders are to confront those who are teaching or living in a pattern contradictory to Biblical truth, so that the truth of Christ will remain credible to both the congregation and the community. Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9
    5. *Pray for the Sick*. Pastors/Elders are to pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of the members of the congregation. James 5:14
    6. *Assist in the Observance of Ordinances* (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper)
    7. *Oversee the Discipline of the Church*. Pastors/Elders are to be guided always by the principles set forth in Matthew 18:15-17; I Corinthians 5:9-13; I Thessalonians 5:12-14, as well as the Church Constitution and By-laws (see Article I. F. 1-3).
    8. *Standing Pulpit Supply*. The Elders will serve or arrange temporary ministry in the absence of the pastor/pastors.
    9. *Supervise Paid and Volunteer Staff*
    10. *Act for the Church as Delegated*. The Pastors/Elders will act for the church in such other matters as the church may delegate to them.
23. **SELECTION OF PASTORS**
    1. *Number*. The number of Pastors shall be determined by the congregation.
    2. S*earch Committee*. A Pastor Search Committee shall be elected by the church to seek a suitable man who has been called by God to be a pastor. The Pastor Search Committee must validate every item in the resume and any other document the prospective pastor presents to the committee. Their recommendation will constitute a nomination. The Committee may only bring before the Church one man at a time.
    3. *Information required.* A resumé, including at least three references; audio or video recording of at least three sermons; and any other information the candidate wishes to submit. The Search Committee will obtain a background check through a recognized organization.
    4. *Voting*. Voting to extend a Pastoral call shall take place at a Special Meeting, for which at least two weeks’ public notice shall be given from the pulpit and by electronic means. Voting shall take place by secret ballot. An affirmative vote of three-fourths of the active members present is required to call a pastor. Absentee ballots will be allowed only for those members who are homebound.
24. **TERM OF PASTORS**
    1. *Term*. A Pastor thus elected shall serve until the relationship is terminated by mutual consent, by resignation, by retirement, or by a two-thirds vote of the active members for termination.
    2. *Termination Vote of the Church* 
       1. A termination vote of the church will not be taken by the church without a concerted effort at reconciliation, following the steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 and I Tim. 5:19-20. The Elders will address the issue at hand and will also provide an opportunity for any aggrieved parties to present their concerns to the Pastor in the Elders' presence. The Pastor will be given an opportunity to respond and, where appropriate, to make any agreed upon changes. If need be, the church may consider using a mediator from outside the church.
       2. If the situation is not resolved, the Elders will present the case to the church at a Special Called Business Meeting. A termination vote will be taken at another Special Called Business Meeting within one week. Proper notice of such a meeting must be given by electronic means and from the pulpit on the Sunday preceding the date of such meeting.
25. **VACATION FOR PASTORS** 
    1. Full-time Pastors are entitled to the following:

Less than 5 years 2 weeks paid

5 – 9 years 3 weeks paid

10 years or more 4 weeks paid

The year begins at date of employment. Vacation time not used in one year may not be carried over into the next year.

**F. DAYS OFF**

1. Pastors are entitled to two days and two nights off per week.

**G. CONTINUING EDUCATION/PLANNING TIME**

1. Pastors are encouraged to pursue continuing education as approved by the church.
2. Pastors are encouraged to take one week per year away from regular duties to plan for the life of the church. This is separate from any vacation time scheduled during the year.

**H. SABBATICAL**

After serving Mount Hope for seven years the Pastor may apply for sabbatical time of between one and three months.

1. The purpose of a sabbatical is:
2. To renew pastoral vision and energy.
3. To allow time for spiritual reflection, growth, and renewal.
4. To provide time for rest, recuperation, and re-invigoration.
5. To allow time to pursue a ministry-related goal that will benefit the Pastor and the people.
6. To reflect on what the Lord is doing in his life and in his ministry.
7. The Pastor will bring his proposal for a sabbatical to the Elders. The proposal must be presented to the church at least 3 months ahead of the start of the sabbatical.
8. The terms of the sabbatical will be negotiated between the Pastor and the Elders, and must be explained to and approved by the church.
9. The Pastor must remain in ministry with Mount Hope for at least six months following the end of the sabbatical.
10. Full salary and benefits will be paid during the sabbatical; and the church should budget accordingly.

