

RIVER VALLEY
COMMUNITY CHURCH

POLICY
MANUAL

Est. 2005
Grants Pass, Oregon

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Section One

Our Biblical Priorities

“The biblical mandates that we will focus on to accomplish our Vision.”

1. **Bible** – The Bible, not human wisdom, is the final authority for what we believe and how we live. It is God’s Word to us, sufficient to equip us for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:15,16; Hebrews 4:12)
2. **Worship** – The essence of worship is the celebration of God as supremely valued and worthy. We are to worship Him in every aspect of life. (Psalm 96; Romans 12:1)
3. **Prayer** – Prayer is simply communicating with God. We believe it is the means for an intimate relationship with the Lord and the primary weapon in which to release the power of God in our lives and in this world. (Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2)
4. **Discipleship** (Spirit-led life) – The process of becoming a mature, Spirit-led follower of Jesus in every area of life. (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5; 3:3)
5. **Fellowship** – Living out our Christian lives in close community with other believers is essential for our spiritual health and growth. (Acts 2:42-47)
6. **Evangelism** (local and global) – Taking the Gospel of Christ “across the street and around the world!” (Matthew 28:19,20)
7. **Ministry** – Every member a minister. Every believer has been called by God to serve and be used by Him in this world. (Ephesians 4:11-16)
8. **Stewardship** – Everything we possess belongs to God. Life is a trust. Therefore we are under loving obligation to invest our God-given time, talents and treasures for the advancement of His Kingdom. (Matthews 25:14-30; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

Section Two

Our Core Values

“Convictions that God has given to us that make River Valley unique.”

1. **Christ Focused / Word Centered** – We desire to be a church where everything we are and do centers on the person of Jesus (Romans 11:36) and His Word (2 Timothy 3:15,16).
2. **Grace Oriented** – Living under God’s unconditional and inexhaustible love, acceptance and forgiveness and extending that same grace to others. Jesus came for the sick and needy, therefore we will minister to those needing healing and recovery, bringing people to a Christ-centered wholeness. (Titus 2:11-14; Colossians 3:12-14)
3. **Faith in God** – Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). We believe God wants to build His church and use us in a significant way in this world. Not because of who we are, but because of who God is and how desperately people need Him. (Ephesians 3:20; Matthew 16:18; Matthew 9:29)
4. **Vision and Mission Oriented** – we believe in accomplishing our God-given vision and mission over the maintenance and survival of an institution.
5. **Church of Home Groups** – authentic communities of faith where people deeply love Jesus and one another. As the church grows larger, we must grow smaller with Home Groups.
6. **Unity** – Unity in essentials, freedom in non-essentials (agree to disagree).
7. **Message vs. Methods** – the Message (God’s teaching in the Bible) must never change, but Methods (church strategies, programs, structures, and styles) must change when appropriate, in light of our changing world, in order to most effectively reach people. The church should be culturally relevant (informal atmosphere, contemporary music, application oriented, etc.) while remaining Biblically pure. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; John 17)
8. **Target Groups Ministry** – because the opportunities for ministry are so broad, we choose to emphasize ministry to target groups - for example: youth, children, singles, young families, senior adults, people in recovery, etc. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)
9. **Church of the Valley** – we play an important role in the overall “church” of Grants Pass and the surrounding areas. We are lovingly united with other Christ-centered churches in our valley in a fellowship known as “Church of the Valley.” (Ephesians 1:1; Romans 1:7)
10. **Excellence** – doing things with excellence honors God and inspires people. (Colossians 3:23)
11. **Church Leadership** – Christ is the Head of the Church. He gives authority to Elders/Pastors as a team to lead and shepherd His church. The *Lead* Pastor is a “leader among equals.” Elders/Pastors need to provide ongoing communication to the Body as well as soliciting input from the Body on a regular basis. (1 Peter 5:1-4)
12. **Meeting Needs** – By discovering and meeting perceived needs, we earn the opportunity to meet people at their point of real need, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 9:35-38)

13. **Family** – The Bible puts a high value on the family as one of the primary “God-ordained” institutions in society. We are committed to cultivating and supporting families in their quest of becoming more like Christ. (Ephesians 5:21– 6:4)
14. **The Big Picture** – We emphasize that God is most concerned about three things...the What, Why, How of the Christian life. These have been called “God’s Trifocals.”
 - a. **Love** – this is “What” we are supposed to do. Jesus said that love is the greatest commandment, and that by loving God and others, we fulfill all the commands of the Bible. (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10)
 - b. **Glorify God** – this is “Why” we are to love – so that in all things God will look good and be more clearly revealed in our lives. We love so that we keep the spotlight on Jesus. (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 4:11)
 - c. **In the Power of the Spirit** – this is “How” we glorify God in our love. There is only one way to do this – only through depending on the power and control of the Holy Spirit in our lives. (John 15:5; Galatians 2:20; 3:3; 5:16; Romans 8:1-18)

Section Three

The Procedure For Elder Selection

1. Identification

- a. Anyone in the church family may, after prayerful consideration of the scriptural qualifications, recommend one of the men of the church to the Eldership for consideration as an Elder. Each person so presented is given serious consideration by the existing Elders.
- b. Once a man is under consideration and is scripturally qualified, they spend some time in contact with him in order to determine with him God's will in this matter. (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2).
- c. Following the identification of a potential Elder, the Elders take reasonable time to get to know the candidate. This time provides for:
 - I. Prayer and fasting for God's will in the matter (Acts 14:23).
 - II. A period to familiarize the man with the functions of an elder.
 - III. A sufficient opportunity for the existing leaders to develop their relationship with the person and to evaluate his spiritual depth and character as one who might share in the ministry of equipping the saints (1 Timothy 5:22).
- d. Any areas of life in which the man is found lacking are discussed lovingly, candidly and confidentially within the Eldership. The candidate's continuation in the process of becoming an Elder is determined by the circumstances of any deficiency that arises.

