

# **Constitution and Bylaws**

## **Mission Bible Church**

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

## I. NAME

The name of this church shall be "MISSION BIBLE CHURCH". The word "church" as used in this Constitution shall refer to Mission Bible, whereas the word "Church" shall refer to the Body and Bride of Christ.

## II. PURPOSE, AUTHORITY, INCORPORATION

### A. MISSION AND PURPOSE

Mission Bible Church exists to know, love, and obey Jesus together and make disciple-making disciples for God's glory. It shall seek to attain this end through the public worship of God, the preaching of the Scriptures, consistent Christian living by its members, personal evangelism, license and ordain ministers of the Gospel, missionary endeavor and Christian education (Eph. 1:5-14; Col. 1:9-10; Mat. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:9-12).

It is our conviction that: (1) every member is called to minister, (2) God and His Word are sacred and unchangeable, and (3) methods, organization, and activities are always open to change as we find more effective ways to minister.

### B. AUTHORITY

The Elders serve as the governing body of this church. Mission Bible Church is to be recognized as a Jesus-ruled, Elder-led, and congregational accountable church in accordance with the principles in the New Testament.

### C. INCORPORATION

To implement this purpose legally, the church is incorporated under the laws of the State of North Carolina, so that it may own, provide and/or maintain a place of worship (including suitable real estate and buildings), receive, hold and disburse gifts, bequests and funds, and/or do all and sundry things necessary or incident to carry on such purpose.

The principal office for business transactions of the church is currently [REDACTED] due to the church not owning its own facility. The Elders (Pastors) shall have full power and authority to change the principal office from one location to another, establish other offices, campuses, sites and locations at any place or places where the church is qualified under applicable law to conduct its business.

### D. AFFILIATIONS

The church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of denominational control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches in the fulfillment of its purposes, the church may voluntarily affiliate with other churches and conventions by a passing vote of the Elders.

## III. DOCTRINE

At the center of Christian faith and practice stands the belief that God has spoken to the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ, which is accurately and authoritatively revealed in the Christian Bible ("the Holy Bible," "the Bible," "Scripture," or "the Scriptures"). The Bible is the inspired, inerrant and sufficient Word of God and is thus the ultimate authority for life, faith and morals. Though the various theological statements of the church reflect succinct summaries of biblical boundaries, it is the Bible itself to which we are in ultimate submission.

The following Statement of Faith represents the core orthodox beliefs of the church from a biblical and historical perspective. While members are not required to fully understand or articulate all aspects of the Statement of Faith, the explicit rejection of any part of it disqualifies one from membership in Mission Bible Church. Revisions to the Statement of Basic Belief in order to more clearly align to Scripture shall be at the discretion of the Elders, with the understanding that such changes will be communicated to the Members of the church and affirmed through a vote.

The Holy Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God and is the basis for this statement of faith.

1. We believe the Scriptures of the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testament as being verbally inspired by God and inerrant and infallible in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority.
2. We believe there is one God, creator and sustainer of all things, unchanging, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are equal in power and glory.
3. We believe Jesus Christ is true God and true man, was conceived of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He led a sinless life and died on the cross as the sinner's substitute, shedding His blood for the forgiveness of sins. The third day He arose from the dead in the body which had been laid in the tomb. He ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of God the Father He is now our high priest and advocate.
4. We believe the Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to convict men of sin. He gives believers new life; indwells them when they believe, and guides and gives spiritual gifts for service. He also empowers preaching and teaching of the gospel.
5. We believe mankind was created in the image of God; sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death which is separation from God. From this state, he can be saved only by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, on the basis of His death and resurrection. Those who receive the Savior are born of the Holy Spirit, adopted as children of God, and kept eternally secure.
6. We believe in the existence of the devil (Satan), who is still working in the world to destroy the souls of men, and that he and all his angels and all who do not receive Christ as their Savior will eternally perish in the lake of fire.
7. We believe the true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Only those who are members of the true Church are eligible for membership in the local church which exists for worship, evangelism, and discipleship. As the church preaches the Scriptures to all the world, its endeavors will be guided by biblical leadership and supported by the wise stewardship of God's people.
8. We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper (Communion) are ordinances, given by our Lord, for believers to be observed by the Church during this present age. They are not, however, a means of salvation.
9. We believe that Christ will return personally and bodily to the earth in fulfillment of God's eternal plan. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in hell, and the fellowship of the saved in heaven.

