

RIVER VALLEY  
COMMUNITY CHURCH  
Grants Pass, Oregon

CONSTITUTION  
AS AMENDED  
MAY 24, 2005

# RIVER VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH CONSTITUTION

## ARTICLE I – NAME

River Valley Community Church (RVCC)

## ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

Our Mission is to **Win** people to Jesus, **Equip** them to seek an intimate relationship with Jesus and to **Send** them to serve and share Jesus! - All by the power of the Spirit to the glory of God the Father.

Our Vision is to build a caring community of individuals and families committed to being more like Jesus through worship celebration, equipping and home groups.

## ARTICLE III – WHAT WE BELIEVE (Statements of Faith)

### A. Core Beliefs

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God. (I Thessalonians 2:13, II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:21)
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19, I Peter 3:18, John 15:26)
3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory. (Mark 16:19, I Corinthians 15:3-4, I Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-10; I John 2:1)
4. We believe that The Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that all who by faith alone repent and believe in Him alone are justified (made righteous) by His shed blood. (Romans 3:21-28; 4:5, Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10, 13, 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:24.)
5. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration (new birth) by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. (John 3:3,7; 1 Timothy 3:4-7)
6. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, who indwell all believers, and by this indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a Godly life. (John 14:16-17; 16:13, Romans 8:5-11; 26-27, 1 Corinthians 2:12.)
7. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting, conscious punishment of the lost. (II Thessalonians 1:5-10, John 5:29, I Thessalonians 4:13-18)
8. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. (John 13:35)
9. We believe in the grace and forgiveness of our Lord Jesus. Every person, no matter how much they have broken God's commands in His Word and listed in these Statements of Faith, is deeply loved by God and is a potential child of God by receiving forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ. (Rom. 10:11-13; 1 Tim. 1:12-17; 1 Cor. 6:9-11, John 1:12)

### B. Additional Beliefs & Positions (Since some social issues create more litigation than others, it has become advisable for our church to declare in writing its position on the following issues.)

1. We believe that marriage is unique among all relationships in that it is set apart by God to signify to the world the relationship between His Son and His Bride, the Church. Therefore this bond is extraordinary among all human bonds, and the breaking of it, likewise. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). He views

marriage as a permanent life- long commitment between a man and a woman. (Mark 10:6-9). When it is impossible for a married couple to stay together, the Bible is very specific about two narrow concessions God makes for our inability to live peaceably together.

A. Sexual Immorality. In Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-9 we read that God allows the spurned spouse to divorce and remarry when sexual immorality has occurred.

B. Abandonment. Desertion by an unbelieving spouse is also a concession for divorce and remarriage since the believing spouse is no longer Biblically bound. (1 Corinthians 7:10-15) In both of these cases, however, forgiveness and reconciliation are always encouraged in an attempt to preserve and heal the marriage and family. We recognize that each marital conflict scenario is unique and should be handled on a case-by-case basis. This includes providing the appropriate Biblical protection, care, assistance, instruction and correction.

2. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; I Thess. 4:18; Heb. 13:4)
3. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; I Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)
4. We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well being of the mother are acceptable. We believe that the only permissible time for abortion is when the life of the mother is at risk. (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44)
5. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in value, worth, and personhood before God as all are made in the image and likeness of God. But God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions or roles for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to have the final spiritual authority or "Headship" of the home, and men are to be the "final spiritual authorities" or "heads" over the church as Pastors and Elders. (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12).
6. 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 heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including possible Scriptural corporal correction. (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; I Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4, Col. 3:18-21; Heb. 13:4; I Pet. 3:1-7)
7. We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both those who are not believers and those who oppose us. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the 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 sinful 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; 1 John 3:17-18)
8. We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may be compensated 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)

## **ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP**

Christians desiring to become members of River Valley Community Church shall do so by the Elder-established process described below. A list of members shall be maintained and updated annually. The matter of church discipline is overseen by the Elder Board who shall be governed by Scripture. (see section C)

### **A. Membership Requirements**

River Valley Community Church emphasizes the need for, and importance of a formal membership process for the following reasons:

1. We believe that the Bible teaches that believers clearly identified themselves with a local church, and were challenged to become active participants. (Romans 12:4-8, I Corinthians 12:27)
2. Membership is valuable to church leaders as they seek to fulfill their God-given task of shepherding. River Valley will always attract the curious and uncommitted – seekers, observers, guests. That should be the case and we thank God for this opportunity. It is important then, at some point to identify who truly comprises the “flock” of River Valley - the core that we know are with us. Just as a family is aware of its members, so a church family should be aware of its members.
3. Membership benefits each individual member. In a culture where commitment and loyalty are not seen as important core values, a declaration of membership is an important spiritual step as a believer moves from the nebulous level of good intentions into the clear light of committed participation.