2. Period of Consideration

- a. Once agreed that the man appears to desire the office under the Lord's direction, the Elders notify the congregation of the candidate under consideration.
- b. The church family is encouraged to pray for the man and his family. During this period the Elders challenge the body to affirm the man or to bring to them any report which may affect his qualification for the office of Elder.
- c. Any objections concerning the candidate which might surface during this process are worked through in a constructive manner with the man involved so that any deficiencies or misunderstandings may be addressed and corrected.
- d. Any areas of life in which the man is found lacking results in an invitation for a discipling relationship between a member of the Elders and the candidate. In this way deficiencies are dealt with directly and the candidate may be considered for the eldership at a future time.

3. Presentation to Church

When the Elders are assured of God's direction, and that any former objections have been dealt with properly, the new Elder is publicly affirmed by the Elders in the presence of the congregation. He is given opportunity to share with the church family his heart and sense of the Spirit's leading for him to assume the office of Elder.

Section Four
The Biblical Way to Deal with Conflict and Disagreement
with Church Leaders

1. In any church, it is not uncommon to have a thousand different opinions on a certain issue. So, when church leaders seek God's heart for the direction of the church and make difficult decisions, there are a few different responses that church members can have.

a. Response #1 – "I like the decision and I accept and trust that God is working through the leadership."

This, of course, is the easiest position to be in because you believe God is working through the leaders and you actually like the decision.

b. Response #2 – "I do not like the decision, but I accept and trust that God is working through the leadership."

This is not an easy position to be in because, even though you believe that God is working through the leaders, it may not be the decision you would have made if you were in charge. A great attitude is to be able to say, "Well, I'm not doing back-flips over this decision or change, but I believe that God has spoken to our leaders and they are accountable before Him for their leadership. So I will support them and get on board."

If you continue to struggle with the decision or direction then the next step is to say, "I'm going to give the leaders the benefit of the doubt and spend a lot of time in prayer over this."

After prayer, God may lead you to talk to the leaders in love (one-on-one in humility). When you talk with them, honestly listen to them. Do not go with the goal of changing the leadership, go with the goal of trying to understand and be understood. Many times people define "listening" as, "They did what I wanted them to do." Because it is biblical, these mature "one-on-one" conversations, with the right attitude, can be very valuable.

Often, these meetings are very helpful for leaders, even though the participants may agree to disagree on some issues. Humble and godly leaders know that God will speak through many different people to help shape and sharpen the direction of the church.

Another thought on this: please use the Welcome Card in the Worship celebration Services with sensitivity – and not as a complaint card.

A good rule in communication is to compliment in writing and share constructive criticism face to face (of course, compliments face to face are great, too). If you have concerns, spend some time praying about your concern and then make an appointment to talk to the appropriate person about the issue.

If, after this "one-on-one" meeting, you are still not at peace, pray some more and then talk once more with the appropriate church leaders. Take another person with you, if necessary. After this conversation, hopefully your prayer will be similar to the following:

“Father, I’ve shared my heart and, after hearing their explanations, I don’t agree. But I trust that You are working through them. So I will support them, remembering that it’s the leaders, not me, who are ultimately accountable before You for the leadership of this church.”

- c. Response #3 – “I do not like the decision, I am not happy with what is happening and I do not believe that God is working through the leadership.”

This is obviously the most difficult situation to be in. If a person finds himself in this situation, it is critical that he talks to the appropriate leader. After talking to the leader(s) about the issue (using the same approach and advice given in #2 above), you may still believe that they are not making the right decision *and* you may find that you are not able to support their leadership. What do you do then?

It is difficult to be in this position because it is critical for a church to be unified. Now of course unity is not uniformity! Even though we have many differences, we need to be working, going in the same direction, and accomplishing the vision together. If a church member is not in agreement with leadership, then we can guarantee this - God wants you to take the necessary steps to be supportive or find a church fellowship where you can be productive and agree with the vision.

2. Please don’t misunderstand us on this issue. *We don’t want anyone to leave River Valley.* However, it is better to leave a church than be upset, unproductive and sowing discord. An important caution: if you leave one church unhappy and go to another, make sure you have honestly dealt with your *own* issues and attitude. Otherwise, your unresolved problem will continue to hurt you, the people around you and potentially bring division to your new church.
3. What is never appropriate (or “How to kill a church”):
 - a. Murmuring, grumbling, and complaining to others. This becomes divisive, can spread untrue rumors and can poison others. (Remember what is appropriate: - talking to God and talking to the appropriate person or persons in love.)
 - b. Anger, accusations, mean-spirited conversations.
 - c. Withholding giving in your church home because you don’t agree with something. Using this rationale, we all could withhold our giving because none of us agree with everything in the church all the time. We should give to the Lord. Church leaders are responsible before God for the stewardship and responsible use of God’s money.
4. The above attitudes and behaviors are deadly to a church. They say to the community that we have nothing to offer them. We must guard against any and all disunity in our church family.
5. The following scriptures reflect God’s heart on this issue:

Hebrews 13:17 - Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 - Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

Romans 16:17,18 - I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

1 Corinthians 1:10 - I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

1 Corinthians 11:17,18 - In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you...

Galatians 5:19,20 - The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity,...hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions...

Titus 3:10 - Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.

Ephesians 4:29-32 - Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

6. This is God's Word on this issue of how to respond to church direction and vision. Remember that positive reaction and proper response to the vision is just as important as God giving that vision to the leaders.

Section Five

Financial Policy

1. **Purpose:**

- a. To provide guidelines for the finance operations of this church.
- b. To help us achieve a clear sense of direction.
- c. To avoid making important decisions on an emotional or haphazard basis.
- d. To insure that each dollar is spent effectively as God would have it spent.
- e. To bring new Finance Ministry members up to date, allowing them to quickly familiarize themselves with the issues to be faced in the general direction of our policy.
- f. To maintain consistency as the ministry changes membership.
- g. To work in harmony with the church-wide leadership.
- h. The Finance Ministry is accountable to the Elder Board for the carrying out of finance policies and programs.

