

# Constitution of



# of Sugar Grove, Illinois

Ratified 2/28/2010

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**Constitution of  
Village Bible Church  
Sugar Grove, Illinois**

We the members of Village Bible Church recognize that the Word of God sets forth the divine plan for the local church, and upon this basis we establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit.

## **Article I – Name**

This organization will be known as Village Bible Church of Sugar Grove, Illinois.

## **Article II – Purpose**

It is the purpose of Village Bible Church to be a family of growing believers committed to glorifying God by reaching our world with the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. We desire to love Jesus to the point of transformation, love each other to the point of sacrifice and love our neighbor to the point of action.

### **Sec. A. Aspects of Ministry.**

It is the goal of Village Bible Church to bring glory to God through corporate worship, through the ministry of the Word of God, through seeing unbelievers come to faith in Christ, through the discipling and building up of believers for service to God and others and through the worldwide proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in order that His Kingdom might be extended.

### **Sec. B. Independence and Autonomy.**

As an autonomous entity, with no denominational affiliation, Village Bible Church seeks to follow the Word of God in all matters of faith and practice. It is our desire, however, to fellowship and to cooperate with other evangelical churches.

# **Article III – Statement of Doctrine**

THIS STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE expresses what we believe true Christians must affirm. It is not meant to represent all that Christians should believe but includes the essential truths that we believe authentic Christians must not deny.

## **Sec. A. The Scriptures**

The Bible, composed of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, was written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit, is God's revelation to humanity and is our final, absolute authority, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Having been given by God Himself, the Scriptures are fully and verbally inspired. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free from error in all it teaches. Each book must be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord Who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide for all Christian practice and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation or worldly wisdom. All doctrine, whether in creed, confession or theology, must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, Who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:18-19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:25,44-45; John 5:39; 10:35b; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23,25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

## **Sec. B. God**

There is only one living and true God, Who is a spiritual and personal Being. He is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of the universe. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is infinite in holiness, love and all other perfections. He is all powerful, all knowing, all wise and present everywhere. His knowledge is perfect and extends to all things, past, present and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence and obedience. The eternal and unchanging Triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

**The Father** reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures and human history according to the purposes of His grace. He involves Himself mercifully in human affairs, hears and answers prayer and saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. He is faithful to every promise, in all things works for the good of those who love Him and in His unfathomable grace gave His Son Jesus Christ for our redemption.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15,28-29; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:13-15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:14-17; 1 John 5:1-4.

**Christ** is the eternal and only Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, and in His very nature He is fully God in bodily form. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of the Father, taking upon Himself human nature and identifying Himself completely with humanity, yet without sin. In His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of human beings from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the same person Who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of the Father, where He is the only Mediator, being fully God and fully man. Through Him believers are reconciled to God. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to bring His redemptive mission to completion.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9;; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

**The Holy Spirit**, the Lord and Giver of life, is to be respected, honored and worshipped as God, the third person of the Trinity. Through the proclamation of the Gospel He persuades people to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. He brings about the new birth, unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, baptizes them into the Body of Christ and dwells within them. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals believers for the day of redemption. His presence in believers enables them to grow in Christlikeness. He leads the Church into a right understanding and application of the truths of God's Word. He came to glorify the Son, Who in turn came to glorify the Father.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3-4; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,28,39; 10:44; 11:16-17; 13:2,4; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 6:19; 12:3-11,13; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 5:5; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-8; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

### **Sec. C. Humanity**

Humanity is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation, that they might have fellowship with Him. In the beginning humans were innocent of sin and were endowed by their Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice Adam rebelled against God, bringing sin into the human race. As a consequence of Adam's sin, all human beings are estranged from their Maker, yet are still responsible to Him. All humanity is subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and, apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God. All people are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ. Nevertheless, because they still possess the divine image, every person of every race has full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:7,18-22; 3:1-24; 9:6; Psalms 1:1-6; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:12-18; 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

### **Sec. D. Salvation**

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In its broadest sense salvation includes election, regeneration, justification, sanctification, perseverance and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; Romans 1:16; 10:9-10,13; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; Colossians 1:9-22; Hebrews 5:8-9; 9:24-28.

**Election** is the gracious purpose of God, settled before the foundation of the world, on the basis of which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies and glorifies sinners. Election is consistent with the free agency of human beings and is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; Matthew 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; John 6:44-45,65; 15:16; 17:6; Romans 8:29-30; 11:5-7,26-36; Ephesians 1:4-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; 2:4-10.

**Regeneration**, or the new birth, is the work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration is not the result of water baptism or of any outward ritual. It is a change of heart brought about by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, in which sinners respond in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. And true Biblical faith means more than simply believing certain facts. It means accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and committing one's entire being to Him as Lord. It calls for a total response involving the believer's mind, emotions and will.

Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Ezekiel 11:19; John 1:12-14; 3:3ff.; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Eph. 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3.

**Justification** is the act of God by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins and confess Him as Lord. It is granted apart from any human virtue or good works and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ and of His righteousness to us.

Genesis 15:6; Luke 24:44-48; John 3:16; 5:24; Acts 13:39; Rom. 1:17; 3:21-28; 4:1-25; 5:1, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 3:24.

**Sanctification** is the ongoing experience, beginning in regeneration, by which believers are set apart for God's purposes, and are enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the power of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in them. Growth in grace should continue throughout the believer's life.

John 17:17,19; Acts 20:32; Romans 6:1-23; 8:1-17; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:19-20; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-25; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 12:14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:13-16, 22; 1 John 1:6-2:11.

**Perseverance** to endure to the end is promised to all true believers. Those whom God has accepted in Christ and sanctified by His Spirit will never fall away from the state of grace, but will persevere to the very end of their earthly lives. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, thereby grieving the Spirit, bringing reproach to the cause of Christ and coming under the Lord's discipline. Nevertheless, God's promise is sure: He who began the work of salvation will be faithful to see it through to completion.

