

## **Maryland Gospel Church By-Laws**

### **Section 1. Name, Location and Purpose of the Church**

The subject organization, incorporated in the State of Maryland and located in Montgomery County, Maryland, is named Maryland Gospel Church and will be also referred to in the By-laws as the “Church”. This organization is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code. The particular purpose of the Church is to build up a Christian community with Christ’s love, to reach out to the world with the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and to glorify God. The property of this Church is irrevocably dedicated to religious and charitable purposes, and upon dissolution, the procedures in Section 14 shall be followed.

### **Section 2. Statement of Faith**

1. Our Church is “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). We believe the sixty six books of the Bible are revelation from God, inerrant, sufficient, and the final authority for our faith and practice.
2. Our Church is “God’s holy temple” (2 Corinthians 6:16) and “spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). We worship only the Triune God.
  - a. We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
  - b. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, and begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnated from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day, he rose in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.
  - c. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.
  - d. Above is adopted from Nicene Creed
3. Our Church is “God’s flock” (1 Peter 5:2). We believe that man is made in the image of God, but corrupted by sin, and fallen into curse. We believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation. Only through confession, repentance, and believing in Jesus would man be saved and receive eternal life.

4. Our Church is the “body of Christ” (Colossians 1:24). We believe that Christ is the head of the Church. The Church is God’s family and consists of all born-again believers.
5. Our Church is a “kingdom of priests” (1 Peter 2:9). We believe our mission is to bear witness for our Lord Jesus Christ, and spread the gospel to all nations.

### **Section 3. Purpose of By-Laws**

#### **3.1 Purposes.**

These By-Laws are intended to provide a simple but adequate form to

1. govern Maryland Gospel Church;
2. advance strong covenantal relationships; and
3. assure that any issues that do arise will be quickly addressed and remedied through application of these By-laws.

#### **3.2 Adoption.**

Accordingly, Maryland Gospel Church, a State, non-profit organization, by the solemn and unanimous action of its Elder and Deacon Board (defined in Section 8 and hereafter referred to as the Board), hereby adopts these By-Laws. The Board and members of the congregation willingly submit to be governed by the By-Laws so that Maryland Gospel Church may effectively carry out its functions as a body of Christ. Furthermore, these By-Laws shall constitute and evidence the agreement by and among the Board, that its governance, business, and activities shall be conducted as provided in these By-Laws.

#### **3.3 Organization of By-Laws.**

- Section 1. Name, location and purpose of the Church
- Section 2. Statement of faith
- Section 3. Purpose of By-Laws
- Section 4. Pastoral and staff roles & responsibilities (also compensation, calling & dismissal)
- Section 5. Ordinances (baptism & communion)
- Section 6. Membership (requirements, responsibilities & privileges including voting rights)
- Section 7. Elders and Deacons (qualifications, duties, term of office, nomination, selection procedure, removal from office & vacancies)
- Section 8. Governance of the Church by Board (Senior Pastor, Elders & Deacons) and communication with congregation
- Section 9. Congregational Meetings (annual, semi-annual & special)
- Section 10. Procedure for Church members to put forth issues for the Church to decide
- Section 11. Church discipline
- Section 12. Amendment of By-Laws

- Section 13. Emergency powers
- Section 14. Dissolution

#### **Section 4. Pastoral and Church Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

The purpose, serving relationship, responsibilities and compensation of the Pastor(s) and Church staff are recommended by the Pastoral Search Committee and approved by the Board. The Pastoral Search Committee is appointed by the Board.

##### **4.1 Purpose of Pastoral Staff.**

The purpose of the pastoral staff is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, teach from the Bible, engage in pastoral care, provide leadership in Church ministries, supervise paid Church staff (if any), and conduct Church ordinances and worship. The Pastoral staff consists of the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor (if any) and Assistant Pastor (if any). The persons hired by or promoted by the Church to fill the positions of Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Assistant Pastor shall be designated respectively as Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Assistant Pastor.

##### **4.2 Serving Relationship.**

The Pastor(s) serve the Church through prayers and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Church Body. The Pastor(s) receive counsel from the Elders and Deacons. The Senior Pastor serves as the leader of the Pulpit Teams, Elders, and Deacons.