A further explanation of our doctrinal statements is contained in Appendix A.

## **IV. MEMBERSHIP**

Any person may become a member of Mission Bible Church upon becoming a genuine follower of the Lord Jesus Christ - having responded by faith by the drawing of the Holy Spirit to the message of the gospel and been baptized upon that profession of faith - and completing all of the requirements of membership as defined by the Elders. Members shall have signed the Membership Covenant, as it is revised, amended or restated from time to time, thus committing themselves to the responsibilities therein assigned.

A person whose permanent residence is outside a 100-mile radius of the main Mission Bible facility shall be classified as a "non-resident member". This membership retains status on the church roll but does not carry the privilege of voting in church business meetings. Members, such as students and servicemen, temporarily living beyond this 100-mile radius shall retain the right of voting in all church business meetings.

Children may be received into membership in this church upon testimony of personal faith in Jesus Christ, but shall not have the right to vote until they are eighteen years old.

Applicants for membership shall be examined by two or more Elders. Examination includes the testimony of their conversion and discussion of the Doctrinal Statement of Faith, Constitution, and Membership Covenant.

### **A. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP**

Membership within a local church carries both privileges and responsibilities. Members of the church are held accountable to the responsibilities of general Christian obligations comprehensively though not exhaustively outlined within the Membership Covenant. These responsibilities include praying for and pursuing both corporate health and individual holiness. Members are responsible for carrying out the mission of Mission Bible Church. They are also responsible for ensuring the church remains faithful to its mission as given by Jesus Christ and to its doctrines as laid out in Holy Scripture.

#### **Membership Covenant:**

Having received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior by the Spirit of God, we do now in the presence of God and this church most solemnly and joyfully enter into this Covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit:

- To love and to pray for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; to engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer; and to establish family devotions where possible; to bring up such children as may be entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to walk circumspectly in the world, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to be faithful in engagements, exemplary in deportment, denying ungodliness and worldly lust.
- To endeavor by example, by work, and by prayer, to win others to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; to purpose that when we remove ourselves 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.
- To walk together in Christian love; to pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrows, and joys; to be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness; to guard the spiritual and Scriptural purity, peace, prosperity of the church, and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus; to exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another.

- To assist, through the gifts of the Spirit, in the work of the church and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus; to contribute, as the Lord directs, to the financial support of the church, the relief of the needy, and evangelism of all people.

## **B. DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS:**

The purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a Biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs (Galatians 6:1), to maintain purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6) and to deter sin (1 Timothy 5:20).

Any member of this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, and persistently conducts himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church shall be dealt with as follows, according to Matthew 18:15-18:

1. It is the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
2. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
3. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church encouraging the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member.
4. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the Elders and the church, he or she shall be dismissed from the church pursuant to the Scriptures and treated as an unbeliever. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any court. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member.

It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.

## **C. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP:**

Membership may be terminated in one of four ways:

1. By physical death.
2. By transfer: When it is requested, the Elders may grant to a departing member in good standing, a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The Elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to the gospel (Jude 3)
3. By exclusion: If a member habitually absents himself from the stated meetings of the church without valid reason, or if due to relocation he ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be excluded from membership. If an excluded member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth will again be followed.
4. By dismissal as a final step of church discipline. The Elders shall only apply the above-mentioned dismissal (see IIIId) in strict accordance with the Scriptures.