John 10:27-29; Romans 8:28-39; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10, 19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:19.

**Glorification** is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed state of the redeemed as they abide in God's presence for all eternity.

Matthew 13:43; Romans 8:18-23, 30; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 1:18; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:4; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 John 3:2.

## **Sec. E. The Church**

All who come to Jesus Christ in faith are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church, the bride of Christ, of which Christ is the Head. The Father by His Word and Spirit creates the church, calling sinful people into the fellowship of Christ's body. And by the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity.

The universal church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, it is made up of all those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ. The church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on earth. This involves a commitment to see the Gospel preached and churches planted throughout the world. The ultimate mission of the church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the Gospel. As God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women should, through baptism, enter into the fellowship of a local church in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer. In this context they are called to live out the New Covenant as the people of God and demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom of God. The church's members are to work together in love and unity, exercising their spiritual gifts, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ.

Matthew 16:18; 18:17; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 14:26; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 4:10-11.

## **Sec. F. Angels**

Angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than humanity, they are created to serve God, to worship Him and to care for those who will inherit salvation.

Satan, originally the greatest of the angels, rebelled against God, taking with him a host of angels (also referred to in scripture as demons). He was cast out of God's presence and, as a usurper of God's rule, established a counter-kingdom of darkness and evil. He is the "father of lies" and the great deceiver. Therefore Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and of humanity. He is the prince of this world who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although he presently controls all the powers of darkness, he will be eternally punished in the lake of fire.

Genesis 3:1-15; Job 1:6-7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 4:1-11; 25:41; Luke 2:9-14; 10:18; John 10:10; 12:31; 16:11; Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-17; Colossians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 1:6-7,14; 2:6-7,14; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Revelation 5:11-14; 12:1-14; 19:10; 20:2,10.

## **Sec. G. The Return of Christ**

At a time known only to God, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven, and all believers - both those who have died in Christ and those who are still alive - will meet Him in the air. This hope produces in us a sense of constant expectancy and motivates us to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Every human being who has ever lived will one day be raised bodily from the dead. In judgment and condemnation, unbelievers will be consigned to eternal conscious punishment in hell, while believers will enter into eternal blessedness and joy. In the new heavens and the new earth, Christ's Kingdom will come to full fruition as the redeemed, in gloriously renewed bodies, dwell with Him forever, serving Him, reigning with Him and giving Him unending praise and glory.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 8:12; 10:28; 13:49-50; 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:34; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:5,40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; 23:42; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:1,8,10; Philippians 1:23; 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7-13; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 6-7,14; Revelation 1:8; 2:7; 3:11; 19:16; 20:1-22:13.

## **Article IV – The Ordinances**

Village Bible Church recognizes two ordinances that the church is to practice until the end of age – believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. An ordinance is a symbolic act commanded by Jesus to signify what Christ did to effect our salvation from sin. These ordinances are not to be regarded as means of salvation or as means of grace by which special merit is obtained. Both, however, give us opportunities to draw closer to God and to experience His grace in fresh ways.

### **Sec. A. Believer's Baptism**

We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord through which those who have repented and come to faith express their union with Christ in His death and resurrection, by being immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of belonging to the people of God and an emblem of burial and cleansing, signifying the transition of the individual from the old life to new life in Christ. Old allegiances are forsaken in order that new allegiances with Christ and His people can be formed. The believer gives testimony to this spiritual transition through baptism. By submitting to baptism, a person publicly joins with the church in its confession that "Jesus is Lord."

We believe that the New Testament both teaches and demonstrates that baptism is to be administered by immersing a believer in water. We therefore regard all other approaches to baptism as being out of keeping with what is taught in the New Testament. Yet, while not taking these differences lightly, we would not elevate them to the level of what is essential to authentic Christianity. Thus, Christians who have not been baptized by immersion as believers, but were baptized by some other method and/or were baptized before they believed, may under certain circumstances become members of this church.

Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:38-42, 8:36-39, 16:30-33; Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:12

### **Sec. B. The Lord's Supper**

Unlike baptism, which is a one-time event, the Lord's Supper, known also as the Lord's Table or communion, is a practice meant to be observed over and over again throughout the life of a Christian. It is a holy time of worship when we come together as a body to remember and celebrate what Christ did for us. Ever since Jesus instituted this practice at the Last Supper, it has served as a beautiful reminder of the sacrifice of His body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf. It is a sign of our continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we participate in the Lord's Supper, we remember and

proclaim the death of Christ and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body. In addition, when we approach the Lord's Table in faith, accompanied by self-examination, we receive spiritual nourishment for our souls.

We believe that in New Testament times, new believers participated in the Lord's Supper only after having taken the initial step of obedience and discipleship commanded by Christ by publicly identifying themselves with Him through the waters of baptism (cf. Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38-42). It was their baptism that marked them as members of the body of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13), and it was the members of that one body who symbolically participated in the body and blood of Christ by means of the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

Nevertheless, while this is our conviction, we recognize that not all genuine believers have the same understanding with regard to the New Testament's teaching about who may participate in the Lord's Supper. And because we do not wish to create division in the body of Christ, it is not our policy to exclude from the Lord's Table those believers whose understanding is different from ours.

When we gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper, the elders will regularly admonish those who are present to examine their hearts and lives before participating – confirming that they are walking in fellowship with and in obedience to Christ. Some of the ways the New Testament speaks of walking in fellowship and obedience include:

- Having submitted themselves to the lordship of Christ by turning to Him as Savior and Lord.
- Having taken the first step of obedience and discipleship commanded by Christ to publicly identifying with Him through the waters of baptism.
- Having made everything right with God by confessing any recent sins and renewing their commitment to live for Him.
- Harboring no resentment or other ill feelings toward any fellow believer, inasmuch as the New Testament teaches that those who have been forgiven are themselves to extend forgiveness.

