

Mountain Vista Baptist Church

By-Laws

Article 1: Church Leadership

In Scripture, we find three distinct groups of people who exercise some form of leadership in the New Testament church: the congregation, consisting of all church members; elders, those men appointed to spiritual oversight in the church; and deacons, who serve the congregation in hands-on, practical ways. It is Mountain Vista Baptist Church's understanding that these groups work in concert to lead, in matters of doctrine and discipline, with the congregation vested with preeminent authority in major decisions.

In their role as overseers, the elders guide the church, particularly focusing on matters concerning teaching, preaching, and prayer. The elders direct the spiritual life of the church at the pleasure of the congregation, handling matters relevant to the Word and to prayer. The deacons are pictured not as a second legislative body but as a group of able servants, whose focus is facilitating ministry.

Section 1: Pastor

The New Testament uses various terms to describe a pastor: a shepherd who leads, feeds, and guides the flock committed to his care; an overseer who has an administrative role; and an elder, which describes the respect he should merit (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, I Peter 5:1-3, and Acts 20:17-32). Accordingly, the duties of the pastor are preeminently spiritual. The pastor is expected to devote himself to prayer and the ministry of God's Word (Acts 6:3-4). He is a preacher and a teacher of God's Word and the leader in evangelistic matters (I Timothy 4: 1-4). He is to equip laymen for ministry, seeking out and training lay leaders (Ephesians 4:11- 16, II Timothy 2:2). He is to seek God's direction for Mountain Vista Baptist Church and to communicate that direction to the congregation (Hebrews 13: 7, 17). He shall be an ex-officio member of every church organization and committee.

In the event of a vacancy, a pastor shall be selected from prospects brought to the attention of the congregation by the pastor search committee. The pastor search committee shall be elected by the congregation upon recommendation of the nominating committee (a standing committee described elsewhere in these by-laws). The pastor search committee shall comprise five active members who have agreed to serve in this capacity. Prior to beginning their search, the committee shall meet with the personnel committee and finance committee to assure that copies of current employment policies are available, and that adequate financial information is available. The pastor search committee cannot offer employment to a prospect; final determination of employment, salary, and benefits will be by vote of the congregation. The pastor search committee will present only one prospect at a time to the congregation for consideration. The calling of a pastor shall be considered by the congregation at an officially called business meeting, at which 25% of the active members must be present to constitute a quorum. 85% of those present must vote in the affirmative to call a pastor. If a candidate

accepts the call, the candidate will become a member of Mountain Vista Baptist Church and subject to the requirements of the Member's Covenant (once a Covenant is adopted).

The pastor may relinquish his position by giving Mountain Vista Baptist Church a minimum of two weeks written notice. The pastor and MVBC may, by mutual agreement, waive the time requirement for the notice.

In the event it becomes necessary to remove the pastor from his position with MVBC, the elders, in cooperation with the chairmen of all standing committees, shall confer on the matter and bring a recommendation to the congregation for action. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose. In egregious circumstances, the elders and committee chairmen may waive the required two-week notice period for the announcement of the meeting but must give at least one week's notice. An elder shall serve as moderator of such meeting. The vote to dismiss the pastor shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting being necessary for the termination of the pastor.

The pastor of MVBC is an at-will employee and can be removed for cause, which is defined as a violation of the Member's Covenant, unchristian conduct (which may include breaches of clergy-confessor confidentiality), or other offenses as deemed sufficient by the congregation.

Section 2: Support Staff

Other ministerial staff positions shall be created as needed to fulfill the mission and ministry of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. A search committee shall be nominated, as noted in Article 1, Section 1 paragraph 2 of these by-laws, to seek out a suitable person for each position. The congregation of MVBC shall employ ministerial staff positions, and although the position may be supervised by the pastor, he does not have authority to dismiss that person. Such termination would require those steps enumerated in Article 1, Section 1, paragraph 4.

Support staff positions may be created to assist with the administrative needs of MVBC. The positions will be filled with qualified individuals who shall be employees of MVBC. Supervision of the support positions shall be carried out by the pastor.

The position of secretary for church officers shall be held by the church secretary. If no church secretary exists, the congregation shall vote to place a church member in the position of secretary for church officers, on the recommendation of the elders.

Under no circumstances will Mountain Vista Baptist Church employ two or more members of the same family. Family is defined as the employee's spouse, child, child's spouse, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sister, or brother. Family member also means individuals in the following relationship with the employee's spouse: child, child's spouse, parent, or grandparent. It also includes those persons in a "step" relationship.