**I. PROCESS OF ELECTION/ORDINATION OF ELDERS**

1. Elders shall be chosen by the church according to the qualifications in I Timothy 3:2 -7 and Titus 1:6-9, as quoted and described in Article II A.
2. Any man being considered for ordination must be called of God, determined to be qualified by the current Elders, and have been an active member of this church for at least one full year.
3. Active members may submit their suggestions to the Chairman of Elders or Pastor.
4. The Elders shall interview each candidate and will present nominations for Elder at any Business Meeting.
5. Candidates will be observed for a period of four months.
6. After the observation period, there will be a meeting to allow the candidates a public opportunity to share their testimony and answer questions from the congregation.
7. Voting will be held by secret ballot, with two-thirds ruling.
8. Those elected shall be ordained in a public service for that purpose.
9. The number of elders shall be determined by availability of those qualified and by the needs of the church family.

**J. DEACONS - QUALIFICATIONS**

“Deacons likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.” I Timothy 3:8-13 NIV

1. *Individuals Worthy of Respect*. Deacons must be mature, of sound mind and character, yielded to the Holy Spirit.
2. *Sincere*. Deacons must demonstrate verbal consistency. They must not be prone to saying one thing to one person and something else to another. They must be known to demonstrate honesty and integrity.
3. *Not Indulgent in Much Wine*. Deacons must be free from addictions and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
4. *Not Pursuing Dishonest Gain*. Deacons must be purely motivated in their service.
5. *Holding to the Deep Truths of the Faith with a Clear Conscience*. Deacons must have a sound knowledge of Christian truths and a lifestyle in accord with them. They must not be swayed from the truth.
6. *First Tested*. Deacons must have proven over time that they are faithful and that their walk is credible.
7. *Their Spouses Must be Worthy of Respect, Temperate, Trustworthy, and Not Malicious Talkers*. Deacons, if married, must have spouses who are also devoted to the Lord and yielded to the control of the Spirit.
8. *Husband of One Wife*. Deacons, if married, must be a devoted spouse.
9. *Manage Household Well*. Deacons must have well-ordered households, a healthy family life.

**K. ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEACONS**

“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” Acts 6:1-7 NIV

1. *Undertake Areas of Service Necessary for the Church’s Functioning*. Deacons should seek to know the practical needs of the membership in order to relieve and encourage those in need.
2. *Keep Pastors/Elders informed of the Needs of the Congregation.*
3. *Act in Matters Delegated*. The Deacons shall act for the church in such other matters as the church may delegate to them.

**L. PROCESS OF ELECTION/ORDINATION OF DEACONS**

1. Deacons shall be chosen by the church according to the qualifications in I Timothy 3:8-13, as quoted and described in Article II.H.
2. Any one being considered for ordination must be an active member of this church for at least one full year.
3. The Pastor/Elders will bring forward nominations. Active members qualified to vote may nominate a person for deacon in the following manner:
   * 1. Present a nomination in writing to the Pastor or Chairman of Elders/Deacons.
     2. The Pastor and Elders/Deacons shall consider each candidate, after which the Pastor and Elders shall come to consensus on whether to recommend the candidate to the church body and may do so only with the prior consent of the candidate.
     3. Candidates will be observed for a period of four months.
4. After the observation period, there will be a meeting to allow the candidates a public opportunity to share their testimony and answer questions from the congregation.
5. Voting will be held by secret ballot, with two-thirds ruling.
6. Those elected shall be ordained in a public service for that purpose.
7. The Deacon’s term of office shall be three years. After serving three years, a deacon must take one year off before being eligible for re-election. The church may vote to temporarily suspend this requirement if need so dictates.
8. The number of deacons shall be determined by the availability of qualified persons and by the needs of the church family.