If you find yourself out of fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ at the time the Lord's Supper is being shared, we would encourage you to repent and make right your wrong before participating – or, if that is not possible, to abstain from participating and then go and make right your wrong.

Matthew 6:12; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:38-42; Romans 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 21; 11:23-28, 12:13; 1 John 1:9

# **Article V – Membership**

## **Sec. A. Purpose of Membership**

While all believers are part of the universal church, the New Testament also stresses the importance of all believers being a part of a local church. A local church is comprised of a definable group of people who, on the basis of their commitment to the Lord, have identified themselves with and committed themselves to one another. While membership in a local church does not guarantee one's salvation, it is imperative for all believers to be connected to a body of believers for the sake of encouragement, edification and equipping.

While church membership gives believers certain rights within a local congregation, its purpose is far more biblical. In the God-ordained environment of a local church, members function as one body, building up each other in love according to the rule of Scripture. Throughout Scripture, it is clear that God intended for His people to enter into covenants with Him and with one another. Membership at Village Bible Church is a covenant relationship among fellow believers, as well as with their leaders under Christ. In order to implement the principles of accountability and commitment to the local body of Christ as defined in the New Testament and practiced in the early church, Village Bible Church recognizes the need for formal membership (Acts 11:26; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Philippians 1:1).

## **Sec. B. Qualifications for Membership**

Those who give testimony and evidence of their faith in Christ as their Savior and Lord, who have been baptized, who affirm their commitment to follow the Word of God in all matters of faith and practice, and who voluntarily submit themselves to the authority of Village Bible Church are eligible to apply for membership.

## **Sec. C. Membership Commitments**

Village Bible Church, as part of the body of Christ, acknowledges our God-ordained relationship as a local fellowship of believers. We agree to committed relationships expressed in dependence upon, responsibility for, and accountability to each other by God's grace. This relationship will be guided and governed by the Biblical principles set forth in our *Membership Commitments*, which establishes our commitments related to peacemaking and reconciliation, accountability and church discipline, preserving marriages, counseling and confidentiality, and the protection of our children.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to one another through the annual affirmation of our *Membership Commitments*.

#### **Sec. D. Process for Membership**

One who desires to become a member of Village Bible Church and meets the qualifications set forth above is invited to take the following steps:

1. Complete the introductory membership class.
2. Submit an application form to the elders.
3. Read and commit by signature to live in accordance with the *Membership Commitments* of this church.
4. Before a team of at least one elder and another member of the church, declare a personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, display evidence of a maturing, active, love relationship with Jesus, and express a clear understanding of the responsibilities of membership.

After having been approved by the elders, new members will be introduced to the church family and publicly welcomed into the fellowship of the church.

#### **Sec. E. Categories of Membership**

1. Active members: Those who have been received in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, attend regularly and have affirmed and signed the *Membership Commitments* for that current year will be considered active members.
  - a. There is no set minimum age for membership.
  - b. Only active members eighteen years old and older shall have voting privileges.
2. Associate members: Those who meet the qualifications for active membership but are not permanent residents of this area (e.g., students, military personnel, shut-ins and missionaries) may become associate members. They may teach a class or participate in a similar ministry. They may attend congregational meetings, but without the right to vote.

#### **Sec. F. Maintenance of Membership**

1. As the elders shepherd the flock, they will maintain the integrity of the membership roll.
2. Ongoing membership status will be maintained through:
  - a. Annual signature reaffirmation of the *Membership Commitments*: At the beginning of every year, the *Membership Commitments* will be presented to all members for reaffirmation. Members who do

not reaffirm the commitments in writing within 30 days will be removed from the membership roll.

- b. Compliance with the *Membership Commitments*: The Guiding Elders, in conjunction with the Shepherding Elders, have the responsibility to review the status of those who fail to live in accordance with the *Membership Commitments* and, when appropriate, to remove them from membership.
- c. Regular church involvement: Those who have been absent from the church for a period of six months without a satisfactory reason will be removed from the membership roll.
- d. Reinstatement: At any time, a membership that has lapsed due to lack of affirmation of the *Membership Commitments* or due to absence can sign and submit a new *Membership Commitments* and make a request of the elders that their membership be reinstated.

### **Sec. G. Withdrawal from Membership**

1. One may withdraw from membership at any time by simply notifying the church in writing of such intent, provided that such withdrawal does not occur at a time when the member is under church discipline.
2. The church will not accept a member's resignation if the elders believe that the purpose of his or her resignation is to avoid church discipline. Although it may be that church discipline will result in the public dismissal of the erring member, that will be the decision of the elders and not of the erring member who has accepted the accountability inherent in church membership.

### **Sec. H. Discipline of Members**

We strive to love Jesus to the point of transformation, love each other to the point of sacrifice and love our world to the point of action. Church discipline is an essential part of the church's responsibility to fulfill this stated purpose. Church discipline will be carried out by the Guiding Elders, in conjunction with the Shepherding Elders, in accordance with our *Member Commitments* guidelines.

# **Article VI - Government**

## **Sec. A. Form of Government**

The New Testament Scriptures give examples of local churches being led by a plurality of godly men called elders. These elders functioned as members of teams, rather than as individuals, in directing the affairs of local congregations. Elders in New Testament times served as the spiritual leaders of their congregation and were given the ultimate authority and responsibility to ensure that their church remained on a Biblical course and that its mission was carried out.

Elders were selected on the basis of specific moral and personal criteria. And while the Scriptures do not go into great detail regarding the various responsibilities and functions of elders, they do enumerate the essential qualifications for this office and provide us with at least a basic framework of what it means to be an elder. (See Section B, "The Ministry of Elders.")

In light of this biblical teaching, Village Bible Church is led by elders who focus their efforts on meeting the needs of individual church members through prayer, outreach, visitation, networking and other means.