##### **4.3 Pastoral Responsibilities.**

###### **4.3.1 General.**

The Pastor(s) shall be responsible for leading prayer ministry, preaching & teaching the Bible, overseeing Church management, conducting outreach, and caregiving.

###### **4.3.2 Leading Prayer Ministry.**

The Pastor(s) shall maintain vital and wholesome personal relationship with the Lord through daily devotion. The Pastor(s) lead the prayer ministry of the Church.

###### **4.3.3 Preaching & Teaching the Bible.**

The Pastor(s) shall coordinate with Elders and Deacons to plan and conduct worship services. The Senior Pastor is expected to preach in a majority of the services at the home Church. All Pastor(s) shall promote the core values of the Church. All Pastor(s) collaborate with Elders and Deacons to plan small group Bible studies and Sunday School to promote discipleship training.

###### **4.3.4 Overseeing Church Management.**

The Pastor(s) shall conduct Church ordinances (see Section 5), child dedications, weddings, funerals and commissioning of missionaries and other lay ministers. The Pastor(s) work with Church Elders and Deacons to plan Church activities. The Pastor(s) shall conduct congregational and Church business meetings. The Pastor(s) shall supervise paid Church staff, if any. The Pastor(s) shall provide spiritual guidance and advises Church committees as necessary. The Pastor(s) shall oversee, along with Elders and Deacons, all Church discipline matters (see Section 11) and the management of conflicts in the Church. The Pastor(s) shall work with Elders and Deacons to identify and train new leaders.

#### **4.3.5 Conducting Outreach.**

The Pastor(s) shall work with the Elders and Deacons on outreach initiative. The Pastor(s) lead the congregation to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) with vision, purpose, and priority.

#### **4.3.6 Caregiving.**

The Pastor(s) shall coordinate with the Elders, Deacons and other caregiving members of the Church to counsel, comfort and minister to members and prospective members in need of care. The Pastor(s) shall maintain proper priorities at home with his wife and children so as to provide a role model for the Church

#### **4.4 Pastoral Compensation.**

The compensation for a Pastor shall be approved by the Board.

#### **4.5 Other staff.**

Church staff includes paid positions for Church administrative assistant, custodian and other occupations as needed. Church staff positions and their roles, responsibilities, and compensation shall be approved by Board. All Church staff serve under the supervision of the Senior Pastor with assistance from the Associate Pastor or Assistant Pastor and guidance from the Board.

#### **4.6 Calling and Dismissal of a Pastor.**

##### **4.6.1 Calling.**

The Board is responsible for appointing a Pastoral Search Committee. The Pastoral Search Committee shall solicit and seek candidates to fill a vacancy in a pastoral position (senior, associate or assistant). Such candidates shall be invited to present one or more sermons at a Sunday worship and to be interviewed by the Pastoral Search Committee and the Board. The Pastoral Search Committee shall gather feedback on a candidate from each part of the congregation, and therefrom, by consensus recommend a candidate to the Board. The Board shall vote on and approve a final candidate by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority. After a final candidate is approved by the Board, the final determination for calling of a candidate for the

vacant pastoral position shall be made by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the congregation.

#### **4.6.2 Dismissal.**

No Pastor may be dismissed without both at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board and at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the congregation. All pastors, regardless of whether affected or unaffected by the voting, must recuse themselves from the two aforementioned votes. The Board shall disclose fully and publish the grounds for dismissal of a pastor and make available documentation supporting a proposed dismissal to members of the congregation at least a month prior to the congregational meeting. The Board shall not withhold any information relevant to a proposed dismissal.

### **Section 5. Ordinances**

#### **5.1 Baptism.**

The ordinance of baptism should be observed as commanded in the scriptures by all who have repented and believed in Christ as Savior and Lord. In so doing, they declare to the world that they have died, buried and been raised with Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:4).

#### **5.2 Holy Communion.**

The Holy Communion is a memorial and a proclamation of Jesus's suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26), examination of our lives, and anticipation of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26). And it is observed by all believers until the Lord Jesus Christ comes.