2. **The Finance Ministry Team:**

- a. **Membership:**
The Finance Ministry shall consist of the following members: Pastor of Management, two Elders (appointed from within the Elder Board), Lead Pastor and/or his designee, and anyone selected by the Pastoral Staff and approved by the Elder Board.
- b. **Flexibility, Interpretation, and Revision of Policy:**
The Financial Ministry Members shall handle minor changes in the policy for purposes of clarification, as well as making revisions of policy. This will require Elder Board approval.

3. **Responsibilities:**

- a. **Develop the Annual Budget:**
 - i. Help all Ministries with the construction of their annual budgets by giving direction where needed.
 - ii. Approve the Church Budget and present it to the Elder Board for their approval.
- b. To be responsible for the control and implementation of the Church Budget as approved by the Church Body.
- c. Maintain and update this financial policy.

4. **Other Responsibilities:**

- a. Keep the membership of our Church informed of our financial condition.
- b. Administer and promote any special Stewardship Campaigns.
- c. See that the Church is adequately protected with insurance.
- d. Insure and maintain, above reproach, safeguards in the handling of church money.

5. **Designated Funds:**

If River Valley Community Church receives a contribution designated for a purpose that has not been established by the Elder Board, one of the following steps will be taken:

- a. The Elder Board will establish a fund for the designated purpose;
- b. request that the designation be removed from the contribution or changed to another established fund;
- c. return the contribution to the donor.

Section Six

Amendments to the Policy Manual

1. Amendments to the RVCC Policy Manual can be made by a two-thirds majority vote of the Elder Board. Any substantive amendments to the RVCC Policy Manual will be noted in the Annual Vision Celebration and will be available in the church office.

Section Seven

Annual Meetings

1. The Annual Vision Celebration, held the last Sunday in April, is our annual business meeting. This date can be changed, by a recommendation of the Board of Elders, to accommodate (and avoid conflicts with) other events taking place in the church.
2. If the date of the Annual Vision Celebration is changed, this would also change the opportunity for the congregation to vote on the annual budget. The elders may decide, at their option, to do one of the following:
 - a. Have a “Special Meeting” solely for the purpose of having a vote to approve the annual budget.
 - b. If the “Annual Vision Celebration” is held earlier than the last Sunday in April, the annual budget may be presented and approved, but not formally put into force until the expiration of the current budget at the end of the church’s fiscal year.
 - c. If the “Annual Vision Celebration” is held later than the last Sunday in April, the annual budget may be presented and approved at that time. The church would conduct it’s business on the basis of a “continuation” of the present budget until such time as the new budget has been approved by a vote of the members. The newly approved budget would then be in force until the end of that fiscal year.
3. If the newly proposed budget is not approved by the members during the Annual Vision Celebration (or a “Special Meeting”), the church would continue to conduct it’s business on the basis of a “continuation” of the present budget until such time as a newly proposed budget is approved by the congregation. That newly approved budget would then be in force until the end of the church’s fiscal year.

Section Eight

Women in Ministry at RVCC

1. We believe a woman can facilitate or administrate a ministry that consists of men while under the spiritual authority/covering of a Pastor/Elder. But she should not be in a position of ongoing/primary Bible teacher, or ongoing/primary Shepherd and Discipler of men.
2. In 1 Timothy 2:11,12 Paul says that he doesn't permit "a woman to teach or have authority over a man." We take this to apply to an ongoing Position of spiritual authority and Biblical teaching over men.
3. We believe that there may be times when a woman can teach men in a short term elective class setting while under the spiritual authority/covering of a Pastor/Elder. We also believe that there are times when a woman may assist a man in teaching in a mixed setting, as long as she falls under his spiritual covering and is not the ongoing and primary teacher/shepherd of the class/group.

Section Nine

Policy For Insuring "Non Owned" Vehicles

1. We at River Valley Community Church want to thank you for partnering with us in ministry by making your Vehicle available for ministry activities. We appreciate your commitment and sacrifice.
2. In the unlikely event that your Vehicle is involved in an accident or is in some way damaged, we want you to know what you can expect from River Valley Community Church (henceforth referred to as "the church").
3. This policy applies only to vehicles loaned to the church for church and / or church ministry related uses. It does not apply to vehicles loaned by one church member to another church member or to a church staff member for non-church related business or personal use.
4. **Vehicle Liability:** This important coverage applies to covered claims of bodily injury or property damage arising out of the use of a non-owned vehicle (i.e. a vehicle not owned by the church) when used by an authorized operator. This coverage applies after (is excess to) any other vehicle liability insurance that covers the driver and / or vehicle owner. It is important that you understand that when you loan your vehicle to the church, you are loaning your insurance as well. The Church's liability insurance coverage is only secondary to your own auto liability insurance.
5. **Deductible reimbursement:** Our insurance company will reimburse you, the owner of the vehicle, for the deductible portion of your loss, (up to a maximum of \$1,000) for a loss incurred while loaning your vehicle. Please note that if you have no physical damage protection on this vehicle no reimbursement will occur. If your coverage is otherwise insufficient to cover a partial or total loss, the church's only obligation will be the deductible portion.
6. Coverage for liability or deductible reimbursement does not apply to vehicles operated outside the United States.
7. When you loan your vehicle to River Valley Community Church, some aspects of your personal auto insurance coverage do not change. For example:
 - a. You will be fully liable for damage caused by the operation of your vehicle by others.
 - b. Most Policies cover you, your family and anyone you loan your vehicle to. It is very important that you contact your insurance company to be sure your policy will respond if you loan out your vehicle.
 - c. If damage is done to your vehicle it is your responsibility to turn a claim into your insurance company.
 - d. When you loan your vehicle, you lose all supervisory control over who may drive the vehicle and how they operate and care for it.
 - e. The church assumes no liability or responsibility for wear and tear, damage resulting from an uninsured incident or accident, or for any other expenses resulting from either normal or careless use of your vehicle.
8. If your vehicle is involved in an insurable accident you should:

- a. Make sure that appropriate medical and law enforcement agencies are promptly notified, as required by local laws.
 - b. Notify your own insurance company.
 - c. Notify the church office or the church's "Minister of Finance" who will provide you with the appropriate forms to make claims pertaining to losses outlined in paragraphs "4" and "5", above.
9. We truly appreciate your heart. Without your generosity, programs at River Valley would suffer. We also know that you are taking on some additional Liability by your generosity and feel that you should be aware of the facts.
10. As a protection to you and to the church, you will need to present a copy of your auto insurance policy, or an insurance card which states the limits of your coverage. This will enable the church to ensure that your coverage is adequate and sufficient.
11. The church will maintain a signed copy of this policy statement for each person who makes a vehicle available for church use. By signing this document you are formally agreeing that you have read and understood this policy and that you will abide by the terms as set forth here.

Signature of Vehicle Owner Date Signed

Printed Name Address

Vehicle Description (Make, Model, Color) Insurance Company & Policy Number

Section Ten
Policy Regarding Confidentiality & Unity in Matters of
Church Business and Actions of the Board of Elders

1. There is a natural tension that arises between the desires of the Board of Elders to communicate in a loving and forthright manner with the members of the River Valley Community Church Congregation and the need for discretion, circumspection and confidentiality when dealing with sensitive matters.
2. All of us have seen instances where loose, coarse, inappropriate, ill-tempered or ill-timed speech has caused hurt feelings, miscommunication, controversy and other damage that is long lasting and difficult to repair. Similar problems can arise from a perception of “secrecy” or poor communication. Just as with other aspects of our efforts as the shepherding leaders of this church, we will probably never communicate with biblical perfection, but must yet strive to attain this for the good of the body and the Kingdom.
3. The nature of our “business” as a Board of Elders will necessitate dealing with issues of great sensitivity, some issues will be controversial in nature and many issues and decisions will result in sweeping changes in the nature and direction of this Church. We as a group of elders and pastors may (and should) look critically at all sides of a complex issue, discussing amongst ourselves the proper, best and most scriptural course of action. There will probably be times when a unanimous accord will be impossible to achieve. There will be times when emotions run high and positions become polarized within the confines of our meeting room. As leaders, however, we continue to have a biblical obligation to God and to our members to present a leadership model that exemplifies the highest standards of unity, harmony and cooperation.
4. Below are some general suggestions and guidelines to the elders concerning communication:
 - a. Is there a “Need to Know”? Our public communications should be limited to what will promote edification and unity of the body. We should enthusiastically report on things that will promote celebration, praise, unity and encouragement of our members. If a subject is likely to produce hurt, discouragement or division of the members it should only be discussed after prayerful consideration and the counsel of the elders.
 - b. Is there a specific reason for circumspection? Some of our dealings may be specifically excluded from public discussion. A business transaction or legal proceeding may be protected from public proclamation by logical or legal requirements. Would discussion of a specific topic potentially compromise a transaction or prejudice a legal proceeding?
 - c. Is there an issue of sensitivity. Does a topic of discussion contain information that might injure the feelings or reputation of another person, organization or business. As author Rick Warren suggests in the rules for “Gossip”. - Is the other person: 1.) A part of the problem; 2.) A part of the solution; or 3.) A source of wise and circumspect counsel? If not, the “discussion” is probably gossip and should be avoided.
 - d. Are we acting in a wise, fitting and restrained manner by discussing an issue? There will be many opportunities to be drawn into a discussion that can end up being hurtful or damaging to our church and the Kingdom. Make deliberate efforts to steer public discussions in directions that promote unity, edification and celebration.

5. Designate “*communicators*” to announce important topics and keep our members updated. We provide regular communication to the congregation on important and interesting topics. Make sure that there is general agreement amongst the board about releasing information before broaching a sensitive subject with another person or group.
6. Show appropriate leadership and sensitivity when sharing Board of Elder business (including the “Care & Comment” printouts) with your spouse. Is he or she an encouraged and encouraging co-partner in sharing this part of your ministry as an elder and leader, or is he or she being discouraged and overwhelmed by hearing and reading about things that may be difficult or sensitive? Is he or she able to share your commitment to a God-honoring level of confidentiality and sensitivity?
7. An Elder may find himself in disagreement with a decision that the Elders, after prayer and thorough discussion, have reached. In this event, he should be careful in discussions with others in the church or the community in order to positively represent the decision of the Board of Elders. Our belief is that God works through the corporate decisions that we have prayerfully and collectively reached. If an Elder disagrees with a decision of the Board of Elders and he feels that he cannot, in good conscience, support it, and also feels that the matter is so crucial to the life of the church that he can’t positively represent the decision, he should resign from the Elder Board in order to preserve harmony and unity in the body. If he is unwilling to resign, and is causing division in the Body, the Elders should remove him according to the process outlined in the constitution.
8. Scripture provides some guidelines for our communication:
Proverbs 10:19, 20 - When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.
Proverbs 10: 32 – The lips of the righteous know what is fitting.
Proverbs 13: 3 – He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.
Proverbs 16: 21 – The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction.
Proverbs 17:27 – A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even tempered.

Section Eleven

The Sign Gifts of the Holy Spirit

This document represents the beliefs of the majority of the church leadership and how we work these issues out practically in our church. However, we do not believe that this subject constitutes a salvation issue.

- *You can believe that some of the gifts are for today and be wrong and still be Christian.*
- *You can believe all of the gifts are for today and be wrong and still be Christian.*
- *You can believe none of the gifts are for today and be wrong and still be Christian.*

Because of these differences among Christians, there are those in leadership and attendance at River Valley that interpret these scriptural issues differently. There are other valid interpretations of the scriptures and we encourage you to study the scriptures and decide for yourself.