In light of these reasons, we have a “formal membership” at River Valley that consists of those who have:

- Publicly acknowledged personal faith in Christ through baptism. ++
- Affirm the Core Beliefs, Additional Beliefs & Positions, Mission, Vision, Biblical Priorities, Core Values, Constitution, and Policy Manual.◇
- Attended Starting Point or a new members’ class.
- Affirmed and signed the “Fellowship Commitment” and have been formally approved by the Elders.

They invest their time and energy, develop and use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given them and give faithfully of their financial resources to see this purpose accomplished.

++ Our church teaches & practices baptism by immersion following salvation, but we do realize that individuals come to us from other Christian baptismal traditions. In such cases one of the Elders will discuss the matter with the applicant and bring a recommendation to the Elders for a final decision.

◇ It is recognized that there will be those who choose to fellowship with us who do not agree in all points with our teaching positions and church operating procedures. If a prospective or present member has a concern with any belief, position, value or priority, the candidate is encouraged to bring their concern(s) to a designated Elder for consideration. The Elder Board will then discuss the matter and make a final decision. We welcome all to participate freely with us, yet at the same time cannot permit doctrines to be taught within our body that are contrary to what we believe the Bible communicates.

### **B. Membership Status**

Any member who has been absent from the Church for a period of one year with no recorded communication or recorded contribution to its support, will be declared inactive and removed from membership in accordance with ORS# 65.167. Members under our Caring Ministry (i.e. those unable to attend service due to ongoing medical reasons) will be given special consideration. Communication is defined in a manner decided by the Elder Board.

## C. Discipline

Throughout the history of the early church as recorded in the New Testament, there prevails a clear and distinctive theme that discipline must be exercised in the church. The discipline is not directed at the church as an institution, but is directed at those individuals who comprise the body of believers and followers of Jesus Christ. This discipline does not involve our circle of friends, work associates, neighbors or family members who are unbelievers. Christ wants the church, the body, to be holy and blameless. Therefore, each member of the body must seek to be living a life aimed in the direction of holiness and blamelessness.

### 1. The Need for Loving Correction

The need for discipline in the church results from three potentially wayward actions that must be dealt with promptly:

- FALSE TEACHING – We are to have absolutely nothing to do with false teaching and false teachers. Reproof must be given to anyone following false teaching that they may be sound in their faith. (2 John 7-11, Titus 1:13)
- DISORDER – Disorder in the body of Christ must be corrected. We are to stay away from Christian brothers and sisters who live unruly lives, correct those who practice irresponsible living, stay away from trouble makers and avoid those who hinder and cause dissension contrary to scriptural teachings by gossiping and speaking against others in the church body. (2 Thessalonians 3:6-16, Romans 16:17-19) – also see The Biblical Way to Deal with Conflict and Disagreement with Church Leaders in Section 4 of the RVCC Policy Manual.
- WICKEDNESS – It sounds like a strong word, but the apostle Paul instructed the church to remove the wicked from the fellowship of the body. The wicked are those who are sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. We are admonished not to associate with such Christian brothers. Immorality's affect on the church is likened to the effects of yeast in unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is to remain pure as the church is to remain pure. Paul said: "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast-as you really are." (I Corinthians 5:7)

### 2. The Spirit of Loving Correction

Discipline is often associated with an unloving spirit of harshness and vengeance. Nothing could be further from the Scriptural command: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35) The discipline of the body of Christ is performed in a humble spirit unlike anything experienced in the world.