Certain elders also serve on the *Guiding Elder Team*, which makes decisions concerning the overall course of the ministry of Village Bible Church. The members of this team, in accordance with the laws of the State of Illinois, serve as the trustees of the church and constitute the oversight board for all matters of spiritual, financial and legal service rendered on behalf of the church. For corporate purposes, the Guiding Elder Team is the board of directors of the church.

## **Sec. B. The Ministry of Elders**

1 Peter 5:2: *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.*

1. Terminology: The terms "elder," "overseer" and "pastor" (shepherd) are used interchangeably in the New Testament with reference to a single office (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1; 5:17; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
2. Implementation: All elders will be called to fulfill the biblical mandate of shepherding the flock. Some elders will also be called to serve on the Guiding Elder Team, which makes the guiding decisions determining the course of our church and its ministry. Some elders also fill their role in paid staff position.

- a. **Shepherding Elders:** Shepherding is a specific and vital responsibility of those who accept the call to become elders. Shepherding elders serve the church family by:
- (1) **Relating:** Elders should purposefully seek to build relationships with people both in the church and in the community. It is important that elders and those whom they guide know one another. In keeping with the biblical analogy of the shepherd and his sheep, elders must be recognizable, approachable, steadfast and trustworthy. They should interact with people at the natural points of contact afforded by our church structure.
  - (2) **Feeding:** Elders should challenge those whom they shepherd to move into a deeper and more personal relationship with Jesus. Because elders have the opportunity to be personally involved in the lives of those who call VBC their church home, they are able to help ensure that needed spiritual sustenance is available (Acts 20:28-31; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2).
  - (3) **Instructing:** Elders should equip and edify the church by teaching and preaching the Word of God while, at the same time, they model godly living (Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 4:12, 5:17b; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Titus 2:7).
  - (4) **Leading by example:** It is often assumed that the function of a shepherd is primarily that of a guardian. In reality, however, a shepherd leads the flock. A flock left too long in one place will quickly strip a pasture of all sources of nourishment (1 Peter 5:3).
  - (5) **Encouraging** through correct teaching: Elders should encourage the members of the flock to remain consistent and to grow in their relationship with the Lord. At times sheep stray by falling into sin or by walking away from the church. Shepherds pursue and encourage stragglers and wanderers (Titus 1:9).
  - (6) **Discipling and Counseling:** Elders should develop one-on-one relationships with the flock, providing discipleship, mentoring and counseling (2 Timothy 2:2).
  - (7) **Mediating:** Elders are to be thoughtful leaders, always ready to give an appropriate response when encountering discord or division in the church. It is beneficial to have someone who is known and respected by some or all who are involved to speak into such situations. This is a natural function of elders, given the personal relationships that typically develop between elders and those they lead.
  - (8) **Caring and Interceding:** Elders are to care for the spiritual well-being of members and regularly pray for and with the sick. They

should give spiritual comfort during trials and pray with and for those who are part of the flock. This is a significant responsibility, and the reference in James 5:14-16 to praying for the restoration of health can apply to a wide range of needs, including people's physical, emotional and spiritual health (1 Samuel 12:23; Romans 1:19; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Ephesians 1:15-21; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; James 5:14-15).

(9) **Advising:** Elders should offer objective Biblical guidance with regard to conflicts, distortions in thinking and difficult decisions (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

(10) **Unifying:** Elders are responsible for creating and maintaining unity within the church. This is in accordance with the high priestly prayer of Jesus as recorded in John 17.

(11) **Protecting:** Elders are to guard the body against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting Biblical truth or who are following patterns of sinful behavior. They should warn the sheep of danger and discipline them in love and humility when they become rebellious, following the processes of church discipline outlined in Scripture (Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Galatians 6:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 5:17-25; 6:20; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:9; 3:10; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

(12) **Being Accountable:** Elders have a responsibility for the souls of their flock and will give an account before God (Hebrews 13:17).

- b. **Guiding Elders:** Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, makes reference to "the elders who direct the affairs of the church" (5:17). The meaning of the Greek word translated "direct" is "to preside over" or "govern." As a church grows, it seems appropriate and even necessary for there to be a group of elders who focus particularly on the affairs and spiritual health of the church as a whole. In our model, such elders, in addition to shepherding the members of a local flock in a more personal way, also exercise a governing function. We therefore refer to such elders as Guiding Elders. The Guiding Elder Team is a subset of the full body of elders and is entrusted with the responsibility of decision-making with regard to the overall vision, strategy, direction and ministry of Village Bible Church.

In addition to their various roles as Shepherding Elders, those who function in the role of Guiding Elder serve the church body in the following ways:

- (1) **Governance:** Ultimate decision-making authority resides with the Guiding Elder Team, which has been entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the overall ministry of this church.
- (2) **Guidance and Envisioning:** Proverbs 11:14: *Where there is no guidance, the people fall.*

The Guiding Elder Team is charged with discerning the values and vision that ought to guide the overall ministry of VBC and with formulating goals and strategies that will facilitate the carrying out of that vision. Following are some of the ways the Guiding Elders are to carry out this responsibility:

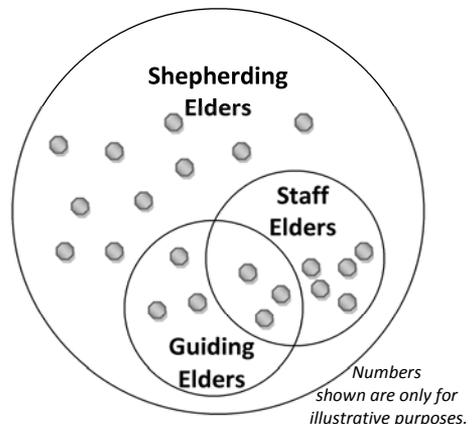
- (a) Through constant prayer and by searching the Scriptures, they are to seek direction and guidance from the Holy Spirit.
  - (b) They are to empower the staff to implement the vision, goals, doctrine and values of the Church.
  - (c) They are to participate in envisioning, blessing and empowering new ministries that are consistent with the vision, goals, values and doctrine of Village Bible Church.
  - (d) They have a responsibility to communicate matters of importance to the body.
  - (e) Interaction and communication between the Guiding Elders and the staff should reflect a recognition of and respect for the staff organizational chart.
- (3) **Direction:** The Guiding Elder Team ensures that the direction of the church is consistent with its statement of purpose and core values. With the assistance of other spiritually mature individuals, they guide the life of the church (1 Timothy 3:8-12; 5:17a).
    - (a) The Guiding Elder Team oversees the nominating process for members of the Shepherding Elder team.
    - (b) It is also the responsibility of the Guiding Elders, in conjunction with the staff, to identify areas in need of deacon oversight.
    - (c) Church discipline is administered under the oversight of the Guiding Elder Team.
    - (d) The Guiding Elder Team reviews and approves the annual ministry budget to ensure that it is in line with the mission, vision and strategic emphases that have been agreed upon for the coming year.
    - (e) The Guiding Elder Team reviews, directs and approves all financial transactions.

- (f) The Guiding Elder Team is responsible for keeping the full body of elders informed about the overall affairs and direction of the church.
  - (g) For each local congregation, a Guiding Elder will oversee the Shepherding Elder team focused on that location.
- c. **Staff Elders:** Staff elders are paid servants of the church. They serve in a manner determined by the Guiding Elder Team and are responsible for the day-to-day operations and ministry of the church. They automatically serve as a Shepherding Elder and may also serve as a Guiding Elder.
- (1) Responsibilities:
    - (a) Ministry descriptions will be established by the Guiding Elder Team in keeping with the giftedness of the individual. Ministry descriptions will be agreed upon at the time of hiring and may change from time to time.
    - (b) Involvement in ministry-related activities outside this church will be subject to approval by the Guiding Elder Team.
  - (2) Compensation: Compensation of staff elders will be determined by the Guiding Elder Team who may also involve a non-staff advisory team (2 Corinthians 8:20-21; 1 Timothy 5:17).

d. **The Full Body of Elders:**

All Guiding Elders and Shepherding Elders together comprise the Full Body of Elders. The full body of elders is not a decision making body. Meetings of the full body of elders are for the purpose of sharing wisdom, for communication and for discussing and understanding the needs of the church body.

The full body of elders meets at least twice a year. In addition, special meetings of the full body of elders can be called when-ever direction and wisdom are needed with regard to significant matters. The chairman of the Guiding Elder Team presides over the meeting of the full body of elders. If he knows that he will be absent, he is to designate another member of the Guiding Elder Team to do so.



## **Sec. D. Functioning of Elder Teams**

1. **Size:** The number of elders will be as many as are qualified and needed to carry out the ministry of elders in the church. The Guiding Elder Team will determine that number.
2. **Equality and Plurality:** While elders may differ in terms of giftedness, spiritual maturity, training and Biblical knowledge, they all have equal authority and responsibility. No one elder is to be considered the “first among equals” overall. We believe, rather, that each elder will rise to be the “first among equals” in specific areas of giftedness, while other elders will rise to be “first among equals” in other areas.
3. **Decision Making by Consensus:** It is the responsibility of the elders to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. Since we believe the Holy Spirit will lead us in unity, decision-making will be through consensus and not through a voting process. Where agreement among the elders is not obvious, decisions will be postponed or proposals may be reevaluated, modified or withdrawn. Consensus is defined as “total agreement by the elders to support a decision.” No elder has veto power, however, and in certain instances, an individual member of the elder board may need to defer to the collective decision of the remaining elders.
4. **Meetings:** Meetings will be held on a regular basis as determined by the elders.
5. **Changes:** Members will be notified of any changes in the composition of the elder teams.
6. **Qualifications:**
  - a. Elders must be active members of this church and also meet and abide by the qualifications set forth in Scripture. They are to be men who exhibit the following traits:

▪ Able to teach	▪ Not violent
▪ Above reproach	▪ Respectable
▪ Husband of one wife	▪ Free from the love of money
▪ Not addicted to alcohol	▪ Hospitable
▪ Temperate	▪ Manages his household well
▪ Not antagonistic	▪ Not a new convert
▪ Prudent	▪ Patient

Acts 20:17, 28-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4

- b. Staff pastors/elders must meet the qualifications of elders listed above, be able to give evidence of the call of God to vocational ministry, and demonstrate competence of leadership and giftedness for the role that they will fill.
7. Accountability: In the New Testament elders are exhorted to maintain accountability among themselves. All spiritual leaders in this church should hold each other accountable for their spiritual lives, their doctrine and the way they carry out their ministries. (Acts 20:28-30)

### **Sec. E. Selection of Elders**

1. Selection: The Scriptures indicate that the first elders were appointed under the authority of the Apostles (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). However, no specific guidelines are given in the New Testament as to how this selection process was to be done after the Apostolic Age. It would appear therefore that local churches are free to develop a process that will best serve their own needs in their particular cultural context.

At Village Bible Church, the Guiding Elder Team will determine the number of positions to be filled. If it is determined that additional elders are needed, the following process(es) will be followed:

- a. Non-Staff Shepherding Elders:
  - i. Nominations will be accepted by the Guiding Elder Team from other elders and from members of the congregation.
  - ii. The Shepherding Elders and the Guiding Elder Team together will prayerfully oversee the examination process to determine if a potential elder:
    - (1) aspires to the office (1 Timothy 3:1);
    - (2) is above reproach in all areas of his life (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9);
    - (3) affirms his agreement with the Statement of Doctrine and Constitution of this church and demonstrates competency of Biblical doctrine so as to be able to teach, encourage and refute false doctrine; (Titus 1: 9)
    - (4) demonstrates the heart and ability to shepherd the flock and to serve alongside the existing elders. (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3)
  - iii. The names of anyone whom the Guiding Elder Team desires to add as a Shepherding Elder will be made known to the members of the congregation. Members will be reminded of

the Biblical requirements for elders and will be given 30 days to speak personally with the nominee(s), should they wish to express their concern about any potentially disqualifying factors. If their concern is not resolved, they should then approach a member of the Guiding Elder Team and share that concern.

iv. Vote of affirmation:

(1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elders decide to proceed, they will present the candidate to the members of the congregation for a vote of affirmation.