1. Christians receive the Holy Spirit at Salvation when the Holy Spirit baptizes the new believer into the Body of Christ. (*1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27*)
2. All Christians are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit (*Eph. 5:18*). The verb tense means “to be being kept continuously and repeatedly filled” with the Spirit on a moment by moment, day by day basis. So there are many fillings of the Holy Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit as we confess sin, abide in Christ and His Word, surrender to the Spirit, depend on the Spirit’s power, and ask to be filled. Christians should pray for and seek a deeper and more complete fullness of the Spirit in their lives (*Eph. 3:16-19*).
3. God is sovereign and chooses to mature His children in different ways. Many Christians describe an unforgettable experience with God where they had a life changing encounter of His presence and received a special touch from Him resulting in a giant spiritual leap forward. However, there are many very godly and Spirit-filled Christians who have not experienced such a dramatic encounter.
4. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to the Church:
 - ▶ The gifts and manifestations listed in the New Testament include administration, apostleship, discernment, encouragement, evangelism, faith, giving, healing, service, hospitality, interpretation of tongues, knowledge, leadership, mercy, miracles, prophecy, shepherding, teaching, tongues, and wisdom. *1Co 12; Ro 12:4-8; Eph 4:11-16*
 - ▶ As determined by the Holy Spirit, each believer receives spiritual gifts to be used for the building up of the Church. *1Co 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10; Rom. 12:6*
 - ▶ Scripture does not designate any one particular gift as the gift that every believer should have or seek to have. Gifts vary from believer to believer. *Ro 12:6; 1Co 12:7-11; 28-31; 14:23; Eph 4:11*
 - ▶ Any spiritual gift must be exercised in an orderly fashion led by the Holy Spirit, subject to the guidelines of Scripture, and under the authority of church leadership. *1Co 14:13, 28, 39, 40*
5. The Apostolic era during the 1st century was a unique time necessary for the beginning and early growth of the church. The Apostles (Jesus’ 12 Disciples plus Paul, Barnabas and James, and possibly others) seemed to have a super empowering from the Lord necessary to birth and oversee the early stages of the church. But we do believe that apostolic giftings (ie. church planting, missionary, one who is sent out, etc.) are still in existence and are very necessary for today.

6. Certain kinds of gifts sometimes referred to as “sign gifts” (such as tongues, healing, miracles) are specifically mentioned in Scripture as those which are likely to be abused and/or counterfeited, we are commanded to take great care and be controlled by the Holy Spirit in exercising them. *Ac 14:3; 1Co 14:22,23; 2Co 12:12; 2Th 2:9*
7. All the spiritual gifts and manifestations are available today to whomever the Spirit wills and whenever He wills it. *1 Cor. 12:11*
8. Signs and wonders are still manifested today to accompany the message of the Gospel to our world. (1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5; Acts 4:29,30) The Gospel alone is enough to save (Rom. 1:16). God in the past (and present) has used miracles and powerful signs to go along with the spoken message (just as God uses the good works of a Christian to go along with the message He speaks to lead someone to Jesus). The apostles, with their tremendous spiritual gifting and ministering to a world that was filled with eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, were greatly assisted with the help of signs and wonders. Around the world today, God is using signs and wonders to advance His kingdom.
9. As with all the spiritual gifts, the gift of tongues has not been given to every Christian – only to whom the Spirit wills. No Christian should be “forced” or “trained” to speak in tongues. Nor should anyone teach that speaking in tongues makes a person “more spiritual.” (*1 Cor. 12:29,30*)
10. A good definition of tongues is *The God-given ability to pray or speak in a language you have never learned and don't understand.* There are three different examples of Tongues taught in the New Testament.
 - a. Acts 2: Tongues are proclaiming the message in a known language unknown to the speaker. The crowd from many nations and languages each heard the message of God in their own language.
 - b. 1 Cor. 14: A tongue that serves as a private devotional prayer language. Tongues practiced in 1 Cor. 14 served a different purpose than at Pentecost (Acts 2). In 1 Cor. 14, Paul contrasts public tongues speaking with another kind of tongues speaking that he practiced outside the church setting (1 Cor. 14:18,19). It seems that the best explanation for this type of tongues is a private prayer language. Paul describes this type of praying as “speaking to God” (1 Cor. 14:2) and says that a person who speaks in a tongue “edifies himself” (1 Cor. 14:4) and speaks to himself and God – v.28. A number of Bible commentators understand the passage this way.

D.A. Carson comments: *“There is no stronger defense of the private use of tongues, and attempts to avoid the conclusion turn out on inspection to be remarkably flimsy. If Paul speaks in tongues more than all the Corinthians, yet in the church prefers to speak in five intelligible words rather than ten thousand words in a tongue...then where does he speak them?...the only possible conclusion is that Paul exercised his remarkable tongues gift in private.”*(*Showing the Spirit* p. 105)

- c. 1 Cor. 14: A public message in tongues that is followed by an interpretation. This serves to edify other believers. Paul says that two, or at the most three, should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the meeting and speak to himself and God. (*1 Cor. 14:27,28*)