**M.  REMOVAL OF AN ELDER OR A DEACON**

1. An Elder or Deacon may be removed from the office of Elder or Deacon for valid cause.  A concerted effort shall be made at repentance and reconciliation following the steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. The Pastor and remaining Elders will address the issue at hand and provide an opportunity for any aggrieved parties to present their concerns to the Elder or Deacon in the presence of the Pastor and remaining Elders. The Elder or Deacon will be given an opportunity to respond and, where appropriate, to make any agreed upon changes.
2. If the situation is not resolved or if the nature of the sin demands it, the Elder or Deacon will be asked to resign.  If there is refusal to resign, the Pastor and remaining Elders will present the case to the church for a removal vote at a regular Business Meeting or at a Special Called Business Meeting.  Proper notice of such a meeting must be given by electronic means and from the pulpit on the Sunday preceding the date of such meeting. Removal will require a majority vote by the congregation.
3. In the case of a resignation, the Pastor and remaining Elders will determine the amount of information disclosed publicly.

***ARTICLE III. CHURCH STRUCTURE***

In addition to the Ordained Offices, the Church’s structure is organized around God’s purposes for the church, which include Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Service, Outreach and Administration. It is the goal of Mt. Hope to operate in a manner which best accomplishes these purposes. All activities of the Church are enhanced by empowering and encouraging members to act as gifted by God.

1. **CHURCH CORPORATION, BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

On August 30, 2004, Mt. Hope Baptist Church received a Certificate of Incorporation from the Commonwealth of Virginia. A notebook resides in the church office that houses the annual minutes, The Articles of Incorporation, and any other pertinent documents. The Special Called Incorporation Meeting was held on October 2, 2005. Also, along with the notebook, is a “Mt. Hope” seal embosser for use when necessary.

1. **Operation/Responsibilities**
2. There should be five Directors: one Elder, the Treasurer, and three at-large members of the congregation. Directors shall serve for one 5-year term, with at least one year off before serving another. To preserve continuity, it is recommended that terms of Directors be staggered.
3. One Director will serve as Chairman, and one as Vice Chairman.
4. The Chairman is the Registered Agent, and is responsible to file the Annual Report requested by the State Corporation Commission each year.
5. Directors are authorized to sign legal documents on behalf of the church, as authorized by church members. All contracts authorized by the members must be signed by at least one Director, with the knowledge of the other Directors.
6. **Compensation**
7. Directors will not be paid a salary or receive any compensation. This does not preclude them from receiving compensation for serving the Church in any other capacity. If, however, there are reasonable costs for travel or other approved expenses, the Directors shall receive reimbursement for said costs.
8. **Conflicts of Interest Policy**
   1. Directors must sign a Conflict of Interest Policy, which will provide for full disclosure of conflicting interests. This will permit the members and Directors to determine whether a contemplated transaction may be authorized as just, fair, and reasonable to the Church.
9. **Transactions with Interested Parties**

* 1. A contract or other transaction shall be voidable at the sole election of the

Members IF:

* 1. The contract/other transaction is directly between the Church and one or more of its Corporation Directors, Members, Pastor, Elders, Deacons, or family members thereof (hereinafter referred to as “Interested Party/ies”); or

* 1. The contract/other transaction is between the Church and any other entity of which one or more of the Church’s Corporation Directors, Members, Pastors, Elders, Deacons, or family members thereof is also considered an Interested Party/ies, or if an Interested Party has a financial interest in said entity.
  2. **UNLESS ALL** of the following provisions are satisfied:
     1. The Church entered into the transaction for its own benefit;
     2. The transaction was fair and reasonable as to the Church, or was in furtherance of its exempt purposes at the time the Church entered into the transaction;
     3. Prior to consummating the transaction, or any part, the Board of Directors authorized or approved the transaction, in good faith, by a vote of a majority of the Directors then in office, without counting the vote of the Interested Party (Director or Directors), and with knowledge of the material facts concerning the transaction and the Interested Parties’ interest in the transaction; and
     4. Prior to authorizing or approving the transaction, the Board of Directors, in good faith, determined after reasonable investigation and consideration, that either the Church could not have obtained a more advantageous arrangement, with reasonable effort under the circumstances, or the transaction was in furtherance of the Church’s tax-exempt purposes.
  3. Common or Interested Party Board of Directors members may not be counted in determining the presence of a quorum at a meeting of the Directors which authorizes, approves, or ratifies such contract or transaction. Notwithstanding the above, no loan shall be made by the Church to any of its Board of Directors, Pastors, Elders, Deacons, or Members.

