



# Vertical Church Alpharetta By-Laws

# Table of Contents

Preamble.....	2
Article 1- Name.....	2
Article 2-Purpose.....	3
Article 3-Governance.....	3
Article 4-Elders.....	5
Article 5-Deacons.....	7
Article 6-Membership.....	8
Article 7-Staff.....	12
Article 8-Officers.....	13
Article 9-Meetings.....	14
Article 10- Designated Giving.....	14
Article 11-Indemnification.....	14
Article 12-Dissolution & Division .....	15
Article 13- Statement of Faith .....	16
Article 14–Beliefs on Cultural Issues.....	20
Article 15- Tax-Exempt Provisions.....	23
Article 16- Church Covenant .....	24
Article 17-Amendments.....	26

## **Preamble**

For the purpose of preserving and making secure the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner, consistent with the accepted beliefs of Baptist churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of the church, and to set forth the relationship of this body to other bodies of the same faith, we do declare and establish these Bylaws:

### Section A: Mission Statement

To facilitate a movement that multiples disciples who, Worship God, Serve our city, and Love our world.

## **Article 1 –Name**

Section A: This church will be known as Vertical Church Alpharetta. This will be a nonprofit corporation of the state of Georgia. This church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any outside control. Recognizing, however, the universal communion of followers of Christ and the benefit of a wider association, this church will be affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Section B: Whenever it is desirable to abbreviate the name of this organization, the name “Vertical Church” shall be considered in every way the legal name of the church corporation.

Section C: Whenever the word “church” is used in these Bylaws or their amendments or other official action of the church corporation, it shall signify the legal organization of this church as established in the Articles of Incorporation and herein. References to votes of the church shall have reference to a vote of the covenant members of this church corporation.

## **Article 2 – Purpose**

Section A: This church is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) of 1986, for such purposes including, but not limited to, the purpose of providing regular opportunities for public worship, to sustain the sacraments, doctrines, and ethics set forth in the New Testament for the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to do the work committed to the church by Jesus. Every organization and group within the church shall seek to promote the spiritual life and growth of the community and exemplify the spirit of Christ and His teachings. We do so in order that his gospel will be proclaimed, disciples will be made, and the mission of the church will extend around the world. Anything contrary to this spirit and purpose should be eliminated from within our church.

Section B: No part of the net earnings of the Corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers or other private persons, except to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purpose as set forth in the Articles.

## **Article 3 –Governance**

Section A: The government of The Church is derived from principles and patterns evident in the New Testament, as discerned and applied by the pastoral leadership of the church. The church is first and foremost an ecclesiastical body of believers, the supreme governing document of which is the Bible. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God, speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of The Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our elders are The Church's interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application. The Church is secondarily a civil corporation, the governance of which is established by its Articles of Incorporation

and Bylaws. The articles and bylaws, however, are subordinate to the Bible and must be interpreted in light of the scriptures. Issues of membership, leadership, officers, and authority are set forth below.

Section B: The following principles, as presented in the New Testament, guide our polity:

- **Jesus is the head of the church and Chief Shepherd of the flock.** (Eph. 5:23; Col 1:15-20; 1 Pet. 2:25, 5:4).
  - Under Jesus' authority, there must be clear leadership within the church—this leadership falls into two primary offices, those of elder and deacon. These positions have specific requirements (1 Tim. 3:1-13).
  - The congregation has a level of responsibility within the local church to carry out the mission of the church (Matt. 18:17, Acts 15:22, 1 Cor. 5:9-13, Rev. 2:1-7).
  
- **Scripture drives us to understand that the church is to be ruled by Christ, led by elders, served by deacons, and held responsible by the congregation.**
  - **Jesus-Ruled** - Jesus is the head of the church. Any other role or office is derived from and flows out of Jesus' role, and our responsibility is to follow him. No one can take the role of Jesus as head of the church. He is the Chief Shepherd and Senior Pastor—Jesus alone has the authority and preeminence to rule the church.
  - **Elder-Led** – The apostle Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in the church in every city, men who were to lead, pastor, and guard the flock as “under-shepherds” under the authority of Jesus (1 Tim, Tit. 1:7, 1 Pet. 5:1-4). The list of qualifications for such men is given in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1. The biblical model of local church leadership envisions a plurality of pastor-elders, potentially with a lead pastor serving as first among equals. These men have the responsibility to lead, teach, shepherd, and equip the congregation, directing and

serving the church in a way that models the leadership of Christ.

○ **Congregational Accountability**

- The entire congregation is responsible for what takes place within an autonomous local body, having a role in the major decision making of the church.
- This responsibility includes holding accountable those in authority over the church, as well as prayer for these leaders.
- The congregation's role is to carry out the work of ministry as described in Ephesians 4:12.

## **Article 4 -Elders**

### Section A: Qualifications for Eldership

The Elder Board (hereafter referred to as the "Elders" or "the Board") is to be comprised of men who are gifted leaders, called by God, meeting the biblical qualifications specified in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These men have the responsibility to lead, teach, shepherd, and equip the congregation, governing and serving the church in a way that models the leadership of Christ. In accordance with the teaching of Scripture as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, the role of elder shall be exclusively filled by men.

### Section B: Appointment (Elder Responsibility)

Candidates for eldership will be selected by the current Board and will undergo a season of training and evaluation before the office or title of Elder is ascribed. This season of examination will include a comprehensive assessment. An elder candidate must meet the following conditions prior to recognition as an elder:

- Meets the biblical qualifications of an elder (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1).
- Embodies the mission, vision, and values of the church.
- Provides reasonable evidence that the Holy Spirit has gifted and called him to this particular platform of service (Acts 20:28).

### Section C: Duties and Privileges of Elders

The Elders shall, in keeping with the principles set forth in the Scriptures, especially Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:14; and 1 Peter 5:1-4, undertake the responsibility of shepherding the congregation by devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. They shall have particular authority to plan and oversee worship services; to oversee the sacraments, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper; to examine and instruct prospective members; to oversee the process of church discipline; to examine and recommend candidates for all offices and positions; to oversee the work of the Deacons and all other agents of the church; and to take any other action which shall be necessary and proper for faithfully overseeing and shepherding the church.

No elder shall have any right, title, or interest in or to any property of the Corporation.

No elder shall be personally liable for the debts or obligations of the Corporation of any nature whatsoever, nor shall any of the property of the elders be subject to the payment of the debts or obligations of the Corporation.

#### Section D: Terms of Service

All Elders will always serve as Elders unless they Biblically disqualify themselves. All Elders, with the exception of the Lead Pastor, will serve a term limit of three years, and having served two consecutive three- year terms, shall not be eligible for re-election for one year. If there are no qualified Elder candidates the current Elders shall continue to serve on the Elder Board.

No Elder shall hold the office of Deacon during his tenure.

The Council of Elders shall choose their Chairman and other Officers

#### Section E: Removal of Elders

If at any time an elder ceases to fulfill his role, meet biblical qualifications, or embody the mission, vision, or values of the church, he may be removed from the office of elder. Discipline and dismissal of elders shall be done in accordance with the instructions set forth in Matthew 18:15-20 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21 and only by due cause. An elder may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any Members' Meeting.

#### Section G: Lead Pastor as Elder

The Lead Pastor serves as one of the elders within the local body. In the case that he resigns or is removed, the elder board will lead the congregation in searching for a new Lead Pastor. Because this position is an elder position within the congregation, the Lead Pastor candidate must be approved by the congregation by a two-thirds vote of the covenant members.

### **Article 5 –Deacons**

#### Section A: Qualification

The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The Elder Board shall recognize men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons.

#### Section B: Duties and Responsibilities

Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and assist the elders in areas of service and ministry. Deacons shall serve a term of one year. There is no limitation on the number of consecutive terms that a deacon may serve. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6, Deacons shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority, but shall support the Elders' ministry of the Word, work to maintain the unity of the church, and care for the physical needs of the church.

#### Section C: Appointment



Deacons will be appointed by the Elder board.

Section D: Removal of Deacons

A Deacon may be removed from office by a decision of the Elders, or upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present at a congregational meeting.

**Article 6 –Membership**

Section A: Qualifications for Membership

The membership of this church shall be composed of persons who have given testimony of regeneration by the Holy Spirit; been baptized as a believer following a personal profession of faith; are genuine followers of Jesus Christ; agree with the Statement of Faith and Bylaws of this church; have completed an interview with a member of the Elder Board; and have signed the Church Member Covenant.

Section B: Process of Membership

Applicants for membership who have met the Qualifications of Membership (Article III, Section A) shall be interviewed by at least one Elder and if qualified for membership will be presented before the Members to be received into full fellowship. A candidate shall be received as a Member of the church upon the recommendation of the Elders.

Section C: Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Member Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. No member shall have any right, title, or interest in or to any property of the Corporation. Non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation, and other appropriate ministries with prior approval of the Elders. No member of this church shall retain

membership in any other church. No person or group shall solicit money on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the Elders.

#### Section D: Termination of Membership

Acts of termination, expulsion, or suspension of membership will be performed in accordance with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible; specific procedures taken by the Elder Board and the church will occur in a fair and reasonable manner, carried out in good faith. Membership may be terminated or suspended by any of the following ways:

- Personal request of the member.
- Failure to uphold Member Covenant.
- Living in such a way that promotes disagreement with the Statement of Beliefs and/or Bylaws.
- Transfer request of membership to another church.
- Death of the member.

#### Section E: Purpose of Discipline

- **For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined.** (see Proverbs 15: 5; 29: 15; I Corinthians 4: 14; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4–5; Hebrews 12: 1–11; Psalm 119: 115; 141: 5; Proverbs 17: 10; 25:12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7: 5; Matthew 7: 26–27; 18: 15–17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2: 40; I Corinthians 5: 5; Galatians 6: 1–5; II Thessalonians 3: 6, 14–15; I Timothy 1: 20; Titus 1: 13–14; James 1: 22)
- **For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them.** (see Proverbs 13: 20; Romans 15: 14; I Corinthians 5: 11; 15:33; Colossians 3: 16; I Thessalonians 5: 14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; I Timothy 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Hebrews 10: 24–25)
- **For the purity of the church as a whole.** (see I Corinthians 5: 6–7; II Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21: 2) For the good of our corporate witness to

non-Christians.(see Proverbs 28: 7;Matthew 5: 13-16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1-14; Ephesians 5: 11; I Timothy 3: 7; II Peter 2: 2; I John 3: 10)

- **For the glory of God, by reflecting His holy character** (see Deuteronomy 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chronicles 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Nehemiah 9: 2;Isaiah 52: 11; Ezekiel 36: 20; Matthew 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15: 5-6; II Corinthians 6: 14-7: 1; Ephesians 1: 4; 5: 27; I Peter 2: 12)

### Section F: Church Discipline of Members

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, or otherwise willfully opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17, 1Corinthians 5, and Galatians 6:1-5. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from communion for a definite period, deposition from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18: 15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14-15; 1 Timothy 5: 19-20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4-5)

Members are not guaranteed confidentiality regarding issues of church discipline, and understand that in submitting themselves to the authority of the church, issues of a sensitive or personal nature may become known to others, including the church leadership and members. This includes, but is not limited to, notification of local authorities if a crime has been committed, a real threat of endangerment exists, and/or other violations of scripture have occurred that may result in physical danger.

### Section G: Other Disciplinary Measures

Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion of the elders, a member, non-member regular participant in church activities, or other individual, may be notified that he or she is not to be present upon church premises or at church activities for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others. Such required absence may, but need not, be concurrent with church discipline of that person.

#### Section H: Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18: 15–20, I Corinthians 6: 1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or secular and whether individuals or corporate entities.

#### Section I: Voting

Those admitted to church membership do not constitute a legislative body, nor do they constitute members of the Corporation, and they cannot vote, pass resolutions binding upon the Corporation, nor shall they have any equity in the real property of the Corporation, or rights to vote on its disposal, except any vote specifically provided in these Bylaws or as specifically provided by the Elder Board. Property of the Corporation is dedicated to religious and charitable purposes. Congregational voting shall occur in the following instances:

Clause 1: Members will vote on the following items: (a) acceptance of an amended bylaws or articles of incorporation; (b); merger and/or dissolution of the Church; (c) affirmation of annual budget; (d) expulsion/suspension of

members (e) purchasing or selling of property (f) other actions deemed major and extraordinary by the elders. All items above will be communicated to the church not less than twenty-one (21) days prior to the vote.

Clause 2: A quorum is not necessary for a vote of affirmation. A quorum shall be necessary only in the case of the rejection of a budget or purchase of land or real estate. If a vote is taken resulting in the rejection of one of these items, an attendance record is to be taken. If the number of members present is less than 50% of all the membership, the elders are to communicate in writing to all members the result of the vote, and schedule within 30 days, a time for either:

- A second vote on the same issue, with the goal to have a quorum present at that meeting.
- A membership meeting to present an alternative (in the case of a budget).

Clause 3: In any election or matter in which members are eligible to vote or offer affirmation, all votes must be cast in person by covenant members in good standing. Members must be at least 18 years of age to participate in voting matters.

## **Article 7 –Staff**

Section A: Paid staff positions may be created or dissolved by elders.

Section B: The Elders shall have primary responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of paid staff members.

Section C: A paid staff position does not constitute recognition as an Elder.

Section D: To preserve the integrity of The Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to The Church's members and the community, it is required that individuals working in a paid position (full-time, part-time, contracted, or

otherwise) which places them in a role of leadership over any of Vertical Church's members agree to and abide by The Church's Statement of Faith and Bylaws.

## **Article 8 – Officers**

### Section A: Treasurer

The Treasurer(s) shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the church. The Treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The Treasurer shall render to the Elders at least once in every year, or whenever they may request it, an account of all financial transactions and of the financial condition of the church.

The Treasurer(s) shall be selected to a renewable term of one year upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

No Elder, or paid staff member of the church, shall be eligible for the office of Treasurer.

The Treasurer shall be removed from office upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

## **Article 9 - Meetings**

### Section A: Members' Meetings

The regular members' meeting shall be held at least bi-annually with prior notice of the date, time, and location given to the Church at least twenty-one (21) days in advance.

#### Section B: Elder Meeting

Elders shall meet regularly to discuss matters of church operations, financial stewardship, spiritual leadership, and prayer. Such meetings shall occur at a time and place deemed appropriate by the elders.

#### Section C: Special Meetings

A special members' meeting may be called at any time by the Elder Board after due notice has been given to the membership during a public worship gathering or via electronic mail, sent at least seven (7) days before the meeting.

### **Article 10- Designated Contributions**

From time to time the church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. If the church receives a designated contribution for these funds or for any other designated purpose, the church will attempt to honor the designation; however, all designated contributions shall be deemed advisory rather than legally mandatory in nature and shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the pastor and the board. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Section 1.02.

### **Article 11 -Indemnification**

To the maximum extent permitted by law, the Church shall indemnify, and shall pay or reimburse reasonable expenses in advance of final disposition of a proceeding to, (a) any individual who is a present or former Trustee or officer of the Church or (b)

any individual who serves or has served another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, employee benefit plan or any other enterprise as a Trustee or officer of such corporation or as a partner or Trustee of such partnership, joint venture, trust or employee benefit plan at the request of the Church. The Corporation may, with the approval of the Elders, provide such indemnification and advancement of expenses to a person who served as predecessor of the Church in any of the capacities described in (a) or (b) above and to any employee or agent of the Church or a predecessor of the Church. Neither the amendment nor repeal of this Article, nor the adoption or amendment of any other provision of the bylaws or charter of the Church inconsistent with this Article, shall apply to or affect in any respect the applicability of the preceding paragraph with respect to any act or failure to act which occurred prior to such amendment, repeal or adoption.

## **Article 12 –Dissolution & Division**

Section A: Upon the dissolution of the corporation, the officers shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporation, dispose of all of the assets of the corporation exclusively for the purposes of the corporation in such a manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501C(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future U. S. Internal Revenue Law), as the Board of Elders shall determine. The physical properties owned by the church shall be given to the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to enable it to renew the work or use the values thereof to further advance the gospel of Jesus Christ in the city of Tampa.

Section B: If division occurs in the church, the name and all property are retained by those adhering to these By-laws and the current statement of faith.



## **Article 13 –Statement of Faith**

### The Scriptures

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments to be the full record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. Different men, while writing according to their own styles and personalities, were supernaturally moved along by the Holy Spirit to record God's very words, inerrant in the original writings. Therefore, those applying themselves to study its literal, historical-grammatical context can accurately understand God's Word. Scripture is fully trustworthy as our final and sufficient authority for all of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

### The Triune God

We believe in the one living and true God, eternally (John 17:3) existing in perfect unity as three equally and fully divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). Each member of the Godhead, while executing distinct but complementary roles in redemptive history, has precisely the same nature, attributes, and being, and is equally worthy of the same glory and honor and obedience (John 1:1-4; Acts 5:3-4).

### God the Father

We believe God the Father created all things in six literal days for His glory according to His own will (Revelation 4:11), through His Son, Jesus Christ. He upholds all things by the Word of His power and grace, exercising sovereign headship over all creation, providence, and redemption (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3).

### God the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, moved by love in accordance with the will of the Father, took on human flesh (John

1:1, 14, 18). Conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the virgin Mary. He, being fully God and fully man (John 14:8-9), lived a sinless life and sacrificially shed His blood and died on the cross in our place accomplishing redemption for all who place their faith in Him. He arose visibly and bodily from the dead three days later and ascended into heaven, where, at the Father's right hand, He is now Head of His Body the Church, the only Savior and Mediator between God and man, and will return to earth in power and glory to consummate His redemptive mission (1 Timothy 3:16).

### God the Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ during this age. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He draws the unredeemed to repentance and faith, and at salvation imparts new spiritual life to the believer, bringing that person into union with Christ and the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, seals, fills, guides, instructs, comforts, equips, empowers, permanently indwells at salvation, and bestows spiritual gifts to the believer for Christ-like living and service (John 16:8; 13:15; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:22; 4:11-12; Romans 8:9-17; 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:4-5, 11-13, 19; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

### Mankind

We believe that God created mankind—male and female—in His own image and likeness, free of sin, to glorify Himself and enjoy His fellowship. Tempted by Satan, but in the sovereign plan of God, man freely chose to disobey God, bringing sin, death and condemnation to all mankind. All human beings, therefore, are totally depraved by nature and by choice. Alienated from God without defense or excuse, and subject to God's righteous wrath, all of mankind is in desperate need of the Savior (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 1:18, 32).

## Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as the substitutionary atonement in our place, and that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ. Before Creation, God chose those who would be saved and granted this unearned grace solely based on His sovereign good pleasure. Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the sole and complete payment for sins, fully satisfying God's righteous wrath, for each person that turns from sin in repentance and places their faith in Christ alone by grace alone. At salvation each person is made a new creation by the Holy Spirit, declared righteous before God, and secured as an adopted child of God forever. Genuine faith continues in obedience and love for Jesus Christ with a life eager to glorify God and persevere to the end (Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

## The Church

We believe that upon placing one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the believer is made part of the Body of Christ, the one universal Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The Scriptures command believers to gather locally in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, fellowship, the sacrament/ ordinance of baptism and communion, service to the local body through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts, and outreach to the world to make disciples (Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 28:18-20). Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the Church under the watchful care of a plurality of elders. A church's members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (Ephesians 4:16).

## Baptism and Communion

We believe that Christian baptism is a public declaration of the believer's salvation in Christ, identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection symbolized by immersion in water. The Lord's Supper is the united commemoration by believers of Christ's death until He comes and should be preceded by a careful self-examination (Acts 2:41; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29).

## Missions

We believe it is the aim, duty, and privilege of every believer and local church fellowship to glorify God by responding as active participants in the Great Commission call of Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations. We believe the primary focus and priority of this call is centered on efforts that establish, strengthen, and reproduce biblically-based churches, which will then plant churches that plant churches for future generations and God's glory.

## Things to Come

We believe in and expectantly await the glorious, visible and personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed hope of His return has vital bearing on the personal life, service, and mission of the believer (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The lost will be raised to judgment and experience eternal wrath in hell. The saved will be raised to eternal joy in the new heaven and new earth in the manifested presence of God (Acts 1:3, 9; Hebrews 7:25-26).

## **Article 14 –Beliefs on Cultural Issues**

### **Marriage and Sexuality**

Section A: We believe that the term “marriage” has only one, legitimate meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, covenantal union, as delineated by Scripture. Marriage ceremonies performed in any facility owned, leased or rented by this church will be only those ceremonies sanctioned by God, joining one man with one woman as their genders were determined at birth. Whenever there is a conflict between the church’s position and any new legal standard for marriage, the church’s statement of faith, doctrines and biblical positions will govern. (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:22-23; Mark 10:6-9; I Cor. 7:1-9)

Section B: We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage as defined in (a) above. We believe that any other type of sexual activity, identity or expression that lies outside of this definition of marriage, including those that are becoming more accepted in the culture and the courts, are contradictory to God’s natural design and purpose for sexual activity. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9-10; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)

Section C: 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 and the rejection of one’s biological gender is a rejection of the image of God within that person. (Genesis 1:26-27)

## **Family Relationships**

Section A: We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders (pastors and elders) of the church. (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12)

Section B: We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are a wonderful gift and heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate training and discipline. (Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 127:3-5; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Mk. 10:6-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

Section C: Divorce and Remarriage. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce except in cases of adultery. Although divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or board member. (Mal. 2:14-17; Matt. 19:3-12; Mark 10:11-12; Rom. 7:1-3; I Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6; I Cor. 7:10-16)

## **Sanctity of Life**

Section A: We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion is murder and constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:13-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:36, 44)

Section B: We believe that an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, facilitates premature death, is assuming a decision that is to be reserved for God. We do not believe that discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome is euthanasia. (Ex. 20:13; 23:7; Matt. 5:21; Acts 17:28)

Section C: Love. We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward those who

are not believers, those who oppose us, and those who engage in sinful actions. We are to deal graciously, humbly, gently, and patiently with those who oppose us. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such actions. (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10; 17-21; 13:8-10; Phil. 2:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; I Peter 3:8-9; 1 John 3:17-18)

Section D: Lawsuits within the Church. We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits within the church. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32)

Section E: Protection of Children. We believe that children are from the Lord and must be absolutely protected within the church from any form of abuse or molestation. The church has zero tolerance for any person, whether paid staff, volunteer, member, or visitor, who abuses or molests a child. (Ps. 127:3-5; Matt. 18:6; Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14)

## **ARTICLE 15- Tax-exempt PROVISIONS**

### **Private Inurement**

No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for the services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article 2 hereof.

## **Dissolution**

Upon the dissolution of the church, the board shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all assets of the church to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as the board shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to tax-exempt organizations that agree with the church's statement of faith.

## **Nondiscrimination POLICY**

The church shall not discriminate against members, applicants, students, and others on the basis of race, color, or national and ethnic origin. While [church name] does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national and ethnic origin in its membership or employment policies, as a religious institution it reserves the right to deny membership or employment or to terminate the membership or employment of persons whose lifestyle, words, actions or otherwise do not align with the church's statement of faith, standard of conduct or other policies of this organization.

## **Limitation Of Activities**

Notwithstanding any other provision of these bylaws, the church shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the purposes stated in Article 2.

## **Article 16- Church Covenant**

As Christians, we are members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19) who are called to function, participate, and minister in a particular place within the body of Christ. A healthy body requires



that each member do its part well. A healthy church requires the same: members who are committed and well-equipped to do the works of service that God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10; 4:12). Vertical Church holds membership in high regard. God, in his sovereignty, placed us in the city of Alpharetta, among these people, at this time, for a reason (Acts 17:26-27). We expect our members to live as disciples making missionaries in the city of Alpharetta.

Being a member of our church is really about being part of a family. All members are disciples of Jesus, unified by their identity as new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). This unity is expressed in the way they collaborate in loving God, loving fellow Christians, and loving non-Christians. Members who enter into a covenant with their local church are called to a higher degree of responsibility and service. At the same time, the elders and deacons are covenanted to assist members first and foremost, to love and lead, provide counsel and aid, and pray for, teach, and guide them.

### **Obligation of Vertical Church Alpharetta to its members**

- We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the character qualifications required of them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- We covenant to care for you and see your growth as a disciple of Christ, in part by equipping you for service (Ephesians 4:11-13) and praying for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
- We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18).

- We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
- We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1).
- We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12)

## **Vertical Church Alpharetta Membership Covenant**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. And in light of the finished work of Christ, we covenant together in the following ways:

- We will strive to develop spiritual disciplines that draw one another closer to God.
- We will attend corporate worship on a regular basis.
- We will maintain a lifestyle that is consistent with scripture.
- We will seek mutual relationships with other believers in a Vertical Church small group.
- We will preserve the unity of biblical fellowship in matters of non-essential beliefs or preferences.
- We will submit to the biblical leadership of the church and support the leaders in prayer.
- We will pursue opportunities for service on a church ministry team.
- We will use our spiritual gifts to serve this church and its mission to our community and beyond.
- We will develop a giving plan in accordance to the biblical mandate to financially support the church.

**Article 17 –Amendments**

Section A: The Statement of Faith or Church Covenant shall be amended upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of three-quarters of the Members voting on the question at any regular Members' Meeting, provided the Amendment shall have been offered in writing at any previous regular Members' Meeting, and shall have been announced for two weeks immediately prior to final consideration. The revised version of the Statement of Faith or Church Covenant shall be made available to all church members.

Section B: These Bylaws shall be amended by a vote of three-quarters of the Members voting on the question at any regular Members' Meeting, provided the Amendment shall have been offered in writing at any previous regular Members' Meeting, and shall have been announced for two weeks immediately prior to final consideration. The revised version of these Bylaws shall be made available to all church members.

These bylaws were adopted by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the church in which a quorum was present.

These bylaws supersede any other bylaws of Vertical Church church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Church Secretary