11. Paul is not condemning tongues in 1 Cor. 14, but teaching us how to use the gift in a responsible and loving way. We are not to forbid people to speak in tongues provided these guidelines are followed. (*1 Cor 14:16-19, 27,28*)
12. Tongues is de-emphasized in 1 Cor. 14 and is described as a lesser gift. (*1 Cor. 14:5*)
13. River Valley draws many people from conservative evangelical church backgrounds, some from mainline churches, some from charismatic churches, some who have not been to church in many years and some who have never been to church. We want our weekend Worship Celebration services to be a safe place where they can be led “beyond religion into relationship with Jesus.” We have concluded that allowing tongues in the Celebration services might in many cases be unloving and insensitive toward our guests. We ask those who have this gifting to limit their liberty to use this gift in the Celebration services. Our goal in this is love and protecting the flock. Some may say that we are quenching the Spirit by limiting this gift, but the fact is we ask a lot of people to limit their use of gifts during the Celebration services – we ask many encouragers not to encourage, many administrators not to administrate and many teachers not to teach during the worship celebration service. Since tongues is such a controversial gift among Christians, great care and sensitivity should be also taken in all the smaller groups (Home Groups, Ministry Teams, etc.) at River Valley so that tongues never becomes the emphasis, but that everything is done in a fitting, orderly and edifying way. (*1 Cor. 14*)
14. Prophecy is more important than tongues to build up the church (*1 Cor. 14*)
15. Prophecy is speaking words of strengthening, encouragement, and comfort (*1 Cor. 14:3*) to another person. This can be a “word” to someone right out of the Bible or sharing something with them that God has “spontaneously brought to mind.” All prophecy is to be consistent with the clear teaching of the Bible and is to be tested by the other believers present (*1 Cor. 14:29*). Many of these prophetic words are impressions or burdens from God that we share with others to build them up. They may speak of the future, but don’t have to.
16. A prophetic word that does not come straight from scripture is not equal to written scripture in authority. This type of prophecy should never be prefaced with, “thus says the Lord.” This implies that the speaker believes that he or she is speaking with inspired authority from God. Prophetic words should always be delivered with humility, asking the person to take the message to God in prayer to seek His leading in the matter.
17. Jesus and the Apostles ministered with extraordinary power. While present-day believers may not witness with that kind of power, they continue to witness. The same is true of miraculous gifts. They may not be used with the power displayed by the apostles, but they still are used.
18. The leadership of the church is committed to obeying the Word by praying for the healing of individuals in the flock (*James 5:14-16*). Often God will use this prayer to bring healing to His children. But God often says “no” when we ask Him to heal. This even happened to the powerful apostles (*2 Tim. 4:20; 1 Tim. 5:23; Gal. 4:13,14*). Suffering is an inevitable part of life on a fallen planet. Our world is described as “groaning” and in “bondage to decay” (*Rom. 8:21,22*). Jesus did not heal every ailing person He encountered and neither does He always heal today through us. When it comes to prayer for healing, it is important to remember that when God chooses not to heal physically, eventual death (physical), in reality, becomes the ultimate healing for the believer.

God is glorified when He heals. God is glorified when He allows us to suffer with hope and dignity. God's compassion extends to us when He lifts us out of our pain. God's compassion extends to us when He holds our hand and walks through our pain with us. God bears witness to our hurting world with the conspicuous power of signs and wonders. God bears witness to a hurting world with the quiet power of a holy life. God draws us toward holiness both when He heals us and when He allows us to share the fellowship of His sufferings. – (Banister, The Word and Power Church, p. 154)

19. We realize that there have been serious abuses, extremes and sensationalism of the miraculous sign gifts in many churches today. But this is no reason to throw them all out. The work of God's Spirit is always counterfeited by the enemy. The scriptural approach is to learn to discern between true and false prophets. We know that there are many false teachers today. Does that mean we should abandon the gift and practice of teaching because there is the potential for abuse? Of course not. There is potential for abuse and extremism in all the gifts today (giving, administration, leadership, teaching, exhortation, etc.), but we should never abandon any of the gifts because of the fear of abuse.

ADDITIONAL:

- 1 Cor. 13:8 teaches that tongues will be stilled when "perfection" comes. This is one of the key arguments given by some for the ending of tongues with the close of the canon of Scripture at the end of the Apostolic age. But many Bible interpreters have concluded that the "perfection" refers to the second coming of Christ and not the close of the canon of Scripture. Verse 10 says that when this happens "we shall see face to face" and "shall know fully." We believe that these descriptions most likely portray the return of Jesus in which these things will happen – since that is when we will experience the true "perfection".

Recommended reading – The Word and Power Church by Doug Banister

Section Twelve
Duties of an Elder – A short Guide

The following are a few suggestions and hints for Elders:

1. Spiritual Life

- a. In I Peter Chapter 5, Paul exhorts the elders to be “. . .examples to the flock.” We, as elders and shepherds, need to continually hold each other on a short leash of accountability, encouraging one another in our daily walks and helping one another to deal with the temptations that are common to all of us.
- b. For this reason, a portion of almost every meeting of the Board of Elders is devoted to discipleship, study, encouragement and prayer.
- c. Each elder should also have a daily time of personal prayer and study, making sure that he is continually filled and empowered with the Holy Spirit, prepared to humbly lead by example, through the grace of God.
- d. The ten “Relational Discipleship” questions are a great place to go for a quick “reality check” as you assess your ability to effectively lead and humbly work together as a team in unity and loving submission to one another.

2. Shepherding

- a. As a River Valley Elder you are an “ambassador” of the church. Make every effort to be outgoing, positive and encouraging while interacting with other members, attendees and guests. Stay informed about events and activities in the church, try to be a resource of good news and hope. Go out of your way to greet and welcome those you do not recognize.
- b. Be proactive in seeing and responding to needs in the body. Does someone look “lost”? Does a member need a helping hand? Is there a hazard or obstacle that you can remove or warn others about? Be on the lookout for opportunities to minister to the flock.
- c. Make yourself familiar with the RVCC Constitution and Policy Manual. Communicate in ways that promote the harmony and unity of the church body. When in doubt, refer to the policy manual section on “Confidentiality and Unity...”.

3. Attendance

- a. Attendance at the regularly scheduled meetings of the Board of Elders is important. Not only are the Elders charged with the oversight and shepherding of the church body, but they function legally as the corporate “Board of Directors” of the church’s legal entity. In order to act on matters of policy or legal matters, a quorum of the Elders (2/3 or more) must be in attendance. Come prepared at meetings – bring a notebook, bible, copies of any unfinished business from prior meetings. Make every effort to complete assigned reading or other assigned work.
- b. Try to be an active part of the board. Divergent opinions and differing points of view are an essential part of the board, as God may speak to different men in different ways.
- c. If you have an agenda item that you want to bring before the board try to let the chairman know about it before the meeting.