1. **CHURCH COUNCIL (also referred to as “Council”)**
2. **Composition: 13 members made up of the following:**
   1. The Senior Pastor
   2. An Elder chosen by the Elders (unless church agrees that circumstances dictate otherwise)
   3. A Deacon chosen by the Deacons (unless church agrees that circumstances dictate otherwise)
   4. Team Leaders (6)
   5. Treasurer
   6. Three (3) At-Large Active Members of the church elected by the Church (not to include other named positions above)

The Church Secretary will also attend the Council meetings as a paid non-voting member

and will record written minutes, except that minutes will not be recorded for annual

budget and nomination meetings. In the Secretary’s absence, the Council will choose a

Council member to record the minutes. The minutes, exclusive of any confidential items,

will be made available to the Church in a timely manner.

All members of the Council shall be active members of the Church and elected by the

congregation.

1. **General Powers.** The Church Council will exercise its authority in keeping with the will of the congregation expressed in its official Business Meetings. The Council will take official action through a simple majority vote, provided there are at least 9 members present.
2. **Responsibilities.**
   1. Support the pastor(s) and elders in nurturing the spiritual life of the Church.
   2. Oversee the business and financial affairs of the Church.
   3. Facilitate communication with the Congregation and among the Teams.
   4. Advise, support, and encourage the Teams in fulfilling their charters; and approve any revisions to the team charters.
   5. Make decisions that do not require Congregational approval, but are beyond the authority of a given Team.
   6. Bring decisions before the Congregation for discussion and vote that are beyond the authority of the Council.
   7. Propose annual nominations for elected Church positions, and present the slate of candidates in **April** for action/vote at a Special Called Business Meeting in **May**.
   8. Review annual budget recommendations from each Team and any other church entities that have a budget, and formulate the annual church budget for posting/presentation at the **April** business meeting for action/vote at a Special Called Business Meeting in **May**.
   9. Ensure that the Treasurer’s books are audited by the Administration Team at the close of the fiscal year, and that the Administration Team presents a report to the Council and then to the Church no later than the end of the second quarter of the new fiscal year. Note: The Mt. Hope Benevolence Fund will be audited by the Elders and not the Administration Team.
   10. Ensure the Treasurer’s books are reviewed by an independent auditor every five years and report the results to the Church at the next regular Business Meeting.
   11. Review policy statements for approval by the members of the church.
   12. In cases of emergency, the Council will take action on behalf of the congregation as deemed necessary. An emergency will be defined as a situation which warrants immediate attention before a Business Meeting or other appropriate body can be convened. All action shall be reported to the congregation.
   13. Exercise any other functions or responsibilities authorized by a majority vote of the members present at an official Business Meeting.
3. **Officers**. The Officers of the Church Council are the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Pastors may not serve as Officers. Said Officers will be elected by majority vote of the Church Council and must be confirmed annually.
4. **Term of Office.** The Congregation may authorize exceptions to the following as necessary.
   1. The Pastor and Treasurer are permanent members of the Council.
   2. Team leaders and at-large members: a maximum of three consecutive years is recommended.
   3. Elders: a maximum of two consecutive years.
   4. Deacons: a maximum of one year at a time.
5. **Rules for Conducting Business.** The Church Council will use parliamentary procedure as set forth in the current edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order*.
6. **Place, Time and Notice of Church Council Meetings.** Regular or special meetings shall be held at the Church, unless otherwise designated.

Regular meetings of the Church Council shall be held once a quarter. Special meetings of the Church Council may be called at other times by the Chairperson with two (2) days’ notice to the Council members and the church at large by any usual means of communication (e.g., email or telephone). Members of the church not on the Council who do not have email and wish to receive telephone notification of changes to regular meetings or notice of special meetings must submit their request in writing to the church secretary. The secretary must keep said requests on file.

Any church member may attend any Council meeting as a silent observer, except during instances wherein confidential matters are being discussed, which include budget and nomination meetings. In instances wherein a dispute arises about the confidentiality of an issue about to be discussed, a majority vote by the Council in private will determine whether such issue may be discussed in the presence of the observer.

Any church member may bring a concern forward for a Council Meeting or Business Meeting at least a week before the said meeting for inclusion in the Agenda and may articulate the concern or issue at the appropriate meeting. Church members may inform the church secretary or any member of the Church Council regarding such request.