(2) Affirmation by three-quarters majority vote, held in accordance with this constitution (see VI.K.6), will be required for the approval of a non-staff elder.

b. Staff Shepherding Elders:

i. The Guiding Elder Team will identify possible candidates for staff ministry positions and to investigate their training, ministry experience and qualifications specific to the position, as well as to evaluate the degree to which they meet the general qualifications prescribed in this constitution.

ii. When a candidate is identified, he will be introduced to other leaders in the congregation for dialog and interaction.

iii. The elders may bring the candidate before the members of the congregation for a time of dialog and interaction.

iv. Vote of affirmation:

(1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elders decide to proceed, they will present the candidate to the members of the congregation for a vote of affirmation.

(2) Affirmation by three-quarters majority vote, held in accordance with this constitution (see VI.K.6), will be required for the approval of a staff elder.

c. Guiding Elders:

i. Additions to the Guiding Elder Team will be comprised of men currently serving as a Shepherding Elder.

ii. Nominations will be accepted by the Guiding Elder Team from the full body of elders and from members of the congregation.

iii. Ordinarily, this team should consist of a minimum of five men and would pursue a balance of staff and non-staff elders.

- iv. The Guiding Elder Team will prayerfully consider all nominations submitted.
- v. Vote of affirmation:
  - (1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elders decide to proceed, they will present a candidate(s) to the full body of elders for a vote of affirmation at their next scheduled meeting.
  - (2) In order for a vote to be binding, a minimum of fifty percent of the members of the full body of elders must physically cast a ballot during the predefined voting period. (Neither proxy nor absentee ballots will be accepted for this vote.)
  - (3) Affirmation by three-quarters of those voting will be required for the approval of a Guiding Elder.
  - (4) Abstentions will not be counted as being either for or against a candidate. Thus, the basis for calculating votes will be the number of votes actually cast for or against a candidate.
- vi. The chairman of the Guiding Elder Team will be selected annually through the consensus decision of the Guiding Elder Team at their first meeting following the annual meeting. The chairman is to be a non-staff elder.

## 2. Term:

### a. Non-Staff Shepherding Elders:

- (1) Each non-staff Shepherding Elder, before appointment, will be asked for a commitment to serve for a specified term of up to three years.
- (2) At the end of a term, the Guiding Elder Team will review his service and decide whether or not to invite him to serve for another term. Those elders renewing their commitment will be presented to the congregation for a vote of reaffirmation.
- (3) There are no term-limits for a Non-Staff Shepherding Elder.

### b. Staff Elders: A staff elder's tenure will be indefinite.

### c. Guiding Elders:

- (1) Each Guiding Elder, before appointment, will be asked for a commitment to serve for a specified term of up to three years.
- (2) At the end of a guiding elder's term, the Guiding Elder Team will review his service and decide whether or not to invite him to serve for another term.

- (3) Guiding elders will be affirmed annually by the full body of elders.
- (4) There are no term-limits for a Guiding Elder.

## **Sec. F. Removal of Elders**

1. Each elder must agree that should an accusation be made against his moral character or competence, he will abide by the ruling of the Guiding Elders. Should the Guiding Elders be unable to resolve the matter, the person against whom the accusation has been made will agree to abide by the ruling of an outside party selected by the Guiding Elders.
2. Accusations against or criticisms of an elder will be received according to the principles laid out in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. Should it become clear that the elder is guilty of an offense, he will be counseled by the other elders, with the ultimate goal of restoration (Galatians 6:1-2). However, should the erring elder continue to sin, he is to be removed from office.
3. Process:
  - a. *Self-initiated sabbatical*: An elder may take a short-term sabbatical at any time by giving notice to the Guiding Elder Team.
  - b. *Self-initiated resignation*: An elder may resign at any time by giving notice to the Guiding Elder Team.
  - c. *Guiding Elder Team-initiated removal*: The Guiding Elder Team reserves the right to remove an elder from office or require an elder to take a temporary leave of absence for the following reasons:
    - i. The discovery, subsequent to his appointment as an elder, of some biblical disqualification.
    - ii. Inability or persistent failure to perform the functions of an elder.
    - iii. Unresolved doctrinal or philosophical disharmony.The disqualified elder will place himself under the direction of the Guiding Elder Team for the purpose of restoration.
  - d. *Member-initiated removal*:
    - i. Any member who perceives that there might be a problem with one of their elders should be appropriately cautious before discussing it with anyone else – even with another elder.

- (1) Given the fact that the church thoroughly examines each potential elder before appointment, concerns should be voiced only when there is compelling evidence that a problem truly exists.
  - (2) Members should also recognize that the unwarranted investigation of an elder might seriously damage his credibility.
  - (3) Legitimate concerns regarding an elder should be raised regardless of personal loyalty to that elder, the fear of strife within the church, personal insecurity or the fear of reprisal, nor should any such factors dissuade the church from investigating and removing an elder, if necessary.
- ii. If, after careful consideration of the above mentioned points, a member determines that it is necessary to address the problem, they should approach the elder, following the steps of peacemaking and reconciliation prescribed in scripture and laid forth in our *Relational Commitments*.
  - iii. If the elder acknowledges that a significant problem does indeed exist with regard to his leadership capabilities or agrees that he is Biblically unqualified, and if he therefore desires to step down voluntarily, no lengthy investigative process will be necessary.
  - iv. If the member is unable to resolve the problem through the above steps, they should approach the Guiding Elder Team who will investigate the problem and, if necessary, suspend or remove the elder from his role according to the principles noted above under the *Guiding Elder Team-Initiated Removal* steps.

### **Sec. G. Ministry Directors (Deacons and Deaconesses)**

1. Terminology: At Village Bible Church those who serve in the roles of deacon or deaconess are referred to also as *ministry directors*. In the original Greek of the New Testament, the word translated "deacon" means "servant," and ministry directors lead by serving. The New Testament qualifications for elders and deacons are essentially the same with regard to character, but they differ with regard to aptitude. While elders are to be men who are "able to teach," ministry directors are to be individuals who are "proven as servants." (1 Timothy 3:8-10,12)

2. **Biblical Precedent:** In New Testament times, the leaders of the church delegated to other qualified believers certain ministries of the church, and such assistants were often called deacons or deaconess.
3. **Responsibilities:** Ministry directors serve at Village Bible Church by filling particular areas of need on behalf of the elders, freeing the elders to give greater priority to their biblical responsibilities. Under the supervision of the elders, each ministry director oversees a specific area of ministry within the church.
4. **Eligibility to Serve:** Men and women, both from the ministry staff and from the congregation at large, are eligible to serve as ministry directors. The number of directors will be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualifications of members of the church.

5. **Qualifications:**

Ministry directors are to be active members modeling spiritual virtue who stand alongside the elders and exhibit the following qualities (1 Timothy 3:8-12):

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| ▪ Worthy of respect         | ▪ Temperate   |
| ▪ Above reproach            | ▪ Not pursuing dishonest gain                                 |
| ▪ Not double tongued        | ▪ Holding to the deep truths of faith with a clear conscience |
| ▪ Proven as servants        | ▪ Faithful in marriage  |
| ▪ Not controlled by alcohol | ▪ Managing their household well                               |
| ▪ Dignified                 | ▪ Faithful in all things                                      |

6. Ministry directors will be appointed by the Guiding Elder Team. Nominations will be accepted by the Guiding Elder Team from other elders and from members of the congregation.
7. **Term:**
  - a. Ministry directors will each serve for a term of one year, and they may serve for consecutive terms if this is deemed appropriate by the Guiding Elder Team.
  - b. A ministry director's term of service may be discontinued at any time by his or her own decision or by a consensus decision of the Guiding Elder Team.

**Sec. H. Clerk and Treasurer**

1. **Clerk:**
  - a. The clerk will carry out the following duties:

- i. Keep a record of all business meetings of the church and of the calling of such meetings.
    - ii. Maintain an up-to-date list of the names and addresses of all members and be prepared to declare the voting membership at each business meeting.
  - b. The clerk will be elected annually by the membership through a vote held in accordance with this constitution (see VI.K.6).
2. Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer:
  - a. The treasurer, aided by the assistant treasurer, will be responsible for all the funds of the church and keep an accurate account of them.
  - b. The treasurer will oversee the deposit of all monies in a bank as soon as possible and will submit a monthly report to the Guiding Elder Team.
  - c. The treasurer and the assistant treasurer will be elected annually by the membership through a vote held in accordance with this constitution (see VI.K.6).
3. Term:
  - a. The clerk, treasurer and assistant treasurer will each serve for a term of one year, and they may serve for consecutive terms if this is deemed appropriate by the Guiding Elder Team.
  - b. The term of service of the clerk, treasurer or assistant treasurer may be discontinued at any time by their own decision or by a consensus decision of the Guiding Elder Team.

### **Sec. I. Qualifications of Church Leaders**

All those who hold positions of leadership must meet and maintain the following general qualifications:

1. Has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
2. Is an active member of Village Bible Church.
3. Has a godly reputation as a growing believer.

### **Sec. J. Ministry and Administrative Staff**

1. The ministry and administrative staff of the church will be chosen by and are responsible to the staff elders and, ultimately, to the Guiding Elder Team.
2. Ministry and administrative staff members must exemplify faithfulness and spiritual maturity and have a reputation for keeping confidences.

3. Ministry descriptions will be established by the staff elders and the Guiding Elder Team in keeping with the giftedness of the individual. Ministry descriptions will be agreed upon at the time of hiring.
4. Ministry and administrative staff members are employees at will, and their services can be terminated at any time by personal resignation or by a decision of the Guiding Elder Team.

## **Sec. K. Meetings & Voting**

1. Annual Meeting: This meeting is to be planned and led by the Guiding Elder Team. It is to include ministry reports, financial reports and a vote of the members in attendance to affirm those nominated to serve as officers and on any proposed measures.
2. Special meetings of the membership.
  - a. It is the right and responsibility of the Guiding Elder Team to call congregational and membership meetings. Special meetings may be called for at any time.
  - b. Special meetings may be initiated at any time by the membership. A written request to call a meeting of the membership, stating clearly its purpose, signed by twenty-five percent of the membership and presented to the chairman of the Guiding Elder Team, will require the Guiding Elder Team to call such a meeting.
  - c. The calling of such a meeting and its purpose must be announced at the morning service on two consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the meeting, or else written notice must be mailed to each member four business days prior to the meeting date.
  - d. Records of these announcements must be kept by the clerk with the regular minutes of the business meetings of the church.
3. The chairman of the Guiding Elder Team will normally preside over congregational and membership meetings. In certain circumstances, the Guiding Elder Team will choose another individual to preside at the meeting.
4. Non-members may ordinarily attend meetings, but without voice or vote. The Guiding Elder Team reserves the right, however, to restrict certain meetings to members only.
5. Family Forums, structured and led by the Guiding Elder Team, will be held periodically to facilitate communication between the congregation and the leadership.

## 6. Voting:

- a. An item may be brought before the congregation for a vote by the Guiding Elder Team at any time.
- b. The calling of a vote must be announced at the morning service on two consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the vote, or else written notice must be mailed to each member four business days prior to the vote.
- c. Members of each local VBC congregation will vote on issues related to their specific location. Issues that involve the overall ministry of Village Bible Church will be voted on by members of all VBC congregations. Voting on ministry-wide issues may take place at one specific location or at multiple locations. The Guiding Elder Team will determine which issues are specific to a local congregation versus the overall ministry.
- d. Absentee voting is permissible and may be implemented at the discretion and procedure of the Guiding Elder Team. Absentee voting must: guarantee eligibility of the voter, prevent the possibility of multiple votes by the same person, provide secrecy of the voter's ballot decisions, maintain confidentiality of the votes until the voting period closes and conclude before the close of the physical voting period. Electronic, automated and paper based forms of absentee voting are all acceptable, assuming they meet the above requirements.
- e. Voting may take place over the course of time and location. The time and location must be disclosed in the communication regarding the vote. The duration of a vote should typically span no more than two Sundays. Votes and voter names must be kept confidential during the voting period.
- f. In order for a vote to be binding, a minimum of twenty-five percent of voting members must cast a ballot.
- g. Abstentions will not be counted as being either for or against a measure. Thus, the basis for calculating votes will be the number of votes actually cast for or against a measure.
- h. The approval of any measure requires a simple majority vote, unless a higher percentage is otherwise specified by this Constitution.
- i. When less than fifty percent of the voting members cast a ballot, a two-thirds majority shall be required to pass any measure unless a higher percentage is otherwise specified by this Constitution.

# **Article VII – Finances**

## **Sec. A. Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year will be the same as the calendar year.

## **Sec. B. Expenditures**

1. Loans or credit purchases in excess of five percent of the current total annual budget must receive member approval through a vote held in accordance with this constitution.
2. Any capital expenditure in excess of five percent of the current total annual budget must receive member approval through a vote held in accordance with this constitution.
3. When voting takes place concerning credit purchases and/or expenditures that are specific to a particular VBC congregation, only the members of that local congregation will take part. When voting takes place concerning credit purchases and/or expenditures that impact the overall ministry of Village Bible Church, all the members of the VBC congregations will participate. The Guiding Elder Team will determine which issues are specific to a local congregation verses the overall ministry.

## **Sec. C. Designated Gifts**

1. Gifts may be designated for a particular purpose only with the prior approval of the Guiding Elder Team.
2. Although by law Village Bible Church cannot guarantee that such gifts will be used for their designated purpose, reasonable efforts will be made to do so.
3. No gifts will be channeled through the church treasury to any agency or person not approved by the Guiding Elder Team.

# **Article VIII – Properties**

## **Sec. A. Title to Property**

The title to all property of this church, both real and personal, will be vested in Village Bible Church as a corporate entity.

## **Sec. B. Acquisition and Sale of Property**

- 1.The Guiding Elder Team, on behalf of the church, will have power to receive, acquire and hold property, both real and personal, in support of the general purposes of the church. All property so acquired will be held in the name of the church.
- 2.Any sale, mortgage or transferring away of property valued in excess of five percent of the current total annual budget must receive a two-thirds approval of the membership, determined by a vote held in accordance with this constitution.
- 3.If it is necessary to transfer property away from a specific local congregation, only the members of that local congregation will vote. When the transfer of property impacts the overall ministry of Village Bible Church all the members of the VBC congregations will participate. The Guiding Elder Team will determine which issues are specific to a local congregation verses the overall ministry.

## **Sec. C. Use of Property**

- 1.All properties belonging to the church will be available to the membership for purposes consistent with the ministry of the church, subject to regulation by the Guiding Elder Team.
- 2.The elders will have access at all times and under all circumstances to all properties owned by the church.

## **Sec. D. Dissolution**

No part of the earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director or officer of the corporation or any private individual, and no donor, member, director or officer of the corporation or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets. Should it ever become necessary to dissolve Village Bible Church, the remaining elder(s) will select (an)other 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization(s) that is/are in agreement with the purpose and doctrine of this church to which to contribute the remaining assets of the church. (Examples of such organizations include: mission organizations, parachurch agencies, Christian colleges or Bible-believing churches.)

# **Article IX – Ordination**

## **Sec. A. Composition and Function of Council of Ordination**

1. This church will have the authority to ordain men within its membership to ministry.
2. When, in the judgment of the Guiding Elder Team, a member is qualified for and called to ministry, it will be within the power of this Team to call and conduct a Council of Ordination. This Council will consist of elders from our church and/or from other evangelical churches.
3. The Council of Ordination shall thoroughly examine the applicant regarding his personal Christian experience, call to the ministry, educational training, doctrinal beliefs, reputation and demonstrated effectiveness in Christian service.
4. Upon completion of the examination of the applicant, a three-fourths majority vote by the Council of Ordination will be necessary for the Guiding Elder Team to recommend to the church that he be ordained.
5. Upon the recommendation of the Guiding Elder Team, a special meeting will be called for the membership to affirm this ordination.
6. Following congregational affirmation, a public ordination service will be conducted by the Guiding Elder Team.
7. The minutes of the Council of Ordination and of the public service will be incorporated into the records of church meetings, and a certificate of ordination will be provided.

## **Sec. B. Discipline of Ordained Ministers**

The Guiding Elder Team will have the power to discipline anyone ordained by this church, even to the point of revoking his ordination credentials, should he be found guilty of doctrinal or moral defection.

## **Article X – Amendments**

### **Sec. A.**

This constitution may be amended or revised by a two-thirds majority vote of the membership, held in accordance with this constitution, provided that such amendments or revisions are presented by the Guiding Elder Team in written form at least one month prior to the vote.

### **Sec. B.**

Article III, *Statement of Doctrine*, may be amended or revised by a three-quarters majority vote of the membership, held in accordance with this constitution, provided that such amendments or revisions are presented by the Guiding Elder Team in written form at least one month prior to the vote.

Ratified 2/28/2010