## V. LEADERSHIP

God has provided various forms of leadership for His Church. At Mission Bible Church we recognize and seek to channel this leadership focus through a variety of positions including Elders (Pastors), Deacons, and staff. Those who serve and minister in these roles shall collectively and individually oversee, provide for, and encourage the spiritual life, welfare, and total ministry of the congregation in order to insure the proper equipping of the saints.

As God's servants and stewards, these leaders shall be persons:

- who meet the qualifications as given in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-15; 5:19-25; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:3-6);
- who adhere to the doctrinal basis of this church;
- whose soundness in the faith and whose ability to serve has been examined and approved by the church.

Therefore, our church leaders are to be assisted, obeyed and respected as they carry out their duties (Heb. 13:17).

**A. ELDERS:** As servants of the church, the Elders are responsible for guiding and guarding the doctrine and direction of the church. The Elders are to know, lead, feed, protect, and care for the church family. When qualified men are available, a minimum of three shall be selected from the membership. Additional elders may be selected as the growth of the church membership requires. The Elders have final authority over all business, boards, and offices in the church. The duties of Elders:

1. To be devoted to prayer and the study of God's Word and sustain a caring ministry for the flock, which involves:
  - a) Serving as partners with the Pastor(s) for the church's spiritual growth;
  - b) Praying for the sick and visiting the congregation;
2. To teach and exhort as well as refute those who contradict the truth, which involves:
  - a) Insuring that instructors, Bible study leaders and youth leaders are properly qualified;
  - b) Arranging for pulpit supply during the Senior Pastor's absence.
3. To lead by Christ-like example, which involves:
  - a) Consistently modeling spiritual character, attitudes, values, and behavior among the congregation;
  - b) Providing and inviting the opportunity for frequent and on-going contact with members of the congregation;
  - c) Conducting the affairs of the church in an atmosphere of openness and mutual sensitivity, focusing as much on nurturing one another as on decision making.

4. To oversee the affairs of the church, which involves:
  - a) Being responsible for the employment, terms of employment, direction, and termination of employment of pastoral staff, with the exception of the Senior Pastor;
  - b) Installing the duly elected Pastor and/or Pastors;
  - c) Approving all subordinate organizations of the church;
  - d) Approving all applicants for church membership;
  - e) Maintaining the legal status of the church;
  - f) Being responsible for securing funds necessary to meet the current expenses of the church;
  - g) Conducting any regular or special business meetings of the church;
  - h) Submitting the approved budget to the congregation at the Annual Business Meeting of the church;
  - i) Approving nominations for the Elders for the Annual Business Meeting of the church.
  - j) Communicating to the congregation on a regular basis concerning the activities and concerns of the Elders.
  - k) To perform other constitutional, Scriptural, and general duties of oversight.

Though no individual or group of individuals is infallible, the Elders shall serve as the final authority in matters of the interpretation and application of Scripture as it applies to Mission Bible Church.

B. **SENIOR PASTOR:** As a servant of the church, the Senior Pastor shall have general oversight of the spiritual life of the church, regular services, and administration of baptism and the communion services. He shall declare the whole Word of God and earnestly work for the salvation of souls and the spiritual advancement of all the flock of God under his care. As an Elder of this church the Senior Pastor shall:

1. Give himself to prayer and the study of the Word of God;
2. Preach and expound the Word of God;
3. Administer the Ordinances in accordance with the Word of God;
4. Share in the pastoral care of the congregation along with the other Elders, Deacons and members of the pastoral staff;
5. Perform the marriage ceremony at his discretion in accordance with the laws of God and the State;
6. Officiate at funerals of members of the church and non members at his discretion;
7. Together with the other Elders maintain church discipline;
8. Participate in the installation of newly designated Elders;
9. Act as an ex-officio member of all committees and boards;
10. Perform other constitutional, Scriptural, and general pastoral duties.

The Senior Pastor shall be free to accept invitations to preach the Word of God to other groups or organizations, provided such engagements do not interfere with the work of the church. Before accepting invitations to speak for other groups which require his absence from the church and its activities, the Senior Pastor shall consult with the Elders and obtain their blessing.

