



Village Bible Church

**Constitution of
Village Bible Church of Sugar Grove, Illinois
including all campuses**

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We the members of all campuses 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 discover, develop and deploy disciples who are all in for God's Kingdom, both here and around the world.

Section 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.

Section 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, cooperate and at times even partner with other like-minded churches and networks.

ARTICLE III. STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE

This statement of doctrine expresses what we believe the scriptures teach us about our faith. It is not meant to represent all to which Christians must hold, but includes what we believe are the essentials of authentic Christianity.

Section 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 34:16; 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.

Section 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.

- A. **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.

- B. **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.

- C. **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.

Section 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 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. All humanity is subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and, apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God.

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.

Section 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.

- A. **Election** is the gracious purpose of God, settled before the foundation of the world, as the basis on 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.

- B. **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.

- C. **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; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:24.

- D. **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.

- E. **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.

- F. **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.

Section 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 multiplying 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 learning, 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 fulfilling 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.

Section 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 authority, he 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 punished eternally 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.

Section 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 heaven 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.

Section H. Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest and the use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Village Bible Church as the local Body of Christ and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all members agree to and abide by this statement on Marriage, Gender and Sexuality (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22), which is further expanded in our distinctive entitled *Marriage and Human Sexuality*.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31).

Section I. Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect and value all human life (Ps 139).

Section J. The Final Authority for Matters of Belief and Conduct

This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God, speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality and the proper conduct of mankind and is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For the purposes of Village Bible Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policies and discipline, our Guiding Elder Team, as representatives of the church membership, will serve as the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

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 Christ to signify what He 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.

Section 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.

Section 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. The ways the New Testament speaks of walking in fellowship and obedience include:

- Having submitted oneself 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 by publicly identifying with Him through the waters of baptism.
- Having confessed any recent sins and renewing one's 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 going and making 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

Section A. Purpose of Membership

While all believers are part of the universal church, the New Testament stresses the importance of all believers also being 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 local body of believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement, edification and equipping.

While church membership gives believers certain rights within a local congregation, its primary purpose is far more biblical than that. 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.

Section 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. The minimum age for membership is 14.

Section C. Membership Commitments

Village Bible Church, as part of the visible 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. These relationships will be guided and governed by the biblical principles set forth in our Membership Commitments, which relate to peacemaking and reconciliation, accountability and church discipline, the preservation of marriages, counseling and confidentiality and the protection of our children. We therefore commit ourselves to one another through the annual reaffirmation of our Membership Commitments.

Section D. Process for Membership

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

- A. Complete the introductory membership class.
- B. Submit an application to the elders.
- C. Read the Membership Commitments of this church and commit by signature to live in accordance with them.
- D. Display evidence of a maturing, active love relationship with Jesus.

- E. Declare a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord as well as express a clear understanding of the responsibilities of membership in the presence of a team of at least one elder and another member of the church.
- F. After having been approved by the campus pastor, new members will be introduced at their campus and publicly welcomed into the fellowship of the church.

Section E. Maintenance of Membership

Those who have been received in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, attend regularly and have affirmed and signed the Membership Commitments for the current year will be considered active members at the campus where they attend regularly and turn in their Membership Commitments.

- A. As the elders shepherd the flock, they will maintain the integrity of the membership roll.
- B. One's ongoing membership status will be maintained through:
 - 1. Annual signature reaffirmation of the Membership Commitments: Every year, the Membership Commitments will be presented to all members for reaffirmation. Members who do not reaffirm the Commitments in writing within 90 days will be removed from the membership roll.
 - 2. Compliance with the Membership Commitments: The campus pastors, 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.
 - 3. 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.
 - 4. Reinstatement: At any time, anyone whose membership has lapsed due to absence or a failure to affirm the Membership Commitments can sign and submit a new Membership Commitments form and make a request of the elders that they be reinstated as a member.
 - 5. Under special circumstances, the campus pastor may grant continued membership to individuals who are unable to attend regularly or affirm their membership in person because of life circumstances (e.g., students, military personnel, shut-ins and missionaries).

Section F. Withdrawal from Membership

- A. One may withdraw from membership at any time by simply notifying the church in writing of such intent.
- B. The church will not accept a member's resignation, however, 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 Guiding Elder Team and not of the erring member who has accepted the accountability inherent in church membership.

Section G. 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 Elder Team in accordance with our Member Commitments guidelines.

ARTICLE VI - GOVERNMENT & LEADERSHIP

Section 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. 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.

In light of this biblical teaching, Village Bible Church is led by elders who focus their efforts on meeting the individual and corporate needs of the church.

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.

Section 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.

- A. **Terminology:** The terms “elder,” “overseer” and “pastor” 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).
- B. **Qualifications:** 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:
- Above reproach
 - Husband of one wife
 - Not addicted to alcohol
 - Temperate
 - Not antagonistic
 - Prudent
 - Not violent
 - Respectable
 - Patient
 - Hospitable
 - Manages his household well
 - Not a new convert
 - Free from the love of money

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.

- C. **Implementation:** All elders will be called to fulfill the biblical mandate of shepherding the flock at their local campus. Some elders will also be called to serve across all campuses on the Guiding Elder Team.

D. **Functions:**

1. **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.

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:

- a) **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.
- b) **Equality and plurality:** While Guiding Elders may differ in terms of giftedness, spiritual maturity, training and biblical knowledge, they all have equal authority and responsibility.
- c) **Decision-making by consensus:** It is the responsibility of the Guiding Elders to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. Since we believe the Holy Spirit will lead us in unity, decision-making will normally be through consensus and not through a voting process, unless otherwise noted. Where agreement among the Guiding 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 Guiding 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 Guiding Elders.
 - 1) **Meetings:** Meetings will be held on a regular basis as determined by the Guiding Elders.
 - 2) **Changes:** Members will be notified of any changes in the composition of the Guiding Elder Team.
- d) **Guidance and Envisioning:** The Guiding Elder Team is charged with discerning the values and vision that guides the overall ministry of Village Bible Church and with formulating goals and strategies that will facilitate the carrying out of that vision. Scripture reminds us in Proverbs 11:14 that “where there is no guidance, the people fall.” Following are some of the ways the Guiding Elders are to carry out this responsibility:
 - 1) Through prayer and study of the Scriptures, they are to seek direction and guidance from the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) They oversee the staff and the implementation of the vision, goals, doctrine and values of the church.
 - 3) They have the responsibility of communicating matters of importance to the body.
 - 4) Interaction and communication between the Guiding Elders and the staff should reflect a recognition of and respect for the staff organizational chart.
- e) **Direction:** The Guiding Elder Team ensures that the direction of the church is consistent with its statements of faith and purpose. It guides the life of the church (1 Timothy 3:8-12; 5:17a).
 - 1) The Guiding Elder Team oversees the nominating process for members of the Shepherding Elder Team.
 - 2) 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. The Lead Pastor and the Executive Pastor will recuse themselves from the final decision of compensation for their personal positions.
 - 3) The Guiding Elder Team is responsible for keeping the Full Body of Elders informed about the overall affairs and direction of the church.
 - 4) Church discipline is administered under the oversight of the Guiding Elder Team.

2. **Shepherding Elders:** Shepherding is a specific and vital responsibility of those who accept the call to become elders. The number of elders will be as many as are qualified and needed to carry out the ministry of elders at each campus, as determined by the Guiding Elder Team.

Shepherding elders serve the church family by:

- a) **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.
- b) **Feeding:** Elders should challenge those whom they shepherd to move into a deeper and more personal relationship with Jesus. Because elders can be personally involved in the lives of those who call Village Bible Church 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).
- c) **Instructing and leading by example:** Elders should equip and edify the church by teaching and/or preaching the Word of God, while at the same time modeling godly living (Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 4:12, 5:17b; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Titus 2:7, 1 Peter 5:3).
- d) **Encouraging through correct teaching:** Elders should encourage the members of the flock to remain consistent and to grow in their relationship with the Lord (Titus 1:9).
- e) **Discipling and counseling:** Elders should develop one-on-one relationships with the flock, providing discipleship, mentoring and counseling (2 Timothy 2:2).
- f) **Mediating:** Elders are to be thoughtful leaders, always ready to give an appropriate response when encountering discord or division in the church. When there is conflict, someone who is known and respected can help to resolve that conflict. This is a natural function of elders, given the personal relationships that typically develop between elders and those they lead.
- g) **Caring and praying:** 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 (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 5:14-16).
- h) **Advising:** Elders should offer objective biblical guidance with regard to conflicts, distortions in thinking and difficult decisions (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- i) **Unifying:** Elders are responsible for fostering and maintaining unity within the church. This is in accordance with the high priestly prayer of Jesus as recorded in John 17.
- j) **Protecting:** Elders are to guard the body against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting biblical truth or 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 and our Membership Commitments (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).
- k) **Being accountable:**
 - 1) **To God:** Elders have a responsibility for the souls of their flock and will give an account before God (Hebrews 13:17).

- 2) **To one another:** 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).

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

All Guiding Elders and Shepherding Elders together comprise the Full Body of Elders. Meetings of the Full Body of Elders are for the purpose of equipping, encouraging and communicating the shepherding needs and vision 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 whenever direction and wisdom are needed with regard to significant matters.

Members will be notified of any changes in the composition of the elder teams.

Section C. Selection of Elders

A. **Selection:** The Scriptures indicate that the first elders were appointed under the authority of the apostles. No specific guidelines are given in the New Testament, however, as to how they were to be selected in the future. Therefore, local churches are free to develop a process that will best serve their own needs. When additional elders are needed, the following process will be followed (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

1. **Shepherding elders:**

- a) Nominations will be accepted by the Guiding Elder Team from other elders and from members of the congregation.
- b) The Guiding Elder Team 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) meets the biblical qualifications laid out in Section B above;
 - 4) affirms his agreement with the Statement of Doctrine and Constitution of this church and demonstrates competency in the area of biblical doctrine (Titus 1: 9);
 - 5) demonstrates the heart and ability to shepherd the flock and to serve alongside the existing elders (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3).
- c) The name of anyone whom the Guiding Elder Team desires to add as a shepherding elder will be made known to the members of the local campus where he will serve. 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.
- d) Vote of affirmation:
 - 1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elder Team decides to proceed, it will present the candidate to the members of his campus for a vote of affirmation.
 - 2) Affirmation by a three-quarters majority vote, held in accordance with this constitution, will be required for the approval of a shepherding elder.

2. **Guiding elders:**

- a) Additions to the Guiding Elder Team will be made from among men currently serving as shepherding elders.
- b) When there are openings on the Guiding Elder Team, the Team will accept nominations from the Full Body of Elders. An elder cannot nominate himself.
- c) Ordinarily, this team should consist of a minimum of five men. Based on their areas of oversight, the lead pastor and executive pastor will serve on this team. The remaining Guiding Elders will be chosen from among the non-staff members of the Full Body of Elders.
- d) The Guiding Elder Team will prayerfully consider all nominations submitted.
- e) Vote of affirmation:
 - 1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elder Team decides to proceed, it will present a candidate(s) to the Full Body of Elders for a vote of affirmation.
 - 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.
 - 3) Affirmation by three-quarters of those voting will be required for the approval of a Guiding Elder.
- f) The chairman of the Guiding Elder Team will be selected annually through the consensus decision of the Guiding Elder Team. The chairman is to be a non-staff elder.

B. Term:

1. Shepherding elders serve indefinitely.
2. The lead pastor and executive pastor each serve indefinitely as both a shepherding elder and a Guiding Elder.
3. Campus pastors serve indefinitely as the leader of their campus shepherding elder team.
4. Guiding elders:
 - a) At the end of his term, the Guiding Elder Team will review a Guiding Elder's service and decide whether or not to invite him to serve for another term and for how long (up to three years). Those elders renewing their commitment will be presented to the Full Body of Elders for a vote of reaffirmation.
 - b) There are no term limits for Guiding Elders.

Section D. Removal of Elders

Regretfully, there will be times in the life of the church when an it is necessary to consider removing one who is serving in leadership. When this must be considered of an elder, the following will guide our process.

- A. 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 Guiding Elders, with the ultimate goal of restoration (Galatians 6:1-2). However, should the erring elder continue to sin, he will be removed from office.
- B. The accused elder has the right to defend against the accusation, but will recuse himself from the ability to vote during the decision making process. If the Guiding Elders cannot reach consensus, the full body of Elder Team will be called upon to make the decision by a simple majority vote.
- C. Process:

1. *Self-initiated sabbatical*: An elder may take a short-term sabbatical at any time by giving notice to the Guiding Elder Team.
2. *Self-initiated resignation*: An elder may resign at any time by giving notice to the Guiding Elder Team.
3. *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. The elder in question will recuse himself from the decision and will place himself under the direction of the Guiding Elder Team. If an accusation has been leveled against a particular elder, the accused elder has the right to defend against the accusation, but will recuse himself from the ability to vote during the decision making process. Each elder must agree that should an accusation be made against their moral character or competence, they will abide by the ruling of the Guiding Elder Team. The Guiding Elder Team will make the decision of removal by a simple majority vote. If the voting of the Guiding Elder Team results in a 50/50 tie, then the Full Body of Elders will make the decision by a simple majority vote. The decision of the Full Body of Elders is final and will be binding.

This could happen for the following reasons:

- a) The discovery of some biblical disqualification;
 - b) Inability or persistent failure to perform the functions of an elder;
 - c) Unresolved doctrinal, philosophical or relational differences or conflict
4. *Member-initiated removal*: 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. The following should be considered:
- a) 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.
 - b) Members should also recognize that the unwarranted investigation of an elder might seriously damage his credibility.
 - c) 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, and any such factors should not dissuade the church from investigating and removing an elder, if necessary.
 - d) If, after careful consideration of the above-mentioned points, a member determines that it is necessary to address the perceived problem (Matthew 18:15-17):
 - 1) They should approach the elder, following the steps of peacemaking and reconciliation prescribed in Scripture and laid forth in our Relational Commitments.
 - 2) There are certain circumstances where approaching the offender is not only inappropriate but also unwise. In these situations, the offended member should not go to the offender but immediately to an elder.
 - 3) If the elder acknowledges that a significant problem does indeed exist with regard to his leadership capabilities or agrees that he is biblically disqualified, he may step down voluntarily.
 - 4) If the issue remains unresolved, the individual should approach a member of the Guiding Elder Team, which 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.

5. In the event that the removal of a Guiding Elder is to be considered, the remaining Guiding Elders will present evidence, for such removal, to the Full Body of Elders. The accused Guiding Elder will have the opportunity to present a defense to the Full Body of Elders prior to a vote. A simple majority vote of the Full Body of Elders will be binding.

Section E. Staff

The church staff shall normally consist of a lead pastor, an executive pastor, campus pastors, as well as other ministry staff. In addition to qualifications for their specific assignment, they shall have demonstrated appropriate Christian character and values.

Section F. Role and Duties

A. Role & Duties

1. **Lead pastor:** The lead pastor provides visionary and spiritual direction of Village Bible Church across our multiple campuses, with an emphasis on the overall leadership, direction and teaching ministries of the church. In conjunction with the Guiding Elder Team, he oversees the execution of the church's overall vision and direction. He helps to define strategic goals and vision as a key leader among the staff members and elders and assists the staff in developing new ministry programs, as directed by the Holy Spirit, so that everyone in leadership is appropriately responsive to the church's overall needs and well-being. His key responsibilities include but are not limited to:
 - a) **Guiding elder:** Serving as a Guiding Elder, bringing passion, vision and direction to the team.
 - b) **Overall leadership:** Serving as an ex-officio member of all church bodies, including standing subcommittees.
 - c) **Agent of unity:** Serving as VBC's intentional agent of unity across all campuses.
 - d) **Vision casting, goal setting and evaluation:** Working with the Guiding Elders to develop and implement ministry plans for the church and its campuses, ensuring that the ministry of Village Bible Church is fulfilling its defined mission and reflecting its core values through ongoing evaluation of ministry programs and staff.
 - e) **Preaching and teaching ministry:** Through his preaching and teaching ministry, he will promote and enhance the corporate worship of God and knowledge of sound doctrine. He should instruct the congregation from the Scriptures on such matters as the practice of personal holiness, the fellowship of believers, the strengthening of Christian families, evangelism, world missions and how believers ought to conduct themselves in everyday life.
 - f) **Church-wide preaching ministry leadership:** Overseeing the preaching ministry (strategy and execution) of all campuses, developing the preaching schedules and rotating the members of the pastoral team to the other campuses.
 - g) **Shepherding and supervising the campus pastors.**
2. **Executive pastor:** The executive pastor is responsible for the daily administration and development of the ministries of Village Bible Church, so that they fulfill its defined mission and reflect its core values. In partnership with the lead pastor, he shepherds and supervises the campus pastors and the catalyst services team, assisting them and being a resource to them. His key responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- a) **Guiding elder:** Serving as a Guiding Elder, bringing passion, vision and direction to the team.
 - b) **Overall leadership:** Serving as an ex-officio member of all church bodies, including standing subcommittees.
 - c) **Ensuring normal church operation** in the absence of the lead pastor.
 - d) **Ensuring that the systems, practices, activities and policies of the church are responsibly and effectively carried out** in ways that fulfill the objectives and other principles established by the Guiding Elder Team.
 - e) **Catalyst services:** Overseeing the catalyst services of the church by bringing unity and coordination to the key departments of Missions, Finance, Staffing, Systems, Facilities as well as Practices and Policies.
3. **Campus pastor:** The campus pastor is the point person for the ministry of Village Bible Church at his assigned campus, leading the implementation of ministries at the campus level. He teaches, establishes strategy, recruits leaders, champions ministry and works to assimilate people into small group connections and ministry involvement, while providing pastoral care and up-front leadership to the campus. He is responsible for the effectiveness of ministry at his assigned campus. His key responsibilities include but are not limited to:
- a) **Shepherding:** Leading the campus shepherding elder team on which he also serves.
 - b) **Ministry leadership:** Leading the ministry of his assigned campus, establishing strategy and supporting the other leaders as they carry out the overall direction set by the lead pastor and the Guiding Elder Team.
 - c) **Visible leader and communicator:** Serving as the campus leader and communicator.
 - d) **Accountability:** Collaborating with the campus staff to monitor budgets and metrics in order to achieve benchmarks for effectiveness and fruitfulness at his assigned campus.
 - e) **Community connector:** Connecting with the local community and community leaders, representing Village and its vision beyond its walls in collaboration with the rest of the ministry leadership.
4. **Ministry Staff:** The ministry staff shall consist of those serving vocationally in roles other than those listed above.
- a) Ministry and administrative staff members must exemplify faithfulness and spiritual maturity and have a reputation for keeping confidences.
 - b) Ministry descriptions will be established by the campus pastor in conjunction with the executive pastor in keeping with the giftedness of the individual.

B. Hiring

1. Lead pastor

- a) The Guiding Elder Team will identify possible candidates for the lead pastor position and investigate their training, ministry experience and qualifications specific to the position.
- b) When a candidate is identified, he will be introduced to the Full Body of Elders for dialogue and interaction.
- c) The Guiding Elders may bring the candidate before the members of the congregation for a time of dialogue and interaction.
- d) Vote of affirmation:

- 1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elder Team decides to proceed, it will present the candidate to the Full Body of Elders for a vote of affirmation.
- 2) Affirmation by a three-quarters majority vote, held in accordance with this constitution, will be required for approval.

2. **Executive pastor**

- a) The Guiding Elder Team will identify possible candidates for the executive pastor position and investigate their training, ministry experience and qualifications specific to the position.
- b) When a candidate is identified, he will be introduced to the Full Body of Elders for dialogue and interaction.
- c) The Guiding Elders may bring the candidate before the members of the congregation for a time of dialogue and interaction.
- d) Vote of affirmation:
 - 1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elder Team decides to proceed, it will present the candidate to the Full Body of Elders for a vote of affirmation.
 - 2) Affirmation by a three-quarters majority vote, held in accordance with this constitution, will be required for approval.

3. **Campus pastors**

- a) The Guiding Elder Team will identify possible candidates for a campus pastor position and investigate their training, ministry experience and qualifications specific to the position.
- b) When a candidate is identified, he will be introduced to the shepherding elders at the campus where he would serve for dialogue and interaction.
- c) The Guiding Elders may bring the candidate before the members of the campus where he will serve for a time of dialogue and interaction.
- d) Vote of affirmation:
 - 1) At the end of this process, if the Guiding Elder Team decides to proceed, it will present the candidate to the members of the local campus where he will serve for a vote of affirmation.
 - 2) Affirmation by a three-quarters majority vote, held in accordance with this constitution, will be required for approval.
 - 3) If there are less than 40 members at the campus, the Guiding Elders will engage with the local campus on the candidate for the campus pastor. The Guiding Elders will approve the final candidate for that campus.
 - 4) In the event of a church plant or an adoption of an existing church, the campus pastor will be approved by the Full Body of Elders.

4. **Ministry staff:** The executive pastor will hire all other ministry staff in conjunction with the appropriate staff supervisors. He will involve the appropriate staff in identifying possible candidates by investigating their training, ministry experience and qualifications specific to the position.

Section 5 – Removal of Staff

Staff are a great blessing to any healthy church. The relationship between the church and its staff is vital to its effectiveness. While great care and caution is used to select staff members, we recognize that, as fallen people, there will be times when a staff member can fail in their role or fall to a disqualifying sin. When this occurs, it is imperative that the church responds appropriately. While every situation is different, we seek to follow the guidelines laid forth in scripture for confronting sin, resolving conflict, disciplining and restoring the erring individual. There are times, when an individual staff member becomes ineffective or disqualified for their role. When that occurs, the following will guide our process.

A. Guidelines

1. The accused staff member has the right to defend against the accusation, but will recuse them self from the process.
2. Each staff member must agree that should an accusation be made against their moral character or competence, they will abide by the ruling of the Guiding Elder Team. The Guiding Elder Team will make the decision of removal by a simple majority vote.
3. If the voting of the Guiding Elder Team results in a 50/50 tie, then the full body of the Elder Team will make the decision by a simple majority vote. The decision of the Full Body of Elders is final and will be binding.
4. Accusations or criticisms against a staff member will be received according to the principles laid out in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. Should it become clear that the staff member is guilty of an offense, they will be counseled, censured and, when appropriate, disciplined by the Guiding Elder Team with the ultimate goal of restoration (Galatians 6:1-2). However, should the erring staff member continue to sin, or fall to grievous sin, they will be immediately removed from their role by the Guiding Elder Team.

B. Process for removal or temporary leave of staff:

1. *Guiding Elder Team-initiated removal:* The Guiding Elder Team reserves the right at any time to remove a staff member or require them to take a temporary leave of absence. The staff member will place themselves under the direction of the Guiding Elder Team for the purpose of restoration. This could happen for the following reasons which may include, but are not limited to:
 - a) The discovery of some biblical disqualification.
 - b) Inability or persistent failure to perform the functions of their role.
 - c) Unresolved doctrinal or philosophical differences or relational conflict.
2. *Self-initiated sabbatical:* A staff member may request approval for a short-term sabbatical at any time to be considered by the Guiding Elder Team.
3. *Self-initiated resignation:* A staff member may resign at any time by giving notice to the Guiding Elder Team.
4. *Member-initiated removal:*
 - a) Any member who perceives that there might be a problem with one of the staff should be appropriately cautious before discussing it with anyone else – even with an elder. The following should be considered:
 - 1) 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 a staff member might seriously damage the staff member’s credibility.

- 3) Legitimate concerns regarding a staff member should be raised regardless of personal loyalty to that elder, the fear of strife within the church, personal insecurity or the fear of reprisal, and any such factors should not dissuade the church from investigating and removing a staff member, if necessary.
- b) If, after careful consideration of the above-mentioned points, a member determines that it is necessary to address the perceived problem (Matthew 18:15-17):
- 1) They should approach the staff member, following the steps of peacemaking and reconciliation prescribed in Scripture and laid forth in our Relational Commitments.
 - 2) There are certain circumstances where approaching the offender is not only inappropriate but also unwise. In these situations, the offended member should not go to the offender but immediately to another elder.
 - 3) If the staff member acknowledges that a significant problem does indeed exist with regard to his leadership capabilities or agrees that he is biblically disqualified, he may step down voluntarily.
 - 4) If the issue remains unresolved, the individual should approach a member of the Guiding Elder Team, which will investigate the problem and, if necessary, suspend or remove the staff member from their role according to the principles noted above under the Guiding Elder Team-initiated removal steps.

Section E. Ministry Directors (Deacons and Deaconesses)

- A. **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).
- B. **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 deaconesses.
- C. **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 campus pastor or assigned staff member, each ministry director oversees a specific area of ministry within the church.
- D. **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.
- E. **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 | ▪ Not controlled by alcohol | ▪ Holding to the deep truths of faith |
| ▪ Above reproach | ▪ Dignified | ▪ Faithful in marriage |
| ▪ Not double-tongued | ▪ Temperate | ▪ Managing their household well |
| ▪ Proven as servants | ▪ Not pursuing dishonest gain | ▪ Faithful in all things |

- F. Ministry directors will be appointed and supervised by the campus pastor or assigned staff member.
- G. A ministry director's term of service shall be indefinite.
- H. A ministry director's term of service may be discontinued at any time by his or her own decision or by a decision of the Guiding Elder Team or the campus pastor or assigned staff supervisor.

Section F. Qualifications of Church Leaders

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

- A. Has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- B. Is an active member of Village Bible Church.
- C. Is faithful to the Membership Commitments.

Section G. Meetings

- A. Family forums, structured and led by the local campus pastor and overseen by the Guiding Elders, will be held at least twice a year to facilitate communication between the congregation and the leadership. They may include ministry reports and financial updates, as well as any other pertinent information.
- B. Special meetings of the membership.
 - 1. It is the right and responsibility of the Guiding Elder Team to call congregational and membership meetings. Special meetings may be called at any time.
 - 2. Special meetings may be initiated at any time by the membership. A written request to call a meeting of the membership, clearly stating its purpose, signed by twenty-five percent of the whole church membership and presented to the chairman of the Guiding Elder Team, will require the Guiding Elder Team to call such a meeting.
 - 3. The calling of such a meeting must be announced in one or more of three ways:
 - a) at the morning service on two consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the meeting;
 - b) by a written notice mailed to each member at least four business days prior to the meeting;
 - c) by an electronic notice emailed to each member, with receipt confirmed, at least seven days prior to the meeting.
 - 4. Records of these announcements must be kept with the regular minutes of the church.
 - 5. A Guiding Elder will preside over any special meeting or they will assign the oversight to another elder.
 - 6. Non-members may ordinarily attend special meetings, but without voice or vote. The Guiding Elder Team reserves the right, however, to restrict certain meetings to members only.

Section H. Voting

- A. An item may be brought before the congregation for a vote by the Guiding Elder Team at any time.
- B. The calling for a vote must be announced in one or more of three ways:
 - 1. at the morning service on two consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the vote;

2. by a written notice mailed to each member at least four business days prior to the vote;
 3. by an electronic notice emailed to each member, with receipt confirmed, at least seven days prior to the vote.
- C. Members of each campus 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 campuses. Voting on ministry-wide issues may take place at one specified campus or at multiple campuses. The Guiding Elder Team will determine which issues are specific to a local campus versus the overall ministry.
 - D. Absentee voting is permissible and may be implemented at the discretion of the Guiding Elder Team. Absentee voting must be done in a way that a) guarantees the eligibility of the voter, b) prevents the possibility of multiple votes by the same person, c) ensures the secrecy of the voter's ballot decisions and d) keeps voting results confidential until the end of the voting period. In addition, absentee voting must conclude before the end of the in-person voting period. Electronic, automated and paper-based forms of absentee voting are all acceptable, assuming they meet the above requirements.
 - E. The Guiding Elder Team will make decisions on all voting parameters. While voting may take place over an extended period of time and at different locations, the time period and location(s) must be disclosed in the communication regarding the vote. The period of voting 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, unless a higher percentage is otherwise specified by this Constitution.
 - G. Abstentions will count towards a quorum but 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 two-thirds vote by the membership, unless a higher percentage is otherwise specified by this Constitution.
 - I. When fewer than fifty percent of the voting members cast a ballot, a three-quarters majority shall be required to pass any measure, unless an even higher percentage is otherwise specified by this Constitution.

ARTICLE VIII – FINANCES

Section A. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year will begin on July 1 and end on June 30.

Section B. Expenditures

- A. 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.
- B. When voting takes place concerning loans or credit purchases that are specific to a particular campus, only the members of that campus will take part. When voting takes place concerning loans or credit purchases and/or expenditures that impact the overall ministry of Village Bible Church, the members of all campuses will participate. The Guiding Elder Team will determine which issues are specific to a local campus versus the church as a whole.

Section C. Gifts

- A. The Guiding Elders reserve the right to accept or decline any gifts offered to the church.
- B. 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 IX – PROPERTIES

Section 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.

Section B. Acquisition and Sale of Property

- A. 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.
- B. Any sale, mortgage or transferring away of property valued in excess of five percent of the current all-church annual budget must receive a two-thirds approval by the Full Body of Elders.

Section C. Use of Property

- A. 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.
- B. The Guiding Elders will have access at all times and under all circumstances to all properties owned by the church.

Section 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 and Bible-believing churches.)

ARTICLE X – ORDINATION

Section A. Composition and Function of a Council of Ordination

- A. This church has the authority to ordain men within its membership to ministry.
- B. When, in the judgment of the Guiding Elder Team, a member is qualified for and called to ministry, it is 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.
- C. The council of ordination shall thoroughly examine the applicant regarding his personal Christian experience, call to ministry, educational training, doctrinal beliefs, reputation and demonstrated effectiveness in Christian service.
- D. 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.
- E. The minutes of the council of ordination will be incorporated into the Guiding Elder official minutes.

Section B. Discipline of Ordained Ministers

The Guiding Elder Team has 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 XI – AMENDMENTS

Section A. Constitution

This constitution may be amended or revised by a two-thirds majority vote of the membership (all church), 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.

Section B. Doctrine

Article III, Statement of Doctrine, may be amended or revised by a three-quarters majority vote of the membership (all church), 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.