Section 3: Elders

The elders shall consist of the pastor and all those whom the congregation of Mountain Vista Baptist Church has elected to the office. Elders shall serve without a term of office but may be removed from the position of elder upon majority vote of the congregation. Elders may not serve concurrently as a deacon. Elders shall exercise all duties which properly belong to the office but shall at all times be subject to the majority vote of the congregation, unless otherwise stated. There may be as many elders serving MVBC as deemed necessary to accomplish said task.

Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of Mountain Vista Baptist Church and the implementation of church discipline; they are also responsible for watching over the souls of the members as those who must give an account to God for this responsibility. The elders shall exercise the oversight of MVBC in all its ministrations and functions. They shall submit to one another and the church as long as the oversight is in accordance with the explicit or implicit principle of Scripture. They shall evaluate and hold one another accountable to the office of elder and to the call of obedience as followers of Christ (Matt 18:15-20, I Thess 5:12-13, II Thess 3:6, 14-15, I Tim 5:19-20, Tit 3:10-11, Jam 5:14, Heb 13:7).

An elder shall be a male member of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. He shall demonstrate mature judgment, unquestioned Christian character, loyalty to the Word of God, the ability to teach sound doctrine, and a devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and the spiritual welfare of MVBC. His life must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9. He must discharge his duties as set forth in Acts 20: 17, 28ff; I Peter 5:1-4, and Hebrews 13: 17.

It shall be the duty of an elder to be diligent and faithful in attendance to worship services, in attendance to meetings requiring his presence, and in faithful giving of his finances.

An elder shall support the pastor in ministries, encourage the pastor in his work, be diligent in his prayers for God's leadership and protection, and meet regularly with the other elders and pastor.

The positions of director and president for church officers shall be held by elders; the elders shall appoint two men to these roles.

Section 4: Deacons

The deacons shall consist of all whom the congregation of Mountain Vista Baptist Church has elected to the office. Deacons shall organize themselves to assure they provide a supportive role as they coordinate various ministries that relate to the physical needs of the congregation. Deacons, once elected, shall serve until they choose to step down from the office, but may be removed from the position of deacon upon majority vote of the congregation. Deacons may not serve concurrently as an elder. There may be as many deacons serving MVBC as deemed necessary to accomplish said tasks (Acts 6:1-7, I Tim 3:8-13).

Deacons, at their discretion, may gather volunteers in support of their work as they minister to the various needs of the congregation.

Deacons shall be men and women of the congregation whose life is evidence of personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and the welfare of the members of the congregation. They shall also demonstrate being able to comfort the oppressed.

Deacons shall be diligent and faithful in attendance to worship services, in attendance to meetings requiring their presence, and in faithful giving of their finances.

Deacons handle the collection, handling, and distribution of all benevolence funds.

Section 5: Personnel Agreements and Policies

All paid staff positions shall work under the general guidance of written position descriptions and job performance standards. Each paid staff member shall receive an annual performance evaluation. The position description and standards may be modified as needed.

All paid staff positions shall be so employed by written agreement which details to whom the position reports, the salary, and associated benefits.

The personnel committee (if in effect) and the finance committee will meet annually to discuss those portions of the employment agreement that are affected by the finances of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. Proposed changes to salary and benefit packages shall be made to the congregation jointly by the personnel committee (if in effect), the finance committee, and the elders at the annual presentation of MVBC's budget.

Volunteers and staff will undergo a full background check in order to protect our members and children.

All volunteers and employees of Mountain Vista Baptist Church must sign and date an agreement of alignment with the beliefs, practices, Constitution, and By-Laws to be considered for employment and continuance of employment and volunteering.

Article 2: Church Discipline

Section 1: Formative Discipline

Formative discipline is set forth through the teaching of God's Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of the members of the body of Christ. It has as its goal the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love (Ephesians 4: 11-13, Romans 12: 1-16, I Corinthians 12: 4-27). Formative discipline has a sanctifying influence. Every member should be satisfied with the ministry God has given them, and thus we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 4:7-12). Formative discipline utilizes the talents of each member, whether young or old, for the edification of all.