- GENTLENESS – The offender or trespasser is to be restored to fellowship in a spirit of gentleness. (Galatians 6:1)
- HUMILITY AND PURITY – The offender or trespasser is to be confronted by someone who is "spiritual" (one who is walking with the Lord, having confessed all known sin) and humble (not a "holier than thou" but one who realizes his/her own sins and imperfections and is living under the grace of God) (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 7:1-5)
- LOVE – The repentant offender must be forgiven and comforted and not allowed to experience excessive sorrow. Reaffirm your love for him. (2 Corinthians 2:6-8)
- SUBMISSION – The offender must obey and submit to the leadership of the church, recognizing that God's leaders are on guard for what is best for his/her life, "...for they keep watch over you as men who must give an account." (Hebrews 13:17)

- **AUTHORITY** – Discipline is not based upon man’s idea of what is right or wrong. Rather, discipline is given based upon the authority of God’s Word. The offender must respond to God’s authority. (1 Thessalonians 5:12)

### 3. The Process for Loving Correction

Our Lord outlined a simple but bold process for exercising discipline in the church: (Matthew 18:15-17)

- **Step #1: CALL ON GOD** - Pray first. Talk to God before you talk to the person. Make sure your attitude, motives, approach and timing are right. (1 John 5:14-17; James 5:13-20)
- **Step #2: CONFRONT ONE ON ONE** – “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” Go to the person one-on-one. Don’t talk to anyone else about it. Share with the person what you have seen and/or heard. Get the facts from them. And then, if necessary, call them to repentance, if they haven’t yet.
- **Step #3: CONFRONT WITH ONE OR TWO OTHERS** – “But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If some time has passed since you talked to the person one-on-one and they have not repented of their sin, then take one or two others with you and together call them to repent and turn to Jesus.
- **Step #4: CONFRONT WITH A LARGER GROUP** – “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;” If some time has passed since the two (or three) of you have talked to the person and they have not repented of their sin, then tell a larger group of believers that know and care for the person to initiate correction (individually or with one or two others) with the person and call them to repent and turn to Jesus. The public announcement/proceedings concerning a member that has been placed under church discipline can proceed in front of all who are in attendance at that meeting.
- **Step #5: CEASE FELLOWSHIP** – “and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” If some time has passed since the larger group has gone to the person and they still have not repented, then break off Christian fellowship with the person. Continue to pray for them, be kind and loving to them, call them to repentance, but do not allow them to experience the blessing of Christian fellowship so that they will miss it and hopefully return to Jesus and the fellowship in His family.
- **Step #6: COMFORT** – Since a major goal of loving correction is restoration, we must enthusiastically receive the repentant person back into church fellowship with open arms: “The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him”. (2 Corinthians 2:6-8) \*

### 4. The Results of Loving Correction

Discipline produces positive results when scriptural principles are applied. “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11) After this process has been followed and a member retains an unrepentant heart, designated leaders will remove the person from the membership. The designated leaders have the authority to suspend or revoke the right of any person, including a member, to enter or remain on church property. If after being notified of such a suspension or revocation, the person enters or remains on church property, the person may, in the discretion of the pastor (or in his absence, an individual designated by the Elder Board), be treated as a trespasser. Once the discipline process has begun the designated leadership can continue the process even if the member revokes their own membership and leaves.

## **ARTICLE V – CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

### **A. Christ's Authority**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of River Valley Community Church

### **B. Lead Pastor's Authority and Responsibility under Christ**

The Lead Pastor shall guide the staff and Elders in the shepherding of the church. The Lead Pastor by virtue of his office is a voting member of the Elder Board and all other committees and is accountable to the Elders.

### **C. Elder's Scriptural Authority and Responsibility under Christ:**

The Elders have scriptural authority and responsibility, as under-shepherds of Christ, to lead and direct the affairs of River Valley Community Church. They shall carry out this responsibility in prayerful submission to the leading of the Holy Spirit in line with the teachings of the Bible. Their responsibility shall be to care for the spiritual well-being of the members of the church, realizing they will one day give an account to the Lord for their ministry. The Elders shall, under God, in conformity to His Word, and in accordance with the RVCC Policy Manual, set the mission and goals of River Valley Community Church. Decisions of the Elders require at least a two-thirds majority vote. (see section G.3.a)

### **D. Elder/Congregation Relationship**

For the local Christian congregation that sincerely desires to follow the New Testament Church model, Jesus Christ is The Shepherd, scripture is the final and sufficient guide, and the Elders are Christ's under-shepherds and need to be continually mindful that they are accountable to God. The Elders' leadership is to be exercised in a way that models Christ-like, humble, loving leadership. As the congregation looks to its Elders for wise leadership, the Elders also look to the congregation – their brothers and sisters – for wisdom, counsel, inspiration, creative ideas, help, and prayer.+