### **Section 6. Membership**

Members shall be all people who agree, in writing, to fulfill the vision of the Church. The word "Member" shall not be deemed to hold any ownership of the Church assets. Likewise, the word "Membership" referenced herein reflects only a spiritual unity.

#### **6.1 Eligibility:**

An individual seeking membership with the Church shall meet the following criteria:

1. be born again, giving evidence of a consistent Christian life in line with the moral principles of Scripture;
2. be or have been baptized;
3. be at least 18 years of age or 12 who are baptized in this Church at time of application; the former are voting members and the latter, non-voting members;
4. fully subscribe to the Statement of Faith as set forth in Section 2;
5. abide by the By-Laws of the Church;

6. complete and adhere to the standards of the Membership Course, as administered by the leadership of the Church at various opportunities in the calendar year.
7. regularly attend the weekly worship services;
8. submit a complete written membership application; and
9. be approved by the Pastors and Elders as a member.

## **6.2. Member Responsibilities and Privileges**

Membership within the Church carries both responsibilities and privileges.

1. to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines;
2. to regularly attend this Church's worship services and other activities;
3. to understand stewardship; to practice tithing by offering one's finances, gifts and time to God, and to share in the work of various Church ministries and to serve the Lord in unity;
4. to obey God's word and seek to glorify God in conduct;
5. to do one's best to witness for the Lord, leading others to believe in the truth; and
6. to attend the Church congregational meetings and have the voting right in the decision of Church business.

## **6.3. Categories of Membership**

### **6.3.1 Active Member.**

Active members shall consist of those members who adhere to the qualifications stated in Section 6.1 and who regularly attend Church services. Only active members above 18 years of age shall be able to vote on Church matters and may hold elected leadership positions. All references within these By-Laws to voting by members refer to active members.

### **6.3.2 Junior Member.**

Junior membership shall be open to those whose age is below eighteen (18) years of age, who have sufficient spiritual and mental maturity to freely give of themselves to the commitments of membership as stated in Section 6.1. Junior members shall be non-voting members. When a junior member reaches the age of eighteen (18), the Pastors and Elders shall change his/her membership to another appropriate category.

### **6.3.3 Honorary Member.**

Honorary Membership may be extended to member who is away from the local area in the military, in part-time or full-time Christian work, or otherwise desires to keep his or her membership with the Church. The honorary member has no voting privilege in the

congregational meetings.

#### **6.3.4 Inactive Member.**

Inactive members are those members who do not actively participate in Church activities. These include, but are not limited to, members who fail to attend the regular Church services for six (6) months or longer and do not communicate with the Church concerning his/her absence.

Inactive members shall not be able to hold elected leadership positions within the Church or vote on any matter presented to the membership. An inactive member may return to “active member” status by submitting a written request to and then be approved by the Pastors and Elders.

#### **6.4. Membership List**

The membership list shall be examined each year by the Pastors and Elders one month prior to the annual congregational meeting and at other times as they deem necessary so that the Church will have an updated membership list.

#### **6.5. Removal of Membership.**

The Pastors and Elders shall have the right to remove any member that fits into one of the following criteria and the removed member will be notified by the Pastors and Elders after the decision is made:

1. death;
2. leaving the Church as a result of relocation or other reasons;
3. submission of a written letter of resignation or transferring of membership to another congregation to the Pastors and Elders; or
4. result of disciplinary process (see Section 11).

#### **6.6. Reinstatement of Membership**

If a person is removed from membership for reasons of qualification or a disciplinary action, an appeal may be submitted to the Pastors and Elders within 30 days of being apprised of the action. The membership may be re-instated after the approval of the Pastors and Elders.

### **Section 7. Elders and Deacons**

#### **7.1 Nominating Committee.**

1. The Nominating Committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor, two elected by the Board from the Elders and Deacons, and two elected by the congregation. This committee shall be organized at least six (6) weeks in advance of the November congregational meeting.
2. It shall nominate Elders and Deacons, with one of them specified as a treasurer, posting the nominees at least two weeks prior to the November congregational meeting. Other

nominations may be made from the congregation to the Nominating Committee at least one (1) week prior to the annual meeting. The officers shall be elected by ballot at the November congregational meeting.