1. **No Compensation for Council Members.** No Council member shall receive a salary or compensation for serving in that capacity. However, this restriction does not preclude a Council member from receiving reasonable compensation for service in another capacity. Council members may receive reimbursement for travel and other approved expenses with written documentation.
2. **Resignation of Church Council Members**. Any Council member may at any time present a letter of resignation to the Church Council, which shall become official upon acceptance by the Council. (Resignation of a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon shall be presented first to the Elders, then to the Council and then at a Church Business Meeting.)
3. **Removal of Church Council Members**. A Council member may be temporarily or permanently removed from the Church Council according to the following procedure.
4. The Elders shall ascertain all the facts and speak personally to the Council member in question before making a recommendation.
5. If necessary, the Elders may request resignation of the member in question.
6. If the member refuses to resign, the matter will be brought before the Church Council.
7. A decision will be made by a majority vote of the remaining Council members and the elders.
8. The Church Council will present at a Business Meeting a nominee to replace a member of the Council who has been removed
9. **Conflicts of Interest or Transactions with Interested Parties.** The Council shall adopt a “Conflicts of Interest Policy” that will provide for full disclosure of material conflicting interests by Council Members, Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Officers, Directors or employees. The Policy shall provide guidelines for recusal and for the Council to temporarily exclude the affected person(s) in order to determine whether the contemplated transaction may be authorized as just, fair and reasonable to the Church.
10. **CHURCH TEAMS**

Church organizational structure is Team-based in order to gather similar functions and activities under one umbrella and to allow Team members to concentrate service in areas of personal giftedness and interest.

1. **Composition.** Every team is to be composed of individuals called and gifted by God to accomplish Team goals and purposes. The Team Leader shall be elected by the congregation. Members of the Team shall be appointed by the Church Council. Teams shall be composed of an elected Team Leader and at least two other members as necessary. Team Leaders may not serve as Leader of more than one Team.
2. **Team Charter.** Each Team shall be governed by a Charter that will guide how the Team will accomplish its purposes, including organizational, and operational procedures and plans of action. Each Team shall be responsible for writing and, as necessary, amending its Charter. Each Charter, including any amendments, must be approved by the Church Council. The charters are not part of the Constitution and By-Laws; therefore, each Team must maintain an accessible record of their respective charters.
3. **Responsibilities of Team Leaders.**
4. Set meeting agendas.
5. Oversee and guide the work of the team, on behalf of the Church.
6. Work with the Team to prepare an annual Team Budget, which will be presented to the Church Council by May 1.
7. Follow the Team Charter.
8. Make day-to-day decisions in accordance with the Team Charter and budget.
9. Serve on the Church Council and report on the Team’s activity.
10. Maintain communication between the Church Council and the Team.
11. Report to the Congregation quarterly.
12. Be accountable to the Church Council and the Church.
13. **Specific Teams.**
    1. **Worship Team:** The Worship Team will promote a deeper awareness of who God is and what he has done**.**
    2. **Discipleship Team:** The Discipleship Team will encourage godly character through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a deepening understanding of God’s love, and maturity in Christ through the study and application of the Bible.
    3. **Fellowship Team:** The Fellowship Team will provide opportunities to build relationships within the body of Christ.
    4. **Service & Care Team:** The Service and Care Team will promote ministries of practical caring within the Congregation, as well as the larger community.
    5. **Outreach Team:** The Outreach Team will develop and implement the Church’s vision for missions and evangelism.
    6. **Administration Team:** The Administration Team shall oversee and safeguard the integrity of the Church’s financial system and the care and maintenance of all real property of the Church. They shall implement appropriate controls over funds, accounts and records. They will preserve all legal and historical documents of the Church. [The Corporation Directors are responsible to execute all legal documents.]
14. **ELECTIONS – Election by the congregation expresses the direct accountability of officers to the Church body.**
    1. **Elected Positions.**
15. All Ordained Offices (Pastors, Elders & Deacons)
16. Corporation Officers and Directors
17. Team Leaders
18. Three At-Large Church Council Members
19. Treasurer
20. Assistant Treasurer
21. Moderator
22. Clerk
23. Recording Secretary
24. Depositing Secretary
25. Tally Chairperson
26. Sunday School Director(s)
27. Youth Director

1. **Procedures.**
2. For the Ordained Offices of Pastor, Elder, and Deacon the procedures outlined in Article II of the By-Laws shall be followed.
3. All other elected positions shall be filled as follows:
4. Nominations from the Church Council; the Congregation may submit nominations to the Council by **April 1**.
5. Presentation of nominations at a business meeting of the Church and subsequently published.
6. Those receiving a majority vote at the following Business Meeting shall be elected.
7. **DECISION- MAKING POWERS**
   1. **Decisions reserved for the Congregation.**
8. Call and terminate Pastors.
9. Elect all officers of the Church listed in Section D.1. Elected Positions.
10. Authorize non-emergency expenditures over $3,000.00 that are not contained in the approved Annual Budget.
11. Borrow funds to finance church obligations.
12. Vote on the Annual Budget.
13. Approve amendments to the Church Constitution and By-laws.
14. Purchase, sell or rent real property.
15. Accept or terminate members.
16. Approve policy statements.
17. Make all major decisions not specifically designated to another church entity.
    1. **Decisions exercised by the Church Council.**
18. Present nominations to the members for the annual election of Officers. The Church Council will be the Nominating Committee.
19. Formulate Annual Budget for the Congregation’s approval, based upon budget requests submitted by the Teams.
20. Hire and terminate non-pastoral employees of the Church and report the same to the congregation at the next Business Meeting.
21. Advise, encourage, support, assist, and supervise the Teams in carrying out their charters.
22. Ensure balanced dispersion of human resources among the Teams.
23. Confirm or reject Team appointments.
24. Approve Team charters and revisions to the Team Charter in conformity with the permanent functions of the Church as expressed in the Constitution.
25. Submit to the congregation any decisions falling under the Congregation’s purview.
26. Authorize non-emergency expenditures under $3,000 that are not contained in the approved Annual Budget, and report said expenditures to the congregation.
27. Authorize **emergency** expenditures over $3,000 by a three-fourths vote of the Council, and report said expenditures to the congregation.
    1. **Decisions exercised by the Teams and Team Leaders.**
28. In concert with the Council, appoint all non-elected Team Members.
29. Formulate the Team’s annual budget request to the Council for the Annual Budget.
30. Write, review, revise the Team charter, then submit it to the Council.
31. Carry out the Team Charter.
32. Recommend revisions to the Team Charter when necessary.
    1. **Decisions exercised by the Pastors and Elders.**
    2. Oversee & carry out spiritual/Scriptural teaching to the congregation at large.
33. Assist individual members with their spiritual needs.
34. Work toward consensus within the Elders on recommendations to the Church.
35. Oversee Church disciplinary action.
36. Supervise paid and volunteer staff.
37. Nominate Elders and Deacons for approval by the congregation.

***ARTICLE IV. TEMPORARY COMMITTEES***

1. A Temporary Committee functions for a limited task and is not a permanent committee or team.
2. A Temporary Committee will be approved by the church members at a Quarterly Business Meeting.
3. If need dictates, there will be a Special Called Business Meeting for that purpose.

***ARTICLE V. MEETINGS***

1. **WORSHIP**
   1. Public services shall be held each Sunday.
   2. The Lord’s Supper shall be observed every month and at special times. All professing Christians shall be invited to partake of the Lord’s Supper.
   3. Other services may be held at the discretion of the pastor and upon approval by the Elders, or by vote of the church.
2. **BUSINESS**
   1. The church shall meet quarterly on the third Wednesday of January, April, July, and October (October is designated as the Annual Meeting).
   2. Ten percent of the active adult membership (age 17 and over) shall constitute a quorum, except for the call of a pastor when fifty percent of the active membership shall constitute a quorum.
   3. Called meetings may be held whenever the Pastor and/or Elders see the need, provided that public notice stating the purpose of the meeting shall be given from the pulpit and by electronic means on the Sunday preceding the date of such meeting.
   4. Business reports by the Church Council shall be made at each meeting.

***ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENTS***

Amendments or adjustments to this Constitution and By-Laws may be made at any business meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, provided that the proposed change shall have been presented at the previous business meeting, circulated by electronic means, and announced from the pulpit on the Sunday prior to the vote.