- d. If you are unable to attend a regularly scheduled meeting contact the chairman, vice chairman or secretary. Let them know if you will be available for a “Phone Vote” if a matter of urgency arises (and how you can be reached).
- e. Make every effort to attend special meetings, retreats, “Church of the Valley” Elder gatherings and other events that request the presence of the Elders.

4. Other Duties

- a. Starting Point – RVCC’s new member’s class needs Elders to hear testimonies at the end of the program. This usually happens on about 6 Sunday afternoons per year. Contact Sally Potter for a schedule and to see how many attendees are expected. This is a great time to meet some of the folks who are new to our church.
- b. If possible, make yourself available as a part of the “Prayer Team” that goes forward at the end of each worship service.
- c. From time to time, members will request the laying on of hands and prayer by the Elders. If possible try to participate in these times when scheduled by the chairman.

Section Thirteen

Policy Regarding Transportation and RVCC Owned Vehicles

1. **Purpose:** It is our desire at River Valley Community Church to deal with transportation and vehicles in a way that brings glory to God and provides for the safe and reliable carriage of our most precious assets – people with who’s care God has entrusted us. If any part of this policy is unclear or leaves latitude, it is recommended that the driver, person in charge, or ministry leader should always err on the side of the safety and convenience of passengers being transported.
2. **Transportation Assets:**
 - a. RVCC may, at various times, own a number of vehicles for the transportation of persons and cargo. These may include passenger cars, light and medium trucks, passenger vans and larger buses.
 - b. Each of these vehicles, and the authorized operators (drivers) of them are covered by the church’s insurance policy.
3. **Administration of Vehicles:**
 - a. The Administration / Finance Team has overall supervision and control of all church owned vehicles. They are responsible for their safe maintenance, repair, scheduling and dispatching.
 - b. They may delegate a “DISPATCHER” to deal with the day-to-day administration of the church vehicles. This person becomes the final authority for scheduling, maintenance and routine issues regarding the vehicles.
4. **Duties of the Dispatcher:**
 - a. The dispatcher maintains the schedule for the use of church owned vehicles. Department heads and / or ministry leaders should coordinate with the dispatcher to schedule the use of any of the church’s vehicles.
 - b. The dispatcher is responsible for making the vehicles available in a clean and safe condition for scheduled and approved uses.
 - c. The dispatcher will inform heads and ministry leaders should maintenance and repair issues or other events cause a conflict with previously agreed upon schedules.
 - d. The dispatcher holds the keys and “Trip Logs” for all vehicles. Keys and trip logs are signed out with vehicles for scheduled trips and returned immediately to the dispatcher upon completion of trips.
 - e. Under no circumstances will the dispatcher sign out a vehicle for use if he or she does not feel that the vehicle is in a completely safe and satisfactory state of repair. The dispatcher bears great responsibility in this area and no pressure or coercion should be used to influence the dispatcher on this issue.
5. **Maintenance of Vehicles:**
 - a. The dispatcher will coordinate with service and repair agencies to schedule routine vehicle maintenance as follows:

- i. Each large passenger carrying vehicle (16 passengers or more) will receive three “Quarterly” and one “Annual” inspection.
- ii. Each passenger car, van and light / medium truck will receive an “Annual” inspection.
- iii. The items to be inspected will be agreed upon in advance by the church and the servicing agency. At a minimum, all items on the ODOT “Pre Trip Inspection” check list will be inspected and certified as safe and serviceable by the servicing agency.
- iv. The servicing agency will provide the dispatcher with a written report stating that this has been completed, or noting any deficiencies that need to be corrected.
- v. The dispatcher will keep a record of inspections and repairs performed on each church owned vehicle.
- vi. Items identified as needing maintenance, repair or replacement will be dealt with on a basis to be determined by the dispatcher and the Administration / Finance Team.

6. Vehicle Users:

- a. Any department head or ministry leader may schedule the use of a church owned vehicle for appropriate ministry related business.
- b. RVCC’s insurance regulations preclude the use of church owned vehicles for personal, private or non-ministry related functions. These regulations also make RVCC unable to lend, loan or lease these vehicles to other churches or organizations. These vehicles must be used exclusively for RVCC related ministry functions, carrying only those affiliated with this church.
- c. Vehicles are dispatched on a “First Come First Served” basis.
- d. Vehicle assets are limited, the dispatcher has many other duties, and some vehicles require time for preparation before they can be safely signed out to a user. Giving the dispatcher as much advance notice as possible is in the best interests of all concerned.
- e. Under no circumstances may a vehicle be used without the express consent and knowledge of the dispatcher. Positively only one set of keys, kept by the dispatcher, will be available for each vehicle. Any deviation from this policy will be regarded as safety infraction that potentially endangers passengers and puts the church at risk. It will be dealt with severely. In the absence of the dispatcher, the Admin / Finance Team may act in his behalf.
- f. Each vehicle user (or the “driver” designated by that user) will be assigned a trip log for that vehicle. It becomes the user’s responsibility to see that the trip log is completed and returned to the dispatcher at the completion of the trip. If the schedules of the dispatcher and user or driver do not coincide, the dispatcher may, at his convenience, leave the trip log and keys to the vehicle in the staff mailbox of the user. At the completion of the trip, the trip log and keys should be returned to the dispatcher, to his staff mailbox, or returned through the mail drop slot in the church office front door.
- g. Immediately after checking out a vehicle for use, the ministry leader (i.e. “user”) or driver should inspect the vehicle for cleanliness, fuel state and damage not previously noted on the trip log. Any discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the dispatcher and noted on the trip log.