#### **Scriptural evidence for the authority of Elder leadership:**

- leaders were Jesus' foundation for building the church (Matthew 16)
- leaders were responsible for the distribution and management of congregational assets (Acts 2:42, 4:32-35)
- leaders initiate, supervise, and finalize the selection of additional leaders (I Timothy 1:5, Acts 6:1-6, Acts 14:23)
- leaders shape the process of decision-making (Acts 15:1-33)
- leaders bear inherent authority (I Thessalonians 2:6)
- leaders are to be highly esteemed and honored (I Thessalonians 5:12-13; I Timothy 5:17)
- leaders are not to be selected or removed hastily (I Timothy 5:17-21)
- leaders are to reproduce themselves for the good of the church (II Timothy 2:2)
- leaders are to be obeyed (Hebrews 13:17)
- leaders are accountable to God for their "charge" (I Peter 5:1-7)

#### **Scriptural evidence for the involvement of the congregation:**

- the congregation is involved in the nomination and recognition of leaders (Acts 6:1-7)
- the congregation is involved in thoughtful consensus measurement in major decision-making (Acts 15:1-32)
- the congregation may be involved in the discipline process of a member or a leader (Matthew 18:17, I Timothy 5:19-21)
- the congregation utilizes spiritual gifts in ministering to one another (I Peter 4:10)

**Summary:** The authority to administer the affairs of the church is vested in a plurality of mature men who have been recognized by the people. They lead the congregation at large in following God's Word in such a manner as to preserve a unity of the Spirit, aspiring to the fullness of Christ.

**E. Selection Process of Elders**

The Elders shall direct the church in the process of selecting and retaining Elders. These Elders are the “Corporate Members” as defined by the Articles of Incorporation. A quorum shall constitute two thirds of the elected Elders. Careful attention shall be given to Titus 1:5-9 and I Timothy 3:1-7 in the process of selection, removal, or replacement of an Elder. The Elder Board shall consist of a minimum of twelve scripturally qualified men in addition to the Lead Pastor. Church members are encouraged to regularly provide the Elders with names of qualified men to be considered as potential Elders. A slate of prospective Elders shall then be presented by the Elders to the church. Church members will then be encouraged to express themselves, either verbally or in writing, regarding each candidate. This process will also include an all-church survey of affirmation or scriptural disqualification that will be conducted in order for the Elders to more fully evaluate the candidate(s). After due and prayerful consideration the Elder Board will recognize new Board Members. The term of office of Elder shall be two years. An Elder may be re-nominated at the end of the term. Staff Pastors may serve as Elders if they are selected in the nomination process. They then serve as full members of the board, having the same voting rights and responsibilities of any Elder. The Elder Board shall not consist of more than one third paid Staff Pastors. All Elders serve without pay or compensation for their duties on the board. (For additional information on the Elder selection process, see the RVCC Policy Manual)

**F. Selection and Removal of Lead Pastor:**

A candidate for the position of Lead Pastor shall be recommended by the Elders and confirmed in an election at a special or regular meeting of the church. Congregational notice of the election shall be given during regular services and be published in the bulletin for the two weekends immediately preceding the date of the meeting. A candidate must receive affirmative votes from at least two thirds of those written ballots cast by members. After due and prayerful consideration, the Elders may extend a call to the candidate. The Lead Pastor may be dismissed if the elders deem it necessary. (see section G.2.a)

**G. Staff Positions**

The Lead Pastor, with confirmation of the Elders, will oversee the creation of staff positions, the selection, removal, and administration of staff, within the established annual budget. \*\*

1. General Qualifications

Those serving in a leadership or ministry capacity shall strive to meet the qualifications of a Deacon. Those striving to be Pastors should strive to meet the qualifications of an Elder as in I Timothy 3:8-13. All positions of leadership require spiritual maturity. Recognizing that none are perfect, all should be striving toward Christ-likeness in all areas of living. The fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 should be evident in the lives of all leaders.