3. The qualifications for Elders are set out in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. Deacons are expected to maintain a life style in keeping with the spirit and intent of these same references. Each must also be an active member of the Church.

## **7.2 Election and Term of Office.**

1. The term of an Elder shall be for three years. The term of a Deacon shall be for two years. No one may serve more than six consecutive years as either an Elder or a Deacon.
2. Term of elected officers will begin on January 1 and end on December 31.
3. An Elder or Deacon may be removed from office prior to the completion of his/her term of office as a result of the discipline process, or by the congregation:
  - a. A recall motion can be proposed to the congregation if it has the signed endorsement of over 20% of the voting members of the Church.
  - b. At a duly called congregational meeting (at least one week but no later than two weeks after the submission of the recall motion), the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present at the time the vote is cast is required for passage of the proposed recall.
4. An Elder or Deacon position vacated by resignation or recall prior to the completion of the term of office may be filled by an active member designated by the remaining Elders and Deacons, with the temporary assignment lasting until the end of the calendar year.

## **7.3 Duties of the Elders and Deacons.**

The duties for Elders are to assist the pastors to shepherd the Church, meet with the pastors regularly, pray for the Church, and provide an annual evaluation of the pastors. The duties for deacons are to work with the pastors and elders to govern the Church and execute church ministries.

## **Section 8. Governance of the Church by Board (Senior Pastor, Elders & Deacons) and Communication with Congregation**

The Church shall be governed by a Board consisting of the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and all the currently serving Elders and Deacons. The Senior Pastor shall be the chair of the Board.



The Board shall elect a vice chair from the elders, and elect a secretary. In governance of the Church, the Board shall execute decisions made in the congregational meetings and make other decisions for the Church:

1. in the best interest of the Church, including putting the interest of the Church above the interests of other entities such as any personal interests that may exist;
2. consistent with Biblical teachings;
3. observing the Statement of Faith of the Church; and
4. in furtherance of the discipleship and spiritual growth of the Church.

The Board shall refrain from any decisions or behaviors that may create any, apparent or real, conflict of interest between the Church and any members of the Board. The Board may not have two or more immediate family members from the same family. Any decisions by the Board for the Church shall be made in leadership meetings having the required quorum of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Board present in the meetings. The decisions shall be made based on at least a simple majority vote of the members of the Board present in a leadership meeting with the required quorum.

Significant decisions made by the Board, or issues that may have significant impact on the Church, shall be communicated, without violating privacy issues, to the active members of the Church in writing, or in special meetings of the Church.

### **Section 9. Congregational Meetings (annual, mid-year and special)**

In every calendar year, the Church shall hold one annual congregational meeting reporting on church ministries, elect elders and deacons, and approve next year's budget; and one mid-year congregational meeting to elect two Nominating Committee members from the congregation. The mid-year congregational meeting is to be held six months, plus or minus three weeks, from the previous annual meeting. The annual congregational meeting is to be held 12 months, plus or minus three weeks, from the previous annual meeting.

Whenever deemed necessary by the Board due to any special events or circumstances that may arise periodically, the Board is empowered by the By-Laws to call special congregational meetings to report any special matters to the active members of the Church, or let the active members of the Church decide any special issues that may have significant impact on the Church.

At least one month preceding each annual congregational meeting, mid-year congregational meeting, and at least two weeks preceding a special congregational meeting, the Board shall release the meeting agenda to the active members of the Church with the date, time and place of the congregational meeting.

All congregational meetings require a quorum of at least one-half (1/2) of the active members. If a quorum is not reached, a congregational meeting may be held within two weeks requiring a

quorum of at least one-third (1/3) of the active members. If a quorum is still not reached, a congregational meeting may be held within two weeks with no quorum requirement. Any issues the Board puts forth for the active members to decide shall be decided by at least a simple majority vote, except issues that have significant impact on church. Issues that have significant impact on the Church shall require an at least two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of active members who are attending the meeting to pass. Significant issues include the following:

1. Church annual budget;
2. purchase or sale of real estate property; and
3. Church building construction or re-modeling project that is valued at over \$25,000.