7. Charges for Vehicle Use:

- a. The Administration / Finance Team will assign a charge for the use of each church owned vehicle. This may be a charge per mile, a one-time use charge, or both. These charges will be determined based on the cost of fuel, maintenance and projected replacement. As costs change, the Administration / Finance Team may review and modify these charges as appropriate.
- b. These charges will be entered against the annual budget of the ministry using the vehicle(s).
- c. Any damage to the vehicle, or any maintenance issues should be noted on the trip log and brought to the attention of the dispatcher when the vehicle is returned.
- d. Vehicle users are responsible for returning the vehicles fueled, clean and ready for the next user. If vehicles are returned un-cleaned, un-fueled or with damage due to negligence, the dispatcher may, at his option, either coordinate with the returning user to correct these items, or contract for the fueling, cleaning and repair of the vehicle and charge these actions against the user's ministry budget. Examples of this are shown below:
 - i. *A user returns a vehicle with the interior and exterior in a dirty condition – the dispatcher hires someone, on an hourly basis, to wash the vehicle and clean the interior. The cost of these services is charged to the account of the ministry that returned the vehicle.*
 - ii. *A user returns the vehicle to an off-site parking area, but the vehicle has not been fueled and the trip log has not been returned. The dispatcher hires someone to have the vehicle fueled, perform a post-trip inspection and return the trip log to the dispatcher. The cost of these services is charged to the account of the ministry that returned the vehicle.*
 - iii. *A user returns a vehicle that has been used on a short trip in good weather. The fuel tank still registers "FULL" and the interior and exterior are clean. No action is required on the part of the user once the dispatcher has acknowledged the satisfactory condition of the vehicle.*
- e. The dispatcher will refer issues regarding repeated failure to comply with this policy to the Administration / Finance Team.

8. Passengers:

- a. Every effort will be made by church vehicle users to ensure that passengers are transported in a safe and comfortable manner.
- b. Passengers should obey all safety regulations and are to be subject to the instructions of the vehicle driver while in the vehicle.
- c. Passengers are permitted to consume food and beverages in a reasonable manner while in church owned vehicles. Vehicle users and drivers are responsible to ensure that food, beverages and passenger's personal items are dealt with in a manner that ensures the safety of the passengers and does not cause damage to the vehicle.
- d. Because the church incurs significant liability from the carriage of passengers, only persons affiliated with church / ministry events and specifically identified and authorized by ministry leaders should be transported in church vehicles. "Hitch Hikers", stray or unauthorized passengers should not be permitted to ride in church vehicles.

9. Drivers:

- a. Drivers of church vehicles, particularly those transporting passengers, have a major responsibility for the safety of the passengers and the safe and reasonable operation of the vehicle. The driver of the vehicle becomes the "on scene" representative of River Valley Community Church.
- b. No one may drive a church owned vehicle until he or she has been approved by the church administration. This approval will consist of (at a minimum) the following items:
 - i. Copy of valid driver's license (appropriate for class of vehicle driven) on file.

- ii. Current bi-annual DOT Physical exam (where required) on file.
- iii. Current annual drug / alcohol screening report on file.
- iv. Current MVR driving report on file.
- c. The following license classifications and endorsements are required:
 - i. For all automobiles, small trucks and vans weighing less than 26,001 pounds and carrying no more than 15 passengers, a CLASS C license is required.
 - ii. For any vehicle capable of carrying 16 or more passengers, a PASSENGER ENDORSEMENT is required.
 - iii. For any truck or bus weighing in excess of 26,000 pounds, a CLASS B license is required, and for our large busses (or other vehicles with air brakes) the AIR BRAKE RESTRICTION must be removed.
- d. The dispatcher will maintain a list of all currently approved drivers and will not dispatch a vehicle to anyone who is not on the current list.
- e. Ministry leaders are responsible to provide appropriate and approved drivers for each vehicle. Ministry leaders should coordinate with the dispatcher before hand to ensure that their designated driver(s) are on the dispatcher's list of approved drivers.
- f. Drivers will be removed from the "Approved List" if the dispatcher's records indicate that their driver's licenses, DOT physical exams or annual drug / alcohol screening tests have expired. The dispatcher and the Administration / Finance Team will notify ministry leaders and drivers at least one month in advance of these expiration dates. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the ministry leaders to ensure that their own drivers have taken the required steps to remain on the current list of approved drivers.
- g. Drivers are responsible for accomplishing the "Daily Vehicle Inspection" (on the back of the trip log) before each trip (or each day on a prolonged trip).
- h. Drivers are to obey all laws and regulations pertaining to the use and operation of vehicles. Depending on the class of vehicle and the length of the trip, this may include the use of a DOT "Driver's Log", the rotation of multiple drivers, and/or scheduling of rest periods in accordance with DOT regulations.

10. When Problems Arise:

- a. In the event of an accident, the primary concern of the driver is safety, particularly if passengers are being carried.
 - i. Make every attempt to quickly ensure the condition and safety of passengers.
 - ii. If appropriate, either keep the passengers in the vehicle or remove them to a safer location.
 - iii. Take immediate steps to deal with medical issues and / or get medical and emergency aide.
 - iv. Take prompt action to see to the welfare of other vehicles involved in an accident, notify appropriate authorities and exchange information with drivers of other vehicles involved.
 - v. The driver and / or ministry leader should contact the church office who will notify our insurance agent about the details of the accident as soon as possible.
- b. In the event of a breakdown or mechanical problem, the primary concern of the driver is safety, particularly if passengers are being carried.
 - i. If the vehicle has broken down on the road, the driver should make sure that the passengers are safe. Passengers should be quickly moved to a safer location if appropriate.
 - ii. If the vehicle is a hazard to other traffic, appropriate markers should be put out and every attempt should be made to warn others of the hazard.

- iii. If the problem occurs close to the church during business hours, the church office and / or dispatcher should be contacted to arrange for towing, repairs and alternate transportation.
- iv. If the problem occurs at a time or distance when the church office cannot provide necessary assistance, it becomes the responsibility of the driver and / or ministry leader to use his or her best judgment to arrange for appropriate roadside assistance, towing, repair and alternate transportation. Contact the church office at the earliest opportunity.