2. Staff

a. Lead Pastor: His primary responsibility shall be the teaching and preaching of God's Word, supervision of the pastoral staff, and overseeing the ministries of the church. The Lead Pastor shall be a man of Christian ministry experience and established character. He shall become a member of the church and be in full accord with its doctrine. He may exercise the privilege to address and be a voting member of all ministry teams of the church. If the Lead Pastor resigns, one month's notice shall be given in writing unless waived by mutual consent. A resignation does not require a vote of acceptance.

If the Board of Elders determines that the Lead Pastor is failing to live up to the scriptural standards and responsibilities of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and/or is recognized as incompetent to fulfill his duties as the head shepherd of River Valley Community Church he shall be terminated by a two-thirds majority vote of the entire Elder Board. All situations necessitating severance are discussed in the RVCC Personnel Policy Handbook.

b. Staff Salaries: All employee salaries will be annually reviewed by a Salary Review Team made up of the Elder Board Chairman, minimum two additional Elders (non-paid), the Pastor of Management and the Lead Pastor and/or his designee(s). This team will evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of our current staff salaries. Any paid staff member may not be present during the discussion of his own salary. Upon review, a presentation will be made by the Team to the Elder Board for approval. Elders who are on the paid staff must dismiss themselves from the board meeting during this vote. The remaining Elders (non-paid) must affirm the recommended salaries by a two-thirds majority vote.

### 3. Elders

a. Making Decisions: The presence of two thirds of the elected Elders at a meeting provides a quorum, and a two-thirds majority vote of that quorum is sufficient to approve all actions. Generally, the Elders do not make decisions by majority vote of a quorum. In seeking to follow the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, in matters of church polity and practice, they make decisions by consensus. That means the vast majority must favor the decision, and anyone dissenting must be willing to defer to the wishes of the other Board members. If that occurs, consensus is reached. If a dissenting member is adamant, or if several members are not supportive, usually the decision will not be made. This requires maturity, trust, and deference on the part of all members to prevent rule by dissent. If a quorum is not present at a meeting, decisions will be postponed, or a phone vote of missing Board members will be conducted if immediate action is necessary. Actions taken as a result of a phone vote will be ratified at the next regular meeting and will be entered into the minutes of that meeting.

b. Assent/Dissent: Board members present at a meeting are presumed to assent to all decisions of the Board. If there is the occasion for a Board member to dissent but defer to the other members, he may ask that his dissent be noted in the official meeting minutes.

#### c. Officers & Their Duties:

The officers of the church include the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer. These positions shall all be held by members of the Elder Board except for the treasurer which can also be held by the Pastor of Finances (or Elder designee). There is no term or rotation requirement. The officers will normally be confirmed or replaced at the first Board meeting following the annual Vision Celebration weekend.

1. The chairman will serve as the “president” of the church corporation in all legal matters unless another party is specifically named by the Board to act as representative or signer for a certain matter. The chairman is responsible to annually review the job description and objectives of the Lead Pastor. The chairman is also responsible to organize and carry out the yearly job evaluation of the Lead Pastor and ascertain that evaluations of other staff personnel are performed on the same basis.\* In the absence of the Lead Pastor, the chairman (or a designee appointed by the Elder Board) shall be the administrative head of the church.
2. The vice-chairman will conduct meetings of the Elder Board in the absence of the chairman.

3. The secretary will keep the minutes of the Elder Board and will keep on file all minutes and other appropriate documentation used in making decisions and/or taking action. He shall also act as “secretary” of the church corporation in all legal matters unless another party is specifically named by the Board to act as representative or signer for a certain matter.
4. An officer is affirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Elder Board. He may resign at any time. Removal from a named office requires a two-thirds majority vote of the entire Elder Board. A vacancy caused by the resignation or removal of an Elder Board officer will be filled by the Elders within 30 calendar days.

d. Dismissal & Replacement: If the Elder Board determines that an Elder is failing to live up to the scriptural standards and responsibilities of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, he shall be dismissed by a two-thirds majority vote of the entire Elder Board. In the event of a dismissal or vacancy, the Elder Board may appoint an interim Elder to complete his term.

e. Elders and Divorce: In both of Paul’s qualification lists, he places the qualification “the husband of one wife” immediately after “above reproach.” So the first and foremost area in which an elder must be above reproach is in his marital and sexual life. The simplest and least problematic interpretation is that the phrase is meant to be a positive statement that expresses faithful, monogamous marriage. In English we would say, “faithful and true to one woman” or “a one-woman man.” The latter phrasing closely follows the Greek wording. Scripture says the candidate for eldership should be a “one-woman man,” meaning he has an exclusive relationship with one woman. Such a man is above reproach in his sexual and marital life.