### **Section 10. Procedures for Church Members to Present Issues for a Congregational Meeting**

In the event that active members of the Church are aware of an issue that they deem to have a significant impact on the Church, these members may present to the Board a written petition signed by at least 20% of the active members of the Church summarizing the issue along with a request to decide on the issue by the active members. The Board shall put the written petition in the agenda of an already scheduled congregational meeting as long as the written petition is received by the Board at least seven days before the congregational meeting. If the receipt of the written petition is within seven days preceding a congregational meeting, the Board shall call a special congregational meeting putting the written petition in the agenda of the special congregational meeting.

### **Section 11. Church Discipline**

The heart of Church discipline is loving restoration. Church discipline is a necessary mark of a healthy Church and shall be applied in cases of sexual misconduct, gossip, divisiveness, dishonesty, and various other expressions of sin. In accordance with the Biblical pattern generally outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, a person who evidences such sin will be confronted in an initial one-on-one meeting, followed by escalating engagement by one or two witnesses, or by the pastors and elders who represent the Church body. The process will stop at any of the steps if genuine repentance occurs and the disciplined party is restored to a good relationship with God and with others. Where the steps of discipline are exhausted in cases of unrepentant and/or habitual sin, the pastors and elders will consider removing a person from membership with the hope of eventual reconciliation and restoration. If a person is removed from membership due to disciplinary actions, the congregation shall be informed of the decision.

### **Section 12. By-Laws Amendment**

By-Laws not in conflict with the laws of the state may be adopted by a duly called congregational meeting of the Church. Amendments may be proposed by:

1. the Board (as described in Section 8); or
2. Members: An amendment can be proposed to the congregation if it has the signed endorsement of over 20% of the voting members of the Church. Proposed amendments are to be distributed to the Church members when the congregational meeting is called. The affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present at the time the vote is cast is required for passage of the proposed amendment.

The amendment of By-Laws in the event of an emergency is covered in Section 13.

## **Section 13. Emergency Powers**

### **13.1 Definition of Emergency.**

An “emergency” exists for the purposes of this section if a quorum (i.e., simple majority) of the Board can not readily be obtained because of some catastrophic event, e.g., a natural disaster, extreme weather condition, conflagration, civil unrest, or act of war.

### **13.2 Exercise of Emergency Powers.**

In the event of an emergency, the Maryland Gospel Church Board may:

1. replace an Elder or Deacon or employee due to incapacitation or unavailability;
2. relocate the principal office or meeting place of the Board
3. conduct all business meetings by teleconference.

### **13.3. Meetings during an Emergency.**

During an emergency, notice of a meeting of the Board only needs to be given to those Pastors, Elders, and Deacons by practicable means. A Pastor, Elder, or Deacon present at a meeting of the Board may chair the meeting, in order of rank (in descending order: Pastor, Elder, Deacon) and within the same rank and order of seniority, as necessary to achieve a quorum (i.e., simple majority). Action taken in good faith during an emergency binds the Church and may not be the basis for imposing liability on any Pastor, Elder, or Deacon, employee or agent of the Church on the ground that the action was not authorized.

### **13.4 Emergency By-Laws.**

The Board may also adopt emergency By-Laws, which may include provisions necessary for managing the Church during an emergency. The emergency By-Laws shall remain in effect during the emergency and shall be revoked after the Board has deemed that the emergency has ended.

## **Section 14. Dissolution**

### **14.1 Meaning of Dissolution.**

“Dissolution” means the complete disbanding of the Maryland Gospel Church by a resolution passed by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board and at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the congregation.

### **14.2 Discharge of Liabilities.**

Upon the dissolution of the Maryland Gospel Church, all outstanding debts, liabilities and obligations of the Church shall be paid and discharged, or adequate provision shall be made therefore.

### **14.3 Distribution of Physical Assets.**

Physical assets held by the Maryland Gospel Church requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, at the time of the dissolution, shall be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with whatever requirements exist at that time.

Upon the dissolution of the Maryland Gospel Church, all remaining assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose.