



HEARTLAND CHURCH

Bylaws

As adopted January 7, 2024

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Bylaws of Heartland Church Inc.

Heartland Church is a tax-exempt qualified non-profit organization operating under Section 501 (c) (3) of the U. S. Internal Revenue Code, and it is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Desoto Tate Baptist Network of North Mississippi.

These bylaws are the practical expression of our biblical convictions as Heartland Church. As such, the Bible is the ultimate and final authority in all matters of Heartland Church and her congregation. In the event these bylaws conflict with scripture, it is unintended, and the Bible takes precedence.

ARTICLE I. CHURCH ORDINANCES

I. SECTION 1. Baptism

The church will receive for baptism those who have received Jesus Christ as Savior, have professed Him publicly, and indicate a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

A. Baptism shall be by immersion in water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as a symbol of the person's salvation.

B. The Lead Pastor or whomever he shall authorize shall administer baptism.

II. SECTION 2. The Lord's Supper

The church shall observe the Lord's Supper at least quarterly as a symbolic reminder of the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church shall observe open communion. Open communion is defined as the practice that any scripturally baptized believer in Jesus Christ is welcome to participate in this ordinance.

ARTICLE II. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

To become a member of Heartland Church, a person must be saved and scripturally baptized (see Article 1 under Church Ordinances). The church will receive a person to be a member in good standing after that person is examined by a staff member or a lay person who has been authorized by the Lead Pastor to perform such duties. The church will receive a person for membership who:

(1) Accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and experiences scriptural baptism or

(2) Transfers membership from another church in good standing or

(3) By statement affirms that he/she has been saved and scripturally baptized.

II. SECTION 1. Member Expectations

See Church Covenant Commitment in Appendix A.

II. SECTION 2. Member Rights

Every active member shall have the right to vote on the following matters: the annual budget of the church, the disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the church, the merger or dissolution of the church, the acquisition of real property and related indebtedness, amendments to the articles of incorporation and by-laws, and the calling of full-time ministerial staff members. Each member 18 years old or older is entitled to one vote. Those members present and voting at a business meeting shall constitute a quorum of the membership for the conducting of business.

II. SECTION 3. New Member Orientation

Discover Heartland is available for those looking to become a member in good standing. Discover Heartland is not a requirement for membership but it is preferred. Those looking to join Heartland Church can do so by having a conversation with any elder, staff member, deacon, or other church member who has been equipped to carry out membership conversations.

II. SECTION 4. Termination of Membership

Membership termination will occur if one or multiple of the following occurs:

- (1) Death of the member.
- (2) Transfer to another church in good standing.
- (3) Exclusion by action of this church.
- (4) Erasure upon request or upon membership in a church of another denomination.

II. SECTION 5. Church Discipline

Every reasonable measure will be taken to minister to any troubled member (including staff members). The Lead Pastor, elders (pastors)¹, deacons, and members will seek redemption. Biblically, the heart of church discipline is restoration.

Should a serious problem arise regarding the conduct or activities of a member which would cause that member to become a liability to the welfare and interest of the Church, the Lead Pastor, elders (pastors), and deacons will seek to resolve the problem according to Matthew 18:15-20, I Corinthians 5:1-5, and Galatians 6:1.

ARTICLE III. CHURCH OFFICERS

III. SECTION 1. Church Structure

The biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons, but the church is governed by the congregation. The biblical terms "elder," "pastor," and "overseer" are understood to refer to the same biblical office and will be referred to interchangeably hereafter. All pastors-elders-overseers possess the authority and gifts of pastors, whether or not they are paid by the church.

¹ The terms elders, pastors, shepherds, and overseers are biblically synonymous and will be used as such through the entirety of this document.

Jesus is the Senior Pastor of Heartland Church. He is the chief Shepherd of the church. (1 Peter 5:4)

The Lead Pastor is under the authority of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus, and, by affirmation of the church and its members leads the church alongside the other elders (pastors) to spiritually fulfill its vision and mission.

The church structure will consist of the Lead Pastor, elders (pastors), deacons, ministerial staff, and administrative staff. The Lead Pastor is the lead elder (pastor), and therefore the primary spiritual leader of the church. The Lead Pastor and elders will provide oversight of the staff. The Lead pastor, elders (pastor), and staff will provide leadership and equipping to help the church to fulfill its vision and mission.

The church will have elders who will serve alongside the Lead Pastor for personnel issues, finance issues, long term planning, and anything else to oversee the flock at Heartland Church. The elder team will work together to oversee and shepherd the flock at the church. They will meet regularly for prayer, personal accountability, and the fulfillment of their ministry responsibilities.

The church will have deacons who lead by serving the body. A person shall not serve as a deacon and an elder at the same time.

While the role of the deacon is a deed based ministry meeting real physical needs of the church, the role also has a spiritual impact. The physical needs of the church are met so that the spiritual needs can also be met. (James 2:14-17)

The Relationship of Deacons and Pastors

Deacons are not a legislative or decision making body of the church. They are given as much authority as the Lead Pastor and elders allows them to have. However, a good elder/deacon body relationship will help the ministry of the elders exceed their own limitations. It is important that the elders review the decision making of the deacon body regularly. The elders should have the authority to overrule the deacon body in a decision but should not lord their authority over the deacons in a domineering way (1 Peter 5). They are the servants of the church working under the authority of the elders.

Overview of basic church structure

Jesus is the Senior Pastor
Pastor/Elder Led
Deacon Served
Congregationally approved or affirmed

III. SECTION 2. Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor, under Jesus Christ, is God's primary leader for the local church. His main duties include prayer, preparation and delivery of biblical sermons, and giving leadership to the overall church program. He, or his designee, shall be the Moderator of all family meetings. He is the supervisor of the staff and is an ex-officio member of all committees. In the event of the Lead Pastor's inability to perform these duties, another elder will serve in these capacities.

III. 2. B. Qualifications

The following Biblical qualifications must be met by any potential candidate for the position of Lead Pastor: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

III. 2. C. Resignation

The Lead Pastor is asked to give at least two weeks notice to the church at the time of resignation. Upon resignation of a Lead Pastor, then elders will work out the details of the final compensation for the resigning Pastor in a manner consistent with the church budget or upon special approval of the church.

III. 2. D. Church Removal

Should the Lead Pastor perform an act that disqualifies him as a pastor according to Scripture, the church shall take appropriate action to remove him as pastor. Disqualifying actions include violating any of the pastoral qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 (in particular adultery, heretical teaching, embezzlement). At least 66% of the congregation must vote to remove the pastor in a vote that will be held with a seven-day notice given. The vote must be held on a Sunday morning.

III. 2. E. Pastor Search Committee

Should the church be without a Lead Pastor, a Pastor Search Team will be formed. This committee will consist of seven members. The team will consist of one of the elders as identified by the elders, the Chairman of Deacons, and 5 other duly elected church members that have been nominated by the church.

- (1) All nominees must have been a member of Heartland Church for at least two (2) years.
- (2) Nominations will be received from the church body at large.
- (3) Nominees will be screened in the following manner:
 - a. All nominees must give evidence to regular attendance in both Bible Study (i.e. discipleship and Worship services). The church records will be consulted to verify attendance.
 - b. All nominees must be regular givers through tithing. The Finance Office will be consulted to verify giving records.
 - c. A list of nominees who pass these qualifications will be voted on by the church body in a scheduled family meeting.
- (4) The church body will assemble in a called family meeting for the purpose of electing the five remaining members of the Lead Pastor Search Committee. This meeting must be announced from the pulpit at least one week prior to its occurrence. The votes for these five members will be taken by secret ballot and will be counted by the members of the existing elders, and the Chairman of Deacons.

- (5) The five members selected will be composed of three men and two women. The three men who receive the most votes and the two women who receive the most votes.
- (6) There will also be two alternates chosen from the nominees. The man who is fourth in the voting will serve as a male alternate and will replace a male on the committee who cannot fulfill his responsibilities. The woman who is third in the voting will serve as the female alternate and will replace a woman on the committee who cannot fulfill her responsibilities.

Upon selection, the Lead Pastor Search Committee will select a chairman. Once the Lead Pastor Search Committee is selected, it will proceed with the task of finding God's man to serve as the church's new Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor Search Committee will also be responsible for recommending an interim Pastor or interim pulpit supply. The committee must be unanimous in their selection before presenting a recommendation to the church.

When the Lead Pastor Search Committee is ready to recommend a prospective candidate to serve as the new Pastor, the church will receive a one-week notification to vote on their recommendation. The vote must take place during a Sunday service. The prospective Pastor must receive at least a 75% favorable vote for the church to extend a call to him to become the new Pastor.

III. SECTION 3: Ministerial Staff

III. 3. A. Ministerial Staff

Ministerial staff is defined as any non pastoral staff position working with or directly overseeing a specific ministry e.g. kids ministry, worship ministry, student ministry, etc. Under the direction of the Lead Pastor and Elders, with church approval, the church shall employ staff members as needed. Church approval entails a 75% favorable vote via ballot on a Sunday morning. All ministerial staff members will be supervised by and accountable to the elders. The Lead Pastor, in consultation with the elders, has the authority to dismiss staff members if necessary.

III. 3. B. Resignation

At the time of resignation at least two-weeks notice will be given to the church. The Lead Pastor and elders will work out the details of final compensation for the resigning staff member.

III. SECTION 4. Administrative Staff

Administrative staff can be defined as one who ensures the smooth and efficient operation of a church through overseeing the daily activities and operations e.g. business administrator, administrative assistance, facilities manager, custodian, etc. The Lead Pastor and elders will have the authority to employ or terminate the services of administrative staff. The Lead Pastor and elders will employ such staff according to the guidelines of the church budget. During the budget planning portion of the year, the Lead Pastor will meet with the elders to discuss the number and status of non-ministerial staff.

III. SECTION 5. Elders and Trustees

III. 5. A. Qualifications for the office of pastor/elder

As used in Scripture, the term “pastor” is synonymous with “elder” and “overseer.” The pastors will be responsible for the oversight of the church and its ministries. The (elders) pastors are responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The elders (pastors) shall be covenant members of the church.

Elders will be men of prayer and the Word. Their qualifications are defined by specific Scripture passages in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 5:17, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. If at any time an elder (pastor) is not fulfilling his role, fails to meet the biblical qualifications, or no longer desires to serve, the other pastors along with the covenant members will evaluate the situation. If necessary, the elders (pastors) will recommend steps to be taken and ask the membership for affirmation. The membership may provide input about an elders (pastor’s) lifestyle and performance according to biblical qualifications at any time in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-20.

III. 5. B. Selection and Removal of elders (pastors). (Specific to elders/pastors other than the Lead Pastor)

As the need for additional elders arises, there will be an active search initiated by the elders (pastors) for men who meet the biblical qualifications. The elders (pastors) will examine each candidate to determine if they meet the biblical qualifications. The number of candidates presented to the membership for approval will depend upon the needs of the church. There is not a preset number of elders, nor is there a preset term of service. The elders will present candidates to the church one week prior to a church vote. The prospective elder must receive at least 75% favorable vote by ballot to be approved.

At any time, an elder may be removed from the elder team by a unanimous vote from the other elders on the elder team. Elders may be compensated or non-compensated depending on the specific nature of their calling and the needs of the congregation. Compensation for elders shall be determined by the active elders (pastors).

III. 5. C. Trustees

The Elders will also perform the duties of Trustees and shall be charged with the duty of executing such legal documents as may be required by law and such documents as they may be empowered and directed by the church to enforce or administer. The Elders will also exercise church discipline for members when and where needed as outlined by Article II Section 6.

III. SECTION 6. Deacons

III. 6. A. Responsibilities and Duties

The responsibility of deacons is to meet the physical needs of the church body. Deacons should be using their gifts to serve the body of Christ. In doing so, meeting the physical needs of those inside and outside the church. The deacons shall serve under the leadership of the elders and staff as servants of the church and of Jesus Christ. They shall be faithful in their attendance to all regular church meetings. They shall also be faithful to practice tithing. They shall seek to be peacemakers who preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in the body of Christ.

III. 6. B. Officers of the Active Deacon Body

Deacon officers will consist of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary. The Chairman shall preside at all deacon meetings. In case of his absence, the Vice Chairman will preside. The Secretary will keep a record of the minutes of all meetings of the Active Deacon Body.

In the regularly scheduled deacon's meeting held in January, the members of the Active Deacon Body will nominate candidates to serve as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary for the following year. The voting for all offices will be submitted by means of secret ballot during that meeting.

III. 6. C. Meetings of the Active Deacon Body

Regular ministry meetings of the Active Deacon Body shall be held monthly. Special meetings may be called by the Lead Pastor in consultation with the Chairman of Deacons. Ample notice of these meetings shall be given. A quorum of not less than 50% of the Active Deacon Body must be present at any meeting for business to be transacted.

III. 6. D. Election and Removal of Deacons

The qualifications for the office of Deacon which must be met by all candidates are the following:

- meet the Biblical qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- member of Heartland Church for at least 2 years
- participant in discipleship.
- Regular and consistent tither
- In agreement with the mission and vision of Heartland Church

The Active Deacon Body shall be elected in the following manner:

- The church family at large will nominate prospective deacons.
- The nominees will go through a screening and prayer process (not to exceed one month) to ensure their call and qualification to this office. The elders and presiding deacons will conduct the screening process.
- Upon completion of this screening and prayer time all approved nominees will be put forward to the church family for a vote of affirmation of their call to serve as Deacon of Heartland Church.
- A candidate must receive 75% ballot vote of affirmation to be affirmed as a deacon.

The number of deacons serving on the Active Deacon Body will vary depending upon the needs of the church.

Deacons elected to the Active Deacon Body shall serve a three-year term. After a deacon rotates off the Active Body, he/she must wait one year before he/she is eligible to be nominated for another term of service.

If, for any reason, a Deacon Body member is unable to complete his/her duties outlined in scripture, then the elders and current Deacon Body members will nominate a man or woman to fill the position. The nominee will be put forward for a vote of affirmation from the church family.

In the case that a Deacon Body member knowingly and unrepentantly fails to live up the scriptural responsibility of a deacon, they can be removed by dismissal. The membership may provide input about a deacons lifestyle and performance according to biblical qualifications at any time in accordance with scripture. Any subsequent action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matt 18:15-17 and other relevant biblical texts. Any deacon may be dismissed by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members at any formally called family meeting of the church.

ARTICLE IV. INSURANCE AND INDEMNIFICATION

IV. SECTION 1. Insurance

Heartland Church will purchase and maintain liability insurance on behalf of any and all persons who are or were a director, officer, leader, employee, agent, or volunteer of ministry, (while serving in their capacity as such). Such insurance will be purchased for the purpose of protecting such persons from covered loss resulting in liability asserted against the above individuals in connection with their activities on behalf of Heartland Church. Insurance and additional indemnification resources will be used based on the request and decision making process as outlined in Article IV. sections 2, 3, 4, and 5.

IV. SECTION 2. Indemnification Request

Should any director, officer, leader, employee, agent, or volunteer of ministry incur any liability as a result of their affiliation with or service to Heartland then such individual may request indemnification from Heartland Church if the individual was acting on behalf of Ministry in good faith and within the scope of authority designated to the individual by Heartland. The granting of full or partial indemnification shall be at the discretion of the elders of Heartland Church as set forth in Section 3 herein.

IV. SECTION 3. Indemnification Decisions

Should any director, officer, leader, employee, agent, or volunteer of Ministry, incur any liability as a result of their affiliation with or service to Heartland the church may provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders (pastors) determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. A decision on the indemnification request by a majority of disinterested elders will be final.

IV. SECTION 4. Additional Persons

At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

IV. SECTION 5. Elder's Not Available

If at least two elders are not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

ARTICLE V. PROPERTIES, FAMILY MEETINGS, ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

V. SECTION 1. Properties

The Church properties shall be normally used only for the recognized services of the church. Special use of the buildings, equipment, vehicles and grounds shall be under the authorization and supervision of the elders (pastors) and staff.

V. SECTION 2. Concerning Property Usage, Events, and Beliefs

As an organization of professing Christians, Heartland Church and her pastors only perform and allow the use of facilities under the church's legal control for those individuals, events, weddings, and organizations that will further her mission and support her values and beliefs as stated in the most current Baptist Faith and Message.

Heartland Church and her pastors only sanction and perform those wedding ceremonies between a naturally born man and woman who are both professing Christians who agree with our values and beliefs in both belief and lifestyle as stated in the most current Baptist Faith and Message. The use of properties under Heartland Church's legal control will be limited to such ceremonies.

All current and future employees of Heartland Church must be in agreement in both belief and lifestyle with the ~~of the~~ most current value and beliefs Baptist Faith and Message. If at any time a current employee is not in agreement in both belief and lifestyle, then said employee will forfeit their right of employment.

All current and future members of Heartland church must be in agreement in both belief and lifestyle with the values and beliefs of the most current Baptist Faith and Message.

V. SECTION 3. Family Meetings

The Lead Pastor or may call the church into conference at any regular service to dispose of any necessary business. The church will have meetings as needed. The following matters shall be voted on at a previously announced special meeting.

- (1) Calling a ministerial staff member.
- (2) Amending the Constitution or Bylaws.
- (3) Major expansion and expenditures.
- (4) Approval of the annual church budget.

These matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the members present except for the calling of a Lead Pastor which shall require a 75% (three-fourths) majority vote. Notification of the above matters shall be announced from the pulpit at least a two weeks in advance.

In conducting family meetings, matters arising other than the above shall be conducted under "Robert's Rules of Order".

V. SECTION 4. Bylaw Review

To maintain the most up to date bylaws and procedures every year Heartland Church will conduct a Bylaw and Policy Review. The elders will recommend a team of six people to the church including at least one elder and one deacon. The names will be presented to the church two weeks prior to a Family Meeting. The team will be voted on as a whole during the Family Meeting by a show of hands, majority vote.

Once approved the team will be charged to evaluate the Bylaws and various policy and procedure manuals and bring recommendations to the church at the next schedule family meeting for approval.

V. SECTION 5. Additional Policy and Procedures

Heartland Church will maintain each of the following to be used to guide policy and operating procedures. Each must be approved by the church during a Bylaw Revision Process or at the recommendation of the elders with a subsequent church majority vote. Additional Policies and Procedures can be added the same way.

- Heartland Financial Policies
- Heartland Financial Procedures
- Heartland Facility Reservation Request
- Heartland Facility Use Policy
- Heartland Facility Use Agreement
- Heartland Personnel Handbook
- Heartland Social Media Policy
- Heartland Prevent of Sexual Misconduct, Molestation, and Abuse Policy
- Heartland Signs and Alerts for Sexual Misconduct
- Heartland Restrictive Access Agreement
- Heartland Mission Trip Policies

V. SECTION 6. Adoption of bylaws

The adoption of these bylaws shall affect a repeal of all previously adopted rules which are not re-adopted herein.

APPENDIX A

Membership Covenant

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as "living by the Spirit" (Rom. 8). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant...

- **to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues** (Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).
- **to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines** (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Eph. 5:1-21; 1 Thess. 5:12-22).
- **to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:**
 - by being baptized after my conversion.
 - By regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- **to regularly participate in the life of Heartland Church by attending weekly services, engaging in discipleship, and serving those within and outside of this church** (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- **to be committed to taking the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations** (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 1:8)
- **to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary** (Matt. 25:14-30; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).
- **by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ** (1 Pet. 1:13-16, 4:1-3).
- **Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit.**
- **to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish** (Rom. 14:14-23).

- **to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another** (1 Cor. 8:1-13).
- **to do the following when I sin:**
 - **confess my sin to God and to fellow believers.**
 - **repent and seek help to put my sin to death** (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- **to submit to the pastors and other leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church** (Eph. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5).
- **to do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:**
 - to notify the appropriate staff member.
 - to seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.