Famed Southern Baptist Seminary professor and linguist A.T. Robertson and many other conservative commentators (including John MacArthur, J. Vernon McGee and Charles Swindoll, and the distinguished Greek scholar Dr. Kenneth Wuest) agree this phrase addresses the issues of polygamy and fidelity in marriage, not divorce. However, we should not assume from this that divorce is inconsequential or insignificant. Jesus sternly warned His followers to avoid divorce.

An Elder candidate who has been divorced must be evaluated for eldership based on the “above reproach” qualification mandate. When selecting an Elder, a divorce should be seen as a “yellow or red flag” in the candidate’s past. Since an Elder must be above reproach and a good steward of his family, a recent divorce or any concerns about his relationship with his wife or leadership of his family, disqualifies a man from serving as an Elder. However, divorce is not the unpardonable sin for church leaders. For example, a man may have divorced many years ago. Since then, he may have remarried and, for years, lived an exemplary and mature Christian life. This man may now enjoy a godly marriage, raising children who love the Lord. When we take the man’s total life experience into consideration, the divorce should not disqualify him from consideration as an Elder. (1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6) +

## **H. Women In Ministry at RVCC**

Because we believe that both genders receive, without discrimination from God, all the spiritual gifts, we affirm women in leadership, teaching, and shepherding positions at RVCC. As each woman shows spiritual maturity, gentle and humble attitudes toward Elder-led authority and the appropriate spiritual gifting to minister in a leadership position, she will then be seen as equally qualified and capable of serving in any ministry at RVCC except positions of Elder, Pastor or ongoing and primary Teacher/Shepherd over men. In order to maintain and display the picture of “Christ and the church” men are to be the only “Heads or Elders” in final spiritual authority over the church. \*

## **ARTICLE VI – FINANCES AND CHURCH PROPERTY**

The Elders shall establish an annual budget and present it to the congregation three weeks prior to the Annual Meeting. Church members will be encouraged to express themselves verbally and in writing regarding the budget. A simple majority vote of the members present shall be required to affirm the annual budget. Non-budgeted expenditures greater than 5% of the current annual budget must be approved, at a special meeting of the congregation, by a simple majority vote of the congregation to affirm the Elders' proposal. The Elders shall have authority over, and responsibility for, all church real estate. In case of dissolution of River Valley Community Church, all money and property shall be given to (an) appropriate Christian organization(s). Membership in this church does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Although the general public is invited to all of the church's worship services, the church property remains private property.

### **A. Access to Records**

RVCC will provide summary financial statements upon request. However, because of the confidential nature of counseling records, staff salaries, member contributions, elder minutes and similarly confidential documents, such records will not be made available to members of the congregation or to the general public. The Elders will make every effort to discuss pertinent and appropriate information with any member who has just cause for inquiry. The Elder Board meetings can be attended by any congregational member by appointment scheduled with the Elder Board Chairman. In special circumstances an executive Elder Board session may be in progress necessitating a closed meeting. The above-stated policies are in compliance with ORS 65.774(5)(a).

### **B. River Valley Community Church as a Corporation**

River Valley Community Church has been organized for charitable, religious, and educational purposes consistent with the definition of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. This constitution is intended to accurately reflect church procedures while conforming to mandatory requirements of the Oregon Nonprofit Corporation Act. All other issues of policy will be outlined in the RVCC Policy Manual. This manual will not be treated as an addendum to the constitution but merely a working document that outlines the current day-to-day operating procedures of River Valley Community Church and can be modified by the Elders as needed, without a congregational vote, to best serve the needs of RVCC.

### **C. Designated Contributions**

From time to time RVCC, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the Elder Board. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to RVCC other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article 2. In a circumstance where funds need to be redirected, the Elders must approve this decision with a two-thirds majority vote.