Formative discipline begins with each member of the congregation as we recognize that it is our obligation to honor, serve, worship, praise, and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ in all that we say and do (I Corinthians 10:31). Jesus Christ is the head of the church and its Lord and Lawgiver (Ephesians 1:22; Isaiah 33:22); and those who truly love Him will endeavor to keep His commandments (John 14:15). In His Holy Word our Lord has entreated all believers to perform certain duties one toward another, such as but not limited to:

1. to love one another without offence or hypocrisy (John 13:34-35, Romans 12: 9, 13:8-10)
2. to labor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)
3. to endeavor for the edification and spiritual benefit of the whole body that each may grow to be a holy temple in and for the Lord (I Corinthians 14:12, 26; Ephesians 4:12, 29; 2:21-22)
4. to watch over one another for good (Philippians 2:3-4)
5. to pray with and for one another (James 5:16)
6. to not neglect the assembling of ourselves together, for the celebrating of divine worship, and thereby to promote one another's spiritual benefit (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42)

Formative discipline will enable the entire congregation to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Section 2: Corrective Discipline

Corrective discipline will become necessary when a member is actively involved in or harboring sin. Reasonable efforts shall be made through counsel and admonition to resolve difficulties, correct errors, and remove offenses before any further action is taken. No offenses shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Christ have first been followed (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-18). Corrective discipline always has for its goal the glory of God, the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender, and the welfare and purity of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. Corrective discipline may include:

- **Exclusion/Inactive:** If a member is habitually absent from the fellowship of MVBC without just cause, or is unwilling to settle differences on scriptural grounds, or requests severance of membership, he may be excluded from membership at the recommendation of the elders and by majority affirmative vote of the congregation.
- **Restoration:** If a member's personal life, whether publicly or privately, does not reflect a life devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ and the member's life brings discredit to MVBC, but the member is willing to undergo counseling and further scriptural instruction, the elders may provide a restorative process.
- **Revocation:** If restoration is not secured by the processes required in Matthew 18:15-18, further steps must be taken to correct offenders. Written charges shall be given to the accused offender if he requests a hearing. The elders shall meet with the accused, unless the accused refuses to appear. After a fair and impartial hearing of all the witnesses accessible, and all facts ascertainable, the elders must form a judgment. If they believe the accused to be guilty and deserving of severe scriptural discipline, they shall make a recommendation at an officially called business meeting that the offender's membership

be revoked. The congregation shall have the right to revoke membership by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting. Revocation has as its goal the glory of God, the restoration of the offender, and the purity of the body of Christ.

It is the duty of Mountain Vista Baptist Church to forgive. Restoration to membership is a desired outcome, but not a duty. Persons requesting to have all rights and duties of membership restored must meet with the elders and give evidence of repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). The elders shall make a recommendation to the congregation, which shall have the right to restore membership to a person by a majority vote of the members present and voting at an officially called business meeting.

Section 3: Council of Appeal

Any matter involving controversy within Mountain Vista Baptist Church, among the officers, or between the congregation and the officers or employees, if it threatens to cause dissension and injury to the welfare of MVBC, must be called to the attention of the elders. If the elders fail to resolve the difficulty so as to allay dissension, any such matter may be taken to a Council of Appeal.

A Council of Appeal shall be formed at the request of the elders or by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at an officially called business meeting. The Council shall consist of the elders and an equal number of other members in good standing to be chosen by the congregation. The congregation shall also appoint a chairman from those on the Council to preside at its meetings. A member who is a principle, a witness, or who may otherwise be involved in the matter being brought before the council shall not be elected to serve on the council. No family member of a principle shall be elected to the council.

A quorum for a Council of Appeal shall be all those on the Council, including the chairman. If a member of the Council is unable to attend a meeting after the process of hearing the conflict has begun, that member may be present at future meetings and hear the evidence given but will be disqualified to vote on the resolution of the matter.

The resolution of any matter heard by a Council of Appeal shall require a two-thirds vote of the Council. When a final decision is reached, the chairman shall make a presentation of the matter to the congregation at an officially called business meeting. The decision of the Council of Appeals is final, and the matter is closed.

Article 3: Facility Use

Mountain Vista Baptist Church facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. The facilities are not open to public rental. Church facilities may not be used for activities that contradict or are deemed to be inconsistent with the church's faith, moral teaching, or the Constitution and By-Laws. The pastor and elders/deacons/officers are the final decision-makers concerning the use of church facilities.

Article 4: Debt

MVBC will not approve or sign any contract which forces the congregation to take on debt. All approved contracts must be fully funded by the financial accounts of the church body.

Article 5: Committees

Committees are established to fulfill needs of the body, and the purpose of a committee shall be specifically stated in the minutes of the meeting at which the committee is formed. Committee members, who must be members of MVBC, shall be nominated and elected by the church body, or appointed by the pastor or the elders at the church body's instruction.

MVBC will nominate and vote for all members of the Finance Committee, Nominating Committee, and Education Committee. For all other committees, MVBC will only nominate and vote on the chairman and vice-chairman, who must both be members of MVBC for at least one year prior to being appointed; the chairman and vice-chairman may then gather volunteers in support of the committee's work.

A committee report shall be presented to the church body in print at properly scheduled business meetings. In addition, a report shall be presented to the elders monthly for review.

Committees can include but are not limited to:

1. **Financial Committee:** responsible for the finances and budgeting of the church
2. **Personnel Committee:** responsible for working with staff and personnel to develop and maintain policies and procedures for staff and addressing the needs of staff members
3. **Nominating Committee:** responsible for reviewing potential members of all committees and assuring that minimum qualifications are met, prior to making recommendation to the congregation. This committee works in cooperation with the elders and deacons
4. **Hospitality Committee:** responsible for planning and executing functions relating to fellowship of the members and guests
5. **Worship Committee:** responsible for setting direction of music and service order, along with the elders
6. **Missions Committee:** responsible for developing outreach plans with the elders for our community and our involvement in world-wide missions
7. **Education Committee:** responsible for vetting curriculum and teachers, along with the elders

Article 6: Financial Accountability

A financial review shall be performed each year by an external company that is not associated with our bookkeeper. A financial audit shall be performed every third year by an external company that is not associated with our bookkeeper.

Article 7: Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and people in every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Psalm 139, Jer 1:5, Gen 1:26-27).

Article 8: Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the creation of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25, Matt 19:5-6). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (I Cor 6:18, 7:2-5, Heb 13:4).

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage (I Cor 6:18-20, Matt 15:18-20, I Cor 6:9-10).

Mountain Vista Baptist Church will only allow its pastors and facilities to be used for biblical, heterosexual weddings and marriages.

Employees and volunteers of Mountain Vista Baptist Church must agree with and abide by this statement on marriage, gender, and sexuality to provide a Biblical role model to the church members and the community (Matt 5:16, Phil 2:14-16, I Thess 5:22).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31, Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of Mountain Vista Baptist Church.

Mountain Vista Baptist Church Constitution

Article 1: Name

The name of the body shall be Mountain Vista Baptist Church (MVBC) of Carson City, Nevada, and will be affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Article 2: Purpose

Our purpose is to gather together as believers in Christ and to reach people with the Gospel of Christ.

Article 3: Articles of Faith

Mountain Vista Baptist Church subscribes to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole source of all that we believe. For purposes of Mountain Vista Baptist Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our pastor and the elders are the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

MVBC receives the Holy Bible as its authority in all matters of faith and practice. MVBC's understanding of Christian faith and practice is in essential harmony with the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

Article 4: Affiliation

MVBC shall cooperate with the Sierra Baptist Association, the Nevada Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention; MVBC may also cooperate with churches of like faith and order.

Article 5: Government

The government of MVBC shall be vested in the body of believers who comprise its membership, as specifically outlined in the By-laws. This body of believers is subject to no other ecclesiastical body but is associated with churches of the Southern Baptist Convention for purposes of fellowship, consultation, and cooperation. This, and any other voluntary associations with other bodies, shall not infringe on the rights of Mountain Vista Baptist Church. MVBC acknowledges Jesus Christ as its only Lord and Savior and receives the Holy Bible as its supreme guide in matters of faith, order, practice, and discipline. Mountain Vista Baptist Church is an elder-led, congregationally-governed church.

Article 6: Membership

The membership of Mountain Vista Baptist Church shall be composed of individuals who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and affirm the tenets of the Church Constitution and By-laws; who offer evidence, by their confession and their conduct, that they are living in accord with their affirmations and this Constitution and By-laws; and are actively pursuing and continuing in a vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The pastor and/or the elders shall interview and present candidates for membership.

When the elders are satisfied that a candidate gives a credible profession of faith and meets the requirements for membership, which may include attending a new member's training class, the candidate will be brought before the congregation for a vote. Membership shall be granted upon a majority vote of the congregation.

Members must:

1. believe in Christ's atoning work for salvation.
2. be living a Christ-centered life.
3. be baptized by immersion, either in this church or a church of like faith.

Termination of membership shall be as follows: *

1. Death of the member
2. Transfer to another church
3. Upon written request for withdrawal
4. Non-involvement for over 90 days and with the recommendation of the pastor or elders
5. Exclusion by disciplinary action of the church in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20

*A member may not terminate membership while undergoing discipline as outlined in the By-laws.

Rights and Duties of Members

1. Active members 18 years of age or older may act upon and vote in all transactions of MVBC.
2. Members shall be diligent in adhering to the Member's Covenant of MVBC (once a Covenant is adopted).
3. Final authority on all matters of church life rests with the membership – the congregation – of MVBC. Accordingly, the congregation votes on its leadership, admits and dismisses members, and stands accountable to God for its teaching and preaching. This commitment, therefore, should not be taken lightly.

Article 7: Officers

The officers of MVBC serve multiple purposes: as corporate officers required to maintain our 501(c)(3) status; as legal agents for MVBC; and as leaders of the congregation in business matters.

Officers of MVBC shall be president, secretary, treasurer, and director. The president and director must each be an elder and those positions are chosen by the elders. The treasurer is not required to be an elder but must be the chairman of the finance committee. The secretary is not required to be an elder but must also be the MVBC secretary, if that position is staffed.

In the event of a protracted absence of the director, the elders shall appoint the president to act in that capacity. At least one of these officers must be present at any meeting in which business affecting MVBC is conducted.

All officers serve as further noted in this constitution and the By-laws of MVBC.

Article 8: Services

Mountain Vista Baptist Church shall hold regularly scheduled meetings for public worship, preaching, teaching, ministry, fellowship, prayer, and evangelism.

Article 9: Business Meetings

Business meetings shall be scheduled semi-annually and annually. The chairman, or his designee, of each standing or ad hoc committee shall make a presentation related to the purpose of the committee at each meeting. The elders may change the date if a conflict should arise. See Article 10 for quorum.

Special business meetings may be called by the elders or by active members.

1. Members desiring to call a special business meeting must do so by contacting an elder and detailing their concerns for the need of the meeting. If the concern is not resolved by the elders, the member may act corporately to call a meeting if ten or more members are united in a concern that they feel needs to be brought to the attention of the entire congregation. Notice of the time, place, and purpose of such meeting shall be given at least fourteen days prior to the meeting. The notice must be given at all regular worship services for two weeks.
2. Elders desiring to call a special business meeting must announce said meeting for two consecutive Sunday morning services.

Emergency business meetings may be called by an elder. Members will be notified in writing or by electronic notification of such special meetings in a timeframe deemed acceptable by the elders to address emergency issues. The notice of an emergency business meeting shall state the business to be considered at such meeting, and no other business other than that stated shall be discussed at said meeting.

Article 10: Quorum

A quorum for regular business meetings consists of those members in attendance. A majority vote of the quorum shall determine any matter of business except where otherwise stated in the Constitution and By-laws. For amendments to the Constitution and By-laws, a 66% vote is required. For the calling of a pastor, 25% of voting members must be present with an 85% vote required for hiring.

Article 11: Voting

In all matters of church voting and business, we support and encourage discussion. Mountain Vista Baptist Church desires unity in the body, and thus seeks consensus, recognizing that unity does not mean everyone agrees or thinks the same things. Realizing the difficulty in absolute consensus and seeing the brief Biblical example of a majority result in II Cor 2:6-7, ultimate decisions are made by a vote of the eligible membership requiring a majority vote (see article 10) to pass once discussion has concluded, unless otherwise noted.

Article 12: Amendments

Any amendments to this Constitution and By-laws must be presented at a business meeting for discussion and modification. The proposed amendment will then be voted on, provided notice of the time, place, and purpose of such meeting has been properly given as stipulated in this Constitution and By-laws; the proposed amendment must pass by a 66% majority vote (see article 10 for quorum).

Article 13: Dissolution

In the case of dissolution, the church shall adopt a formal plan setting forth the steps to be taken by designated officers to dissolve the corporation. After all expenses are paid, a trust fund shall be established to pay premiums on any insurance policies necessary to maintain insurance and to settle or fund any outstanding risk or obligations of the church, including the obligation to indemnify leaders. The remainder of the property of the church shall be deeded, liquidated, transferred, or given to another Southern Baptist church or a church of like faith and order that the active members select by majority vote.