C. **DEACONS:** As servants of the church, the Deacons shall have the care of the physical properties and assisting in logistics of worship and church life. They shall also hold themselves in readiness to assist in guiding the spiritual life of the church, ministering its ordinances and performing any necessary calling under direction of the Elders. They shall cooperate with the pastoral staff and suggestions of the Elders.

When qualified men are available, they will be chosen from the membership at large and approved/installed by the Elders. The term of office of a deacon shall be one year. He shall not serve more than three terms consecutively. The Elders shall appoint the number of Deacons required to meet permanent and short-term needs of the church.

- D. PASTORAL/CHURCH STAFF:** The Senior Pastor shall have the authority to select and dismiss all pastoral and other staff members. Staff members fulfill a deacon-like role, and the biggest differentiator is that staff are paid by the church so that they can give a much larger portion of their time to the ministry whereas deacons are volunteers who have less of a time commitment.

Pastoral/Ministry Staff selection, however, is subject to the approval of the Elders. Generally, sixty days notice shall precede the effective date of dismissal or resignation of a pastoral staff member unless by mutual agreement a lesser or greater time period is specified. Termination for any staff member may be immediate in case of moral defect, false teaching or divisive behaviors.

- E. QUALIFICATIONS OF ALL CHURCH LEADERS:** All persons who hold any position of leadership (including but not limited to teachers, committee/team members, church staff and church workers) must meet and maintain the following spiritual qualifications for leadership:
1. Has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior.
  2. Is a member of Mission Bible. (Non-members may be invited to teach on a temporary basis).
  3. Teaches no doctrine contrary to the "Statement of Faith" as put forth in the Constitution of Mission Bible.
  4. Provides systematic spiritual, financial, and physical support to Mission Bible ministry.
  5. Is known for a dedicated Christian life according to the standards of God's Word, and will purpose to put any sin, including doubtful conduct and conversation, out of his/her life so that the resulting influence is helpful rather than a hindrance.
  6. Fulfills such specific biblical requirements as may apply to the position of responsibility.

## **VI. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS**

It is the intention to steward all of our resources for the glory of God and the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission as found in the New Testament.

- A. FISCAL YEAR:** The fiscal year of the church shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day in December in each year.
- B. FINANCES / FUND RAISING:** It is the responsibility of all members to give faithfully, generously, and, at times, sacrificially to the local church as outlined in the New Testament.

It shall not be the policy of this church to promote suppers, parties, or engage in the sale of products and/or services for the purpose of raising funds. Any exception to this general policy must have the prior approval of the Elders.

**C. TREASURER/FINANCIAL SECRETARY:** The Elders shall designate an individual or entity to draw checks against the church as directed to satisfy the church's financial responsibilities. They shall also:

1. Prepare a monthly financial statement showing the true status of the various funds in this account to be approved by the Elders.
2. Prepare in approved form under his direction a financial statement showing the true status of all funds for the fiscal year of the church for presentation at a church business meeting
3. Have custody of the legal papers pertaining to property and finances of the church such as deeds, abstracts, insurance policies, bonds, notes, etc. which shall be kept in a depository designated by the Elders and must be submitted to audit as directed by the Elders.
4. Issue annual receipts to those members desiring them.

**D. GOVERNANCE TEAM:** Recognizing that Elders have natural human limitations around their scope of expertise, they may need wise counsel in matters of marketplace and best business practice. When qualified individuals are available, the Elders may establish a Governance Team made up wise, prudent, marketplace-savvy individuals who are committed to the good of the church. Governance Team members should be members in good standing with the church, and should be Biblically-qualified as Deacons.

Governance Team members give support to the Elders in their decision making. The Governance Team does not make any decisions - they only provide wise counsel to the Elders as the Elders make the final decisions.

**E. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS:**

1. **Annual Meetings:** In February of each year, a congregational meeting shall be held to celebrate the ministry of the previous year, review church growth, and conduct other business as recommended by the Elders. If needed, a listening session will be conducted prior to the annual meeting.
2. **Special Business Meetings:** The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance as determined by the Elders. A two-week notice must be given for the special called business unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The notice shall include the subject, the date, and time and place; and it must be given in such a manner that all resident members have an opportunity to know of the meeting.

**F. PROPERTY AND ASSETS:** The church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and so hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of North Carolina and is deemed necessary for the functioning of the church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, bill of sale, deed, or otherwise. All property shall be held in the name of the church.

**G. CONFIDENTIALITY OF CHURCH RECORDS:** No member shall have the right to inspect the church records as to (i) the disciplining of any member, (ii) the hiring or firing of any employee, (iii) the need or problems of any member or employee, (iv) the financial contributions of any member, or (v) any other records which the Elders may determine to be in the best interests of the church to keep confidential.

**H. DISSOLUTION AND MERGERS:** "Dissolution" means the complete disbanding of the church so that it no longer functions as a congregation or as a corporate entity.

Upon the dissolution of the church, its property shall be applied and distributed as follows:

- all liabilities and obligations of the church shall be paid and discharged, or adequate provision shall be made therefore;
- assets held by the church upon condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the dissolution, shall be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements;
- assets received and not held upon a condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance by reason of the dissolution, shall be transferred or conveyed to one or more domestic or foreign corporations, societies, or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and are engaged in activities substantially similar to those of the church.

In the event of a merger of the church with another church, the net assets of the church shall be contributed to the surviving entity.

## Appendix A: Explanation of Doctrinal Statements

### INSPIRATION

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being verbally inspired by God and inerrant and infallible in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority.

Terms explained:

- **Verbally:** This means that the individual words of the Bible are true and without error in the original writings. Therefore, more than just the thought or concept is inspired, but also every word (Mat. 5:17,18; Prov. 30:5,6). The term "plenary" is often used with the word "verbal" to give the view that all Scripture is fully and equally inspired (2 Tim. 3:16,17).
- **Inspired (Inspiration):** Inspiration is that particular work of God by which the Holy Spirit, becoming the co-author of Scripture, supernaturally directed the writers of Scripture and without excluding their human intelligence, individuality, literary style, personal feelings, or any other human factor, God's own complete and coherent message to men was recorded in perfect accuracy and the very words of the Bible bear the authority of this divine authorship. Inspiration is not equivalent to dictation except in certain instances, as God uses the experience, feelings and thinking of the human author. The end result, however, is just as accurate as if God Himself had taken the pen. Hence, the Scriptures were inspired or breathed out by God and, though the authors were fallible men, what they wrote was without error (2 Peter 1:20,21). Inspiration does not suppress the intellectual ability and talent but rather uses that intellectual ability and talent (Luke 1:1-3; 2 Samuel 23:2).
- **Inerrant:** Inerrant means that the Scriptures in their original writings were without error (John 10:35; Luke 16:17).
- **Infallible:** Infallible means that the Scriptures in their original writings were incapable of error and never wrong (John 10:35; Luke 16:17).
- **Final Authority:** The Scriptures are God's special revelation (communication of truth) to man and because they are inspired and inerrant they become our final authority. However, we take careful note of what the Bible indicates as not being authoritative, such as Satan's statement to Eve in the Garden of Eden, "You surely shall not die." (Gen. 3:45; 2 Tim. 3:16,17).

### TRINITY

We believe in one God eternally existing in one essence, yet three co equal persons, the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Terms explained:

- **Eternally existing:** There is but one God (Deuteronomy. 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6,14,18,21-22; Mark 12:29 32), Who has no beginning and no ending (Ps. 90:1-2; Gen. 1:1).
- **Three in One:** God is one in essence, yet three persons, co-equal, eternally existing (Mat. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6; Rev. 1:4; John 12:26; 15:26; 16:15; 1 Peter 1:2; Acts 2:32-36; I Cor. 12:3-6, II Cor. 13:14).
- **Co-equal:**
  - The Bible tells us that the Father is God (John 6:27; Rom. 1:7).
  - The Son is recognized as God (John 1:1; 20:28; Heb. 1:8; I John 5:19-27; Phil. 2:6).
  - The Holy Spirit is also identified as God (Mat. 28:19; Acts 5:4,9).

## INCARNATION

We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born to the virgin Mary.

Terms explained:

- **Jesus Christ:** Jesus Christ had two natures in one person, so that He was simultaneously fully God and fully man, and this relationship was such that there was no dividing of person nor confounding of the two natures. (John 1:1-14).
- **Conceived by the Holy Spirit:** The conception of Jesus was a divine act of God, without human agency (Mat. 1:18; Luke 1:26-38).
- **Born to the virgin Mary:** At the time of Christ's conception and birth, Mary was a virgin (Mat. 1:18-25; Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:27).

## HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, Who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He is the life of the believer, and He empowers the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

Terms Explained:

- **Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, equal with the Father and the Son (John 14:16; Mat. 28:19).
- **Convicts:** Jesus Christ said that the Spirit would perform this ministry with respect to the world (John 16:7-11).
- **Life:** The Holy Spirit is the agent of spiritual birth (John 3:5-8). The Spirit regenerates, indwells, seals, and baptizes into the Church body all believers (1 Cor. 12:13; Titus 3:5; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:9,11; 2 Cor. 1:21,22). The believer's life is strengthened and guided by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 3:16; John 16:13; Rom. 8:4,14,26-27). The believer is commanded to be filled or controlled by the Spirit, so that the characteristics of Christ likeness will be evident in a powerful life (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).
- **Empowers:** The Holy Spirit enables the spreading of God's word in testimony, preaching and practical living (John 15:26-27). Spiritual obedience will give fruit to a spiritually powerful life of service for Christ (Eph. 5:15-21; Gal. 5:22-25).

## MANKIND

We believe that mankind was created in the image of God, sinned, and thereby incurred not only physical death, but spiritual death, which is separation from God, and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature.

Terms explained:

- **Created in the image of God:** Gen. 1:27; 5:1; 1 Cor. 11:7.
- **Separation from God:** When mankind, of its own free will, chose to disobey God, it sinned (the breaking of God's law). This original sin separated us from God, Who, because of His holiness, could not tolerate sin, and therefore, judged such sin (Rom. 6:23; 3:10; 8:7; Gal. 3:22).

## ATONEMENT

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the basis of His shed blood.

Terms Explained:

- **Representative:** This means that Jesus Christ represented all the sins of the world and that He who knew no sin was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:14-21). As Adam was the representative of man in the fall, so Christ was the representative of man in the Atonement (1 Cor. 15:22). Therefore, if Christ represented all, His sacrifice will cover all (John 3:16).
- **Substitutionary:** This is called the "vicarious" suffering since Christ died in our place. He did not die for His own sin (Heb. 4:15-16; 1 John 3:5), but died for the sins of others (1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:8).
- **All Who Believe:** The gift of salvation provided by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is for all mankind (Rom. 1:13; 1 John 2:2), yet only those who exhibit faith are justified (Gal. 2:16; 3:11).
- **Justified:** Justification is that act of God whereby He declares the guilty and depraved sinner to be righteous because of God's own righteousness having been imputed, or credited to the sinner (Deut. 25:1; Prov 17:15; Rom 3:23-26; 4:5, 8, 25; 5:18; 8:33).

## RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, EXALTATION

We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, His ascension into Heaven and His present life there as High Priest and Advocate for us.

Terms Explained:

- **Resurrection:** We believe that after three days, Jesus Christ arose bodily from the grave (Luke 24:23-40). The doctrine of the resurrection is essential to salvation (Rom. 10:9,19; 1 Cor. 15:12-23,35-37).
- **Ascension:** After His resurrection and forty day ministry Jesus ascended up into Heaven (Acts 1:1-11; 1 Peter 3:22).
- **High Priest And Advocate:** Since Christ's atonement has restored our relationship with God, we now can approach God through Christ, Who as our High Priest represents us before God. As our Advocate, He compassionately deals with our needs and strengthens us (John 14:18; Heb. 4:14; 5:1-10; 13:5; 7:25; 8:1-2; 9:11-15,24).

## SALVATION

We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again by the Holy Spirit, and thereby become children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Terms explained:

- **Faith:** Faith is the "gift of God" (Eph. 2:8) and is produced by the Word of God (Rom. 10:14,17). We are saved by faith alone apart from works (Eph. 2:9; Rom. 3:20; Titus 3:5). However, genuine faith necessarily leads to good works (Eph. 2:10; Mat. 5:16; James 2:17-26).
- **Born again by the Holy Spirit:** The new birth (regeneration) is absolutely necessary for fellowship with God (John 3:7). Man is totally passive in regeneration since it is completely a work of God (John 1:13; 3:6). The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8) by which He creates within a person a new nature, a new heart, a new spirit (John 3:5; 2 Peter 1:4; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- **Children of God:** Those who have received the Spirit of Christ have therefore been born again into God's family (John 1:1-12; Rom. 8:9,14-17). As members of His family we not only have fellowship with our Father in Heaven, but we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ, and when Christ returns we will be completely changed in body and spirit to be like Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:19-23; 1 John 3:2). This experience of the life of Jesus Christ within us now by the presence of the Holy Spirit and forever ours in the presence of Jesus Christ is "eternal life".

## HEAVEN AND HELL

We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in hell, and the fellowship of the saved in heaven.

Terms explained:

- **Bodily resurrection:** Those saints who are "asleep in Jesus" will be raised at the same time the living saints are "raptured" and changed (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58). After the resurrection, all the unsaved will stand before the Great White Throne for judgment, and since their names will not be found in the Book of Life, they will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 20:11-15; 21:8,27; Mat. 25:31-46; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Acts 13:48).
- **Everlasting conscious suffering:** Luke 16:19-31; Mat. 25:30; 24:51; Heb. 12:23; 2 Cor. 5:6-9; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 6:9; 20:4.
- **Heaven:** We believe heaven to be a literal place where Jesus Christ is preparing an eternal home for believers of all ages (John 14:1-6; Heb. 1:10-16).
- **Hell:** We believe hell to be a literal place where all unsaved will spend eternity (Rev. 20:15; Mat. 13:36-43).

## DEVIL

We believe in the existence of a personal devil, who is still working in the world to destroy the souls of men and that he and all his angels and all who receive not Christ as their Savior will eternally perish in the lake of fire.

Terms explained:

- **Devil:** Though a created being and one of the highest angels, the devil fell because he wanted to be greater than God (Isa. 14:12-15).
- **Eternally perish:** The judgment upon the devil and his followers is an unending punishment (Rev. 20:10,14,15; 19:20).

## CHURCH

We believe in the Church, whose mission it is to preach the Scriptures to all the world, all of its endeavors being guided by multiple leadership and supported by the wise stewardship of God's people.

Terms explained:

- **Body of Christ:** The collective body of believers in Jesus Christ is the Church (Eph. 5:23-32; Col. 1:18; Mat. 18:20; Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 2:19; 3:15).
- **Mission:** Mat. 28:18-20; Rom. 15:6; Eph. 1:15-23.
- **Preach:** By this term we encompass all of the believers who are to declare and make known God's truth through the totality of their lives, in addition to the formal proclamation of the Word of God (Eph. 3:8-10; 4:15,16; Col. 1:10-28).

- **Stewardship:** As members of God's family we recognize the obligation under which God places us to exercise care and concern with regard to all time, possessions, wealth and persons as may be entrusted to us. One mark of the spiritually wise person is the mature choices made with respect to these areas (Mat. 20:8; Gal. 4:2; Luke 16:2,3; 1 Cor. 4:1,2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25).
- **Tithe:** We believe the guideline of ten per cent to be highly appropriate, yet we recognize the individual believer as free from compulsion or formal requirements in stewardship matters or church support (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-29; Deut. 12:5-7,17-18; 14:22-29; 26:12; Gen. 14:17-24; Luke 11:42; Mat. 23:23f; Heb. 7:1ff).
- **Offerings:** We believe that offerings consist of any gift, whether money, time or effort, that is freely given in response to the direction of God's Spirit (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:24 9:15).

## ORDINANCES

We believe that the ordinances of the Church given by our Lord, are Baptism and the Lord's table (Communion).

Terms explained:

- **Baptism:** Baptism is commanded of all believers and it is an act of obedience signifying the believer's death, burial and resurrection "in Christ" (Rom. 6:3,4; Acts 18:8; 1 Peter 3:21). The disciples were commanded to see to it that baptism was a part of their ministry (Mat. 28:19,20; 16:16) and the pattern of the book of Acts (Acts 2:38-41; 8:12,13,36,38) indicates the widespread practice of water baptism for believers. This church does not believe in baptismal regeneration, nor do we hold that baptism is necessary for salvation.
- **Lord's Table (Communion):** On the night of His arrest, Jesus instituted what is known as the Eucharist, or Communion service, which symbolizes and calls our attention to the atonement. This celebration is one in which we look back to the finished work of Christ and also forward to the yet to be completed consummation of our redemption (Mat. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-30; 2 Peter 2:13).

## ESCHATOLOGY (Last Things)

We believe in the blessed hope, the personal, visible and imminent return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Terms Explained:

- **Blessed Hope:** The return of the Lord is an event that believers ought to wait for with high expectation and excitement. As still imperfect people, we eagerly await the restoration of all things to perfect Christ likeness after the return of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13; Rom. 8:18-25; 1 Peter 1:7,13; 4:13; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:7).
- **Personal, visible:** Jesus, not just in spirit, but in bodily form, will return to this earth (Acts 1:11).
- **Imminent:** The Church, as God's steward, ought to consider the return of Christ as an event which is about to happen, and therefore, though patient, we are to be alert to such an event as we seek to glorify Him through our lives (Mark 3:33-37; Mat. 24:22,24,29-51; Luke 21:34).
- **Patient Lifestyle:** The Bible's teaching concerning the Lord's impending return is always set in the context of practical exhortation, focusing upon our present lifestyle, rather than upon undue speculation (2 Peter 3:11; Mat. 24:42-51).

## **GENDER, MARRIAGE, 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 image of God within that person. Affirmation of that rejection is tantamount to bearing false witness which is clearly sinful.

We believe 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). Mission Bible Church will only conduct a marriage ceremony and recognize the marriage between a biological man and a biological woman.

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 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 a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

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.

This statement specifically gives the Elders the right and authority to prohibit acts or omissions, including but not limited to (a) permitting any church assets or property, whether real property, personal property, intangible property, or any property or asset of any kind that is subject to the direction or control of the church, to be used in any manner that would be—or, in the sole determination of the Elders, could be perceived by any person to be— inconsistent with this Statement on Gender, Marriage and Sexuality; and (b) permitting any Church facilities to be used by any person, organization, corporation, or group that would or might use such facilities to convey, intentionally or by implication, what might be perceived as a favorable impression about any definition of marriage other than that contained in this Section.

Further, Mission Bible Church's Statement on Marriage and Sexuality is based upon God's will for human life as conveyed to us through the Scriptures, upon which this Church has been founded and anchored, and this shall not be subject to change through popular vote; referendum; prevailing opinion of Members or the general public; influence of or interpretation by any government authority, agency, or official action; or legal developments on the local, state, or federal level.