### **D. Indemnification**

#### **1. Actions Subject to Indemnification**

The RVCC Elder Board may indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including all appeals (other than an action by or in the right of the

church) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a Pastor, Elder, officer, employee, or agent of the church, against expenses, including attorneys' fees, judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding; and if that person acted in good faith and in a manner he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

## 2. Expenses Subject to Indemnification

To the extent that a Pastor, Elder, officer, employee, or agent has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys' fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

## 3. Limitations of Indemnification

Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by the RVCC Elder Board only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the Pastor, Elder, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 1 of this Article. The determination shall be made (a) by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of the Pastor and Elders who were not and are not parties to or threatened with the action, suit, or proceeding; (b) if the described quorum is not obtainable or if a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested Elders so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or (c) by a majority vote of the members of the church.

## 4. Timing of Indemnification

Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by the church as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the RVCC Elder Board in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the Pastor, Elder, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by the church.

## 5. Extent of Indemnification

The indemnification provided by this Article shall be deemed to be discretionary unless otherwise required as a matter of law or under any agreement or provided by insurance purchased by the church, both as to action of each person seeking indemnification under this Article in his official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding that office, and may continue as to a person who has ceased to be a Pastor, Elder, officer, employee, or agent and may inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

## 6. Insurance

The RVCC Elder Board may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a Pastor, Elder, officer, employee, or agent of the church against any liability asserted against him and

incurred by him in that capacity, or arising out of his status in that capacity, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify him against liability under the provisions of this Article.

## **ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS & COMMITTEES**

The date of the Annual Meeting of RVCC will be set by the Elders and announced at least three weeks prior to the event with appropriate documents provided to the congregation. The congregation will be encouraged to express themselves verbally and in writing regarding relevant issues. Special meetings may be convened by the Elders as deemed necessary with two weeks' notice to the church membership. During the Annual Meeting an all church vote shall be taken by which a simple majority of the members present shall be required to affirm the annual budget. Only members at least sixteen years of age who are physically present at a duly called meeting of the church shall be entitled to vote. There shall be no proxy or absentee voting. Members may not vote to initiate any church action, rather the vote of a member is to confirm and ratify the direction of the church as determined by the Lead Pastor and the Elder Board.

### **A. Meetings**

The moderator (Elder Chairman and/or his designee) shall determine the rules of procedure according to his sense of fairness and common sense, giving all members a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a matter. The moderator is the final authority on questions of procedure, and his decision is final and controlling. For any meeting under this article, the moderator, in his sole discretion, shall have full and unilateral authority to require nonmembers to leave the meeting room and to order the immediate removal of any member or other person present who is deemed by the moderator to be disruptive to the proceedings by act or presence. The moderator shall have full authority to order the removal of all children (ages to be determined by the moderator) if the moderator determines, in his sole discretion, that circumstances so warrant. If the moderator determines that compliance with his order of removal is unsatisfactory, the moderator may, in his sole discretion, revoke the disruptive person's right to remain on the premises and treat the person as a trespasser.

### **B. Committees**

#### **1. Standing Ministry Teams**

The Lead Pastor (or the Elder Board if the office of Lead Pastor is vacant) shall appoint Standing Ministry Teams (teams that serve on a regular and consistent manner) and designate a leader/facilitator for each Standing Ministry Team and, except when otherwise specifically provided in these bylaws, shall determine the membership of each Standing Ministry Team.

#### **2. Special Ministry Teams**

The Lead Pastor and Elder Board, at their discretion, may create Special Ministry Teams (teams that serve on an as needed basis and are typically disbanded after the task has been accomplished) to provide the Board with advice and information regarding matters submitted to the Ministry Team by the Board for consideration. The Ministry Team shall have no authority to act on behalf of the corporation. The members of the Ministry Team shall be chosen by a majority vote of the Elder Board and shall serve solely at the discretion of the Elder Board. The Special Ministry Team shall be subject to the control and direction of the Elder Board at all times. Any groups, committees, or teams formed without Elder approval may be viewed as being divisive and may initiate the appropriate discipline process by the Elder Board.

## **ARTICLE VIII – AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this Constitution shall be recommended by the Elders. The congregation will be encouraged to express themselves verbally and in writing regarding the proposed amendment(s). Final affirmation occurs by a simple majority vote of the members present at the Annual Meeting or at a Special Meeting. Elders are charged with the responsibility to review and update the current and approved RVCC Policy Manual.\*

(\*Refer to RVCC Policy Manual)

(\*\*Refer to RVCC Personnel Policy Handbook)

(+This paragraph represents selected quotes from, *“Biblical Eldership”* by Alexander Strauch, Lewis & Roth Publishers, ©1995)