

Valley Bible Church's Doctrinal Statement, Constitution and By-Laws

PREAMBLE

Placing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, we, therefore, join ourselves together as a body of believers in Jesus Christ, and adopt the following covenant, declaration of faith, and bylaws to which we voluntarily submit; and we hereby revoke all previous action contrary thereto.

SECTION I. NAME, PURPOSE, AND COVENANT

A. Name:

The name of this organization, a corporation, a nonprofit charitable organization shall be VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH of Billings, Montana.

B. Purpose:

The Purpose of Valley Bible Church shall be to Glorify God.

We will seek to attain this as a corporate body of believers through the public worship of God, the expositional preaching and teaching of the scriptures, consistent Christian living by its members, personal evangelism, missionary endeavors both home and abroad and Christian education.

As a congregation of believers our purpose is to glorify God by developing each individual into committed disciples who desire to honor God in every aspect of their lives.

The development of each individual into a mature believer, requires each one to be growing in their love for and knowledge of God in obedience to the Great Commandments (Matthew 22:36-40) and committed to reaching their neighbors and the lost with the gospel in obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

C. Church Covenant:

Having received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with God and with one another to promise, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live according to this church covenant:

- As members of the body of Christ, we will pursue God through the consistent study of His word and prayer. We will strive to live a holy life by the grace of God and in accordance with the Word of God. We will endeavor to be a godly example to all people in speech, behavior, and attitude.
- We will honor, submit to, pray for, and communicate with our church elders. We will do our best to make their ministry a joy for them (Hebrews 13:17).
- We will purpose to stay involved in the body life of this church through faithful attendance at worship services and participation in other programs and events so that we might give and receive the benefits of Christian fellowship. We will do our best to make VBC a friendly, nurturing church both to members and visitors. We will pray for fellow

members and ministries of this church and will joyfully extend practical acts of service and kindness to others within the church family.

- We will promote the purpose of VBC to make disciples of Jesus Christ by participating in the process of discipleship and encouraging others to do so. We will take individual responsibility for becoming a self-feeding Christian and a spiritual reproducer. We will endeavor to give and receive admonition with love and humility that the body of Christ might mature in righteousness. We will purpose to be slow in taking offense, and quick to make reconciliation. We will submit to the process of church discipline to protect the purity of our church and pursue the restoration of sinning brethren.
- We will seek to win the lost for the Lord Jesus Christ by living and verbalizing the truth of the gospel. We will support the missionary enterprise of VBC.
- We will serve the VBC body as the Lord enables us through the sacrificial use of our spiritual gifts and talents. We will accept the commendation of the Lord as our reward, and not seek or expect the praise of people. We will give financially according to our means to support the ministries of VBC.
- We will be diligent to protect the unity of the VBC body by acting in love toward all other members, by refraining from gossip, by an attitude of deference, and by following our church leaders. We will protect the reputation of our Lord and VBC before the world by living a holy, authentic life.

SECTION II. DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Articles of Biblical Faith

Each and every person, in order to become a member of the Valley Bible Church, shall be required to acknowledge agreement with the doctrinal beliefs in the following Doctrinal Statement:

A. The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbal, plenary, inspired Word of God, the final and all-sufficient authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed. (Matthew 5:18; John 16:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Peter 1:2-4, 20-21)

We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of the scriptures which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days. (see section F.1 and F.2)

B. The Godhead

We believe in one Triune God, one Being in essence, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19; John 16:5-15; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:1-2 also, see references for C, D, and E below)

C. The Person and Work of the Father

1. We believe that the Heavenly Father, Who is Almighty God, created all things through Jesus Christ. (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-16; Revelation 4:8-11)
2. We believe that God the Father, Who is love, purposed before the foundation of the world to send His only begotten Son to redeem out of fallen humanity all of His elect ones. (John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 13:8)
3. We believe that God the Father, Who is sovereign, chose the elect in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestined them to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

D. The Person and Work of Christ

1. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God and Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be Deity, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men. (John 1:1-2, 14; Luke 1:35)
2. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth, and thus He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice. Our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (Romans 3:24-25; Romans 4:25; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 2:24)
3. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate. (Acts 1:9-10; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1-2)

E. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

1. We believe that the Holy Spirit, as the third Person of the Trinity, convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8-11; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14).
2. We believe that the Holy Spirit through divine illumination enables believers to understand the truth of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:14-15, 1 John 2:27). We also believe that interpreting the Holy Spirit-inspired Scriptures requires discipline and careful exegesis (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. We believe that it is the privilege and duty of all believers to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16; Galatians 5:16-26).
4. We teach that God is sovereign in the bestowment of all His gifts; and that the gifts are sufficient for the perfecting of the saints today. The apostolic gifts of speaking in tongues, prophesying, and the working of sign miracles gradually ceased as the New

Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established. (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12).

5. We teach that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accord with His own will, for those who are spiritually weak or physically ill; and that God can and still does perform the miraculous according to His will. (John 15:7; James 5:13-15; 1 John 5:14-15).

F. Creation and the Flood

1. We teach that God, by His omnipotence, created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them in six literal earth days of evening and morning cycles, and that the earth is relatively young according to the chronologies in Scripture. This creation was perfect until the entrance of sin brought about by Satan's fall and the fall of man. (Genesis 1:1-2:3; Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 11:3)
2. We teach that God judged the first world, after it descended from the fall of man down to a state of universal evil, by destroying it with a literal, worldwide, cataclysmic flood; and that Noah found grace in the eyes of God, and God brought Noah and his family through the flood to repopulate the earth and maintain His promise to send a Redeemer by the seed of the first woman, Eve. (Genesis 6-8; 2 Peter 3:3-6)

G. The Personality of Satan

We believe that Satan is a created being, a fallen angel, the author of sin, and the cause of the fall of man. He is the open and declared enemy of God and man, yet God is sovereign over him, and he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire. (Job 1:6-7, 12; 2:6; Matthew 4:2-11; 25:41; Revelation 20:10)

H. The Creation of Man, the Fall, and Total Depravity of Man

We believe the first man, Adam, was created by the immediate and special intervention of God, as opposed to any process of development. God breathed into man "the breath of life" and he became a living soul, bearing the image of God. In Adam's sin the entire human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. The probation and fall of man is neither an allegory nor a myth, but true history. In his fallen state, man is totally depraved, and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition, including an inability to exercise saving faith in Christ apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; Romans 3:22-23; 5:12; 8:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-5, 12; John 6:44,65)

I. Election

We believe that God unconditionally chose the elect according to His foreknowledge and purpose, and predestined them unto salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glory. (Romans 9:14-26; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:4-7; Titus 3:3-7)

J. Salvation

1. We believe that salvation is the gift of God given by grace and received through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19)
2. We believe that salvation has past, present, and future aspects. The past component, being our justification, freed us from the penalty of sin. The present component, being our sanctification, frees us from the power of sin. The future component, being our glorification, will free us from the presence of sin. (Romans 3:23-26; 4:25; 5:1-2; 8:28-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Hebrews 10:14; 1 Peter 1:13)

K. The Security, Assurance, and Perseverance of the Saints

1. We believe that all the elect will come to Christ and are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 38-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 1:5)
2. We believe that it is the privilege of the saints to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word; which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to gratify the lusts of the flesh. (John 5:24; Romans 13:11-14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 5:10-13)
3. We believe that the grace of God, operating through the Holy Spirit, disciplines God's true children and maintains the faith of the believer as they work out their salvation with fear and trembling until the day of redemption. (Philippians 1:3-6; 2:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-8)

L. The Struggle Between Flesh and Spirit in the Life of a Saint

We believe that every born-again person possesses a new nature in Christ, with provision made for victory of the new nature over the flesh (old man, old self) through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The flesh (old man, old self) was and is crucified with Christ that sin might be done away with; however, all claims to the eradication of the flesh in this life are unscriptural. (Romans 6:5-7, 13-14; 8:12-14; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 1:8-2:2; 3:5-9)

M. Separation

We believe that separation from sin is clearly called for in the scriptures and that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, that all the saved should live in such a way as to not bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days, apostasy and worldliness will increase and that believers should be separate from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices as commanded by God. (Romans 13:14; 14:13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5)

We believe that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ and affirm that the Christian life is one of obedient righteousness and a continual pursuit of holiness. (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11)

N. Evangelism and Missions

We believe that it is the obligation of the saints to witness by life and by word to the truths of Holy Scripture and to seek to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all mankind. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

O. The Church

1. We believe that the invisible, universal Church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age. The Church was born on the day of Pentecost and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture. We believe that the Church was a mystery in the Old Testament and is distinct from the nation of Israel. (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:11-3:6; 5:25-27, 32; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
2. We believe that the establishment and continuance of visible, local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. (Acts 14:21-28; 20:17, 28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11)
3. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or denominational control, other than Christ as Head and Scripture as God's written revelation. (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16; 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
4. We recognize the ordinances of believers' water baptism (by immersion) and the Lord's supper (communion) as scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

P. Last Things

1. We teach in the personal, imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the tribulation to translate (rapture) His Church from this earth. (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; Titus 2:13)
2. We teach that immediately following the removal of the Church from the earth, the righteous judgments of God will be poured out on the unbelieving world. This tribulation period will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth with His saints. (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16; 19:11-16)
3. We teach that after the tribulation period Jesus Christ will rule on the earth on the throne of David and establish His messianic kingdom for 1,000 years (the millennium). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Christ over Israel and all the nations of the earth. We believe this is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel to restore them to the land that they forfeited through their disobedience. The result of Israel's disobedience was that they were temporarily set aside during the Church age, but will again be awakened through repentance to enter the land of blessing. We believe that a literal interpretation of Scripture conveys this clear distinction between the nation of Israel and the Church, and the unique role each plays in past, present, and future events. (Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Isaiah 11; 65:17-

25; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-37; 37:21-28; Daniel 7:18, 22; Zechariah 8:1-17; Matthew 21:43; Romans 11; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-7)

4. We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the elements of heaven and earth are to be dissolved and replaced with a new heaven and earth, wherein only righteousness dwells. Following this, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven from God and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another. (Ephesians 5:5; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21-22)

Q. The Judgment and the Eternal State

1. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29; 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-6, 12-13)
2. We believe that the souls of true believers are, after death, absent from the body and present with the Lord. Every believer will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to have his life examined and receive his rewards. At the first resurrection, the souls of the saints, which have been in conscious bliss, will be united with their glorified bodies to be forever with the Lord. (Luke 23:43; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 15:20-58; 2 Corinthians 5:8-10; Philippians 1:23; 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 20:4-6)
3. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment. (Matthew 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Revelation 20:11-15)

R. Marriage and Human Sexuality

1. We believe that the term '*marriage*' has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins a man and a woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7).
2. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man a woman (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).
3. We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God (Leviticus 18; 20:10-26; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Colossians 3:5-7; Ephesians 5:1-3; Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).
4. We believe God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9; Titus 2:14).

5. We believe every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity (Colossians 3.12-14). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture.
6. Therefore, as a result of these above described Biblical beliefs and our belief in the need for a practice of fidelity to these beliefs, it is our policy that the facilities of this church may not be used for any ceremony that in any way approves of, solemnizes, supports or allows a same-sex union or any union which, in the judgment of the church, is inconsistent with our beliefs. It is also the policy of this church that no pastor or member of the church staff shall officiate at any ceremony designed to solemnize, promote, create, or approve of such a union.

In subscribing to the preceding articles of faith, we by no means set aside, or undervalue, any of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This statement reflects our best understanding of Scripture and agreement with these doctrinal beliefs, is necessary for membership in the Valley Bible Church.

SECTION III. BYLAWS

ARTICLE 1. MEMBERSHIP

Membership in Valley Bible Church is an opportunity to visibly express one's desire to be committed to this particular local body of believers in Jesus Christ.

A. Requirements for Membership

All who desire membership in this church must...

1. Be born-again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Acknowledge agreement with the Covenant, Declaration of Faith, and agree to abide by the Bylaws of this church.
3. Have been baptized after conversion to Christ.
4. Give evidence of their faith by a consistent Christian lifestyle.
5. Not be under another church's discipline.
6. Fulfill the application requirements for membership.
 - a. VBC membership will be reserved for those who are at least of the age normally associated with high school. (See the VBC Elders' Position Statement on the baptism of children for more information.)

B. Application for Membership

All who desire membership in this church must...

1. Attend the membership class.
2. Complete and submit the membership application and testimony forms to the Elders.
3. Sign the VBC Church Covenant.
4. Receive approval for membership from the Elders.

C. Admission into Membership

All who receive approval for membership shall be publicly welcomed and affirmed into membership by the Elders during a worship service.

D. Denial of Membership

If the Elders determine that an applicant does not satisfy the requirements for membership, then membership shall be denied. The Elders will communicate their reason(s) for denial to the applicant. Such a decision shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any court or other jurisdiction; however, if the Elders determine at a future time that said applicant's status has changed and the applicant does satisfy the requirements, then membership may be reconsidered.

E. Termination of Membership

Matters involving termination of membership shall be under the authority of the Elders. A person's membership in this church is subject to termination for any of the following reasons:

1. **Personal Request / Resignation:** Any member in good standing (not in the process of church discipline) may request in writing that his/her name be removed from the membership roll, in which case a letter of acknowledgment will be sent after congregation approval.
2. **Absence or Inactivity:** Any member who has for six (6) months failed to consistently attend services or otherwise manifest a reasonably consistent interest in the church and has not satisfactorily responded to inquiries from the elders shall be subject to the process of church discipline outlined in Article 1.H of these Bylaws at the discretion of the Elders. Typical exceptions to this policy include missionaries, shut-ins, students attending school out of town, and people serving in the military.
3. **Church Discipline:** Any member who is subject to the final step of church discipline as outlined in Article 1.H of these Bylaws shall have his/her name removed from the membership rolls after the final step of discipline process (see Article 1 H.4).
4. **Physical Death:** Deceased members shall be removed from the membership roll.

F. Responsibilities of Membership

Members shall seek to exercise their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of all the church body and shall willingly submit to the loving oversight of the Elders as well as discharge all that is articulated in the VBC Church Covenant (see Section 1.C of the Constitution).

G. Voting Privileges

Only church members are allowed to vote on matters brought by the Elders to the congregation. Membership and voting privileges do not vest any member in any proprietary rights in the corporation of this church.

H. Church Discipline

The purpose of church discipline is threefold: to promote the spiritual welfare of an erring believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and/or conduct (Galatians 6:1); to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20); and to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Any member of this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, or who persistently shows conduct inconsistent with biblical teaching, or who disturbs the unity or peace of the church shall be subject to church discipline as follows (Matthew 18:15-18).

1. It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct him or her in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration in a spirit of love and humility.
2. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the confronter shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration.
3. If the erring member still does not heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Elders, which, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall "tell it to the church" (Matthew 18:17), encouraging the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring person. Depending on the situation, the elders may also encourage the congregation to go to the erring person to call them to repentance in a spirit of humility and gentleness (Galatians 6:1).
4. If the erring member still does not heed the warnings of the Elders and the congregation, the Elders will lead the congregation in a vote to decide if he or she shall be formally excommunicated. (The congregation is to be included in the vote so as to express the judgment of the "majority" – 2 Corinthians 2:6.) With a simple majority, if the congregation decides in favor of excommunication, then the congregation will thus no longer recognize the erring person to be a "brother" or "sister in Christ" but instead as an unbeliever (i.e., "a Gentile or a tax collector" – Matthew 18:17). In addition, the erring person's name shall be removed from the church's official membership list. The congregation shall be encouraged to love and pray for the repentance and restoration of the dismissed person. The Elders shall decide if the excommunicated former member shall be permitted to attend VBC worship gatherings. If repentance is later demonstrated, the Elders shall lead the process of restoration into membership.

In the above paragraph, "excommunication" refers to the fourth step of Matthew 18:15–17 whereby a sinning member of the church is officially recognized as an unbeliever and is therefore no longer considered to be a member of the church and no longer welcome to join the church in the Lord's Supper observance (i.e., communion).

The Elders of the church are responsible to equip the congregation to carry out all of the church's corporate responsibilities included in the process of church discipline. The Elders will also lead in setting the timeline for the third and fourth steps of the process. Additionally, the Elders may decide to expedite the process outlined above depending upon the threat to the unity of church posed by the erring person (Titus 3:10).

The members of this church understand that the church discipline process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member stops attending the worship gatherings of the church to avoid the discipline process. It is also understood that members who are subject to the church discipline process do forfeit and waive the right to resign their membership. Only members who are in good standing may resign their membership. Furthermore, the members of this church agree that there shall be no appeal of the discipline process to any court or other jurisdiction; nor shall there be any appeal or other legal action taken in response to any public statements made to the church at the third or fourth stages of church discipline.

I. Membership Record

A record of all church members shall be kept by this Church under the supervision of the Elders. Such a record shall include the name of each member and the date he/she became a member.

ARTICLE 2. OFFICERS

The primary officers of this corporation shall be: Elders, who are responsible to oversee the spiritual matters of the church and Deacons, who are to oversee the practical matters of the church. All other officers, as well as other staff, leaders, committees, and ministries of the church shall be responsible to the above-mentioned officers.

A. Elders

The elders are the spiritual leaders of the church and receive their authority from Jesus Christ, Whom they are ultimately accountable to.

1. Qualifications: An elder must be a man who aspires to the office, is biblically qualified as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4, has been an active member of VBC for at least one year, has proven himself to be gifted and faithful in ministry, and has successfully completed the selection process. The following biblical qualifications make up the standard for an elder however Scripture affirms that all Christians should aspire to these godly standards in their personal lives.

- Above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6,7)
- Does not bring discredit to the ministry (2 Corinthians 6:3)
- Temperate (1 Timothy 3:2)
- One woman man (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)
- Prudent (1 Timothy 3 :2)
- Respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- Hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- Able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2)
- Not addicted to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- Not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- Gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)
- Peaceable (1 Timothy 3:3)
- Free from the love of money (1 Timothy 3:3)
- Manages his own household well (1 Timothy 3:4)

- Keeps children under control with dignity (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
- Children are faithful to parents and not wild or rebellious to authority (Titus 1:6)
- Not a new convert (1 Timothy 3:6)
- Not conceited or proud (1 Timothy 3:6)
- Good reputation outside the church (1 Timothy 3:7)
- Not double-tongued (1 Timothy 3:8)
- Biblically clear conscience (1 Timothy 3:9)
- Not a gossip (1 Timothy 3:11)
- Faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11)
- Not self-willed (Titus 1:7)
- Not lording it over the flock (1 Peter 5:3)
- Not greedy for dishonest gain (Titus 1:7)
- Not quick tempered (Titus 1:7)
- Lover of what is good (Titus 1:8)
- Sensible (Titus 1:8)
- Just (Titus 1:8)
- Devout (Titus 1:8)
- Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)
- Eagerness to serve (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2)
- Keeps discipline over his own body (1 Corinthians 9:27)
- Holds tenaciously to the Word of God (Titus 1:9)
- Able to exhort the church in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9)
- Courage and ability to refute unbiblical teaching and false teachers (Titus 1:9-11)
- Alert to wolves both inside and outside of the church (Acts 20:17, 28-31)
- Able to equip the church for the work of service (Ephesians 4:11-12)
- Seeks to please God rather than men (Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4)
- Keeps watch over the souls under his care (Hebrews 13:17)
- Able to exhort his fellow elders (Galatians 2:11-21)
- Team player as he seeks for one accord (Acts 15:22-29)

Pastors: The senior and associate pastors are defined by VBC as elder-qualified men who possess the gift of pastor and teacher (Ephesians 4:11ff) and are financially supported by the church to serve full time. They are elders serving amidst a plurality of other elders and exercise equal yet not more authority.

2. **Duties:** The Elders are to pattern their lives after Christ's example of servant-leadership. They are responsible to oversee the spiritual life and welfare of the church by being devoted to prayer and the study of God's Word. They are to teach the Word of God both in public and private, affirming the truth and refuting error. They are to set an example to the flock in spiritual character and conduct, being peacemakers for the flock and disciplining those who err with the goal of protecting the purity of the church and restoring the wayward member. While they may delegate many facets of ministry to other leaders and servants in the flock, the elders bear the ultimate responsibility for the policies, practices, and decisions of the church. All staff, leaders, committees, and ministries are subject to the oversight of the Elders. The Elders will strive for unanimity when making decisions but if unity cannot be reached even after thoughtful and prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, the decision must be reached by a 3/4 majority.

In addition to sharing the duties of his fellow elders, the senior pastor shall be primarily responsible for preaching God's word to the congregation and generally overseeing the spiritual welfare of the church. If the senior-pastor is absent, the

Chairman (if not the pastor) or Vice-Chairman will be responsible. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and shall be accountable for his life and ministry to the Elders.

- 3. Selection:** The Elders will keep regular watch for men who are prospective elders. By submitting to the Elders a letter of recommendation, VBC church members are also welcome at any time to suggest potential men to the Elders for their consideration. Each year, prior to the annual meeting in January, the Elders shall decide if they would like to nominate any potential elder(s) to the VBC congregation. Those men whom the Elders deems qualified for this office will be recommended to the congregation for affirmation by no less than a 3/4 majority of the Elders. While it is hoped that unanimous approval would be given to the Elders' recommendation, no less than a 3/4 majority vote by the congregation will be required to install a man as an Elder. Following their initial recommendation to serve as an Elder, every Elder will have their name placed annually before the congregation for affirmation. The same 3/4 majority vote will be required to affirm all the Elders in order for them to continue to serve. "No" votes will be counted but we would strongly encourage those who vote "no" to put their names on their ballots in order to have one of the other Elders meet with them to follow up with them so they may express their concern.

When the senior pastorate of this church becomes vacant, the Elders shall make provision for the filling of the pulpit and immediately commence a search for a successor. Only men who are in hearty agreement with the contents of this constitution and the ministry vision and distinctives of VBC will be considered for this office. When a potential new senior pastor is found (having been approved by the Elders) he will candidate in a manner, and for a prescribed length of time, determined by the Elders. Church members will be encouraged to spend time with the candidate and if they have questions, comments or concerns concerning the individual being considered for nomination they should bring them to the Elders. Upon completion of the candidating period, the Elders will decide by 3/4 majority vote whether or not to call for a congregational vote on the man being considered. If so, a meeting to vote on the candidate will be announced to church members by letter, the church bulletin, and from the pulpit for three Sunday mornings prior to the meeting. Only church members will vote. Confirmation of the candidate will require at least a three-fourths majority of all the votes cast. If the candidate is duly elected, a letter of call shall be sent to him for his response. The Elders may also bring any potential additional pastoral staff before the membership for approval using a process of candidacy and affirmation as it deems appropriate.

- 4. Tenure:** Each elder may serve year by year as long as he aspires to the office of elder, maintains his biblical qualifications, is faithful to discharge the duties of an elder, and has the confidence of his fellow elders and the rest of the congregation. An elder may remove himself from the office during his service at his own request.
- 5. Removal:** An elder may be removed from service by a 3/4 majority vote of the other elders, where they concur that he is no longer biblically fit to serve as an elder. In addition, an annual vote of confidence shall be taken whereupon the members shall affirm or disaffirm each elder. Because of the command given in 1 Timothy 5:19, we

strongly encourage that the first two steps outlined in Matthew 18 and Galatians 6:1-2 be followed before voting “No” on their ballot (see Article 1 H.1 and 2). “No” votes that are not signed will be counted but we would strongly encourage those who vote “No” to put their names on their ballots in order to have one of the other elders meet with them to follow up so they may express their concern. The Elders will follow up “No” votes which are signed to discern the accuracy and severity of the issues involved and whether they warrant the biblical dismissal of the elder in question.

Senior and Associate pastors must give one month’s notice to the Elders if they intend to resign. Upon mutual consent, the Elders may allow a pastor to tender his resignation with less than one month’s notice if this will not in any way hinder the well-being of the church. The Elders reserves the right to dismiss any pastor by a 3/4 majority (excluding the pastor facing possible dismissal). At their discretion, the elders may choose to pay a dismissed pastor for up to one month’s salary, even if his termination is effective immediately.

B. Deacons

As directed by the Elders, the deacons administrate and serve to care for the physical, temporal, and spiritual needs of the church, in order that the elders may give themselves to overseeing the spiritual welfare of the church. The Deacons are to function as the formal assistants to the Elders carrying out tasks and assignments as delegated by the Elders.

- 1. Qualifications:** A deacon must be a man who aspires to the office, is biblically qualified as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, has been member of VBC for at least one year, has proven himself skilled and faithful in ministry, and has successfully completed the selection process.
- 2. Duties:** The Deacons shall be responsible to serve by overseeing and administrating various areas of ministry as assigned by the Elders. The deacons are to function in a spirit of willingness and cooperation under the oversight of the Elders. An effective deacon labors to protect the Elders from anything in the church’s life that threatens to distract and derail the Elders from their primary responsibilities (Acts 6:4).
- 3. Selection:** The Elders will keep regular watch for men who are prospective deacons. By submitting to the Elders a letter of recommendation, VBC church members are also welcome at any time to suggest potential men to serve as deacons to the Elders for their consideration. Each year, prior to the annual meeting in January, the Elders shall decide if they would like to nominate any potential deacon(s) to the VBC congregation. Those men whom the Elders deems qualified for this office will be recommended to the congregation for affirmation by no less than a 3/4 majority of the Elders. While it is hoped that unanimous approval would be given to the Elders’ recommendation, no less than a 3/4 majority vote by the congregation will be required to install a man as a Deacon. Following their initial recommendation to serve as a Deacon, every Deacon will have their name placed annually before the congregation for affirmation. The same 3/4 majority vote will be required to affirm all the Deacons in order for them to continue to serve. “No” votes will be counted but we would strongly encourage those who vote “no” to put their names on their ballots

in order to have one of the Elders meet with them to follow up with them so they may express their concern.

4. **Tenure:** Each man may serve at the discretion of the Elders year by year as long as he aspires to the office of deacon, maintains his biblical qualifications, is faithful to discharge the duties of a deacon, and has the confidence of his fellow deacons, the Elders, and the rest of the congregation. A deacon may remove himself from the office during his service at his own request.
5. **Removal:** A deacon may be removed from service by 3/4 majority vote of the Elders if they concur that he is no longer fit to serve as a deacon. Deacons are subject to an annual vote of confidence in the same manner as described in Article 2.A.5.

C. Other Officers

Other officers of the corporation shall be Chairman of the Elders, Vice- Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary.

1. **Chairman of the Elders:** The chairman or a man designated by him shall preside at regular and special meetings of the membership. He shall be annually elected by the Elders from among the existing elders. Removal of the chairman from his position is under the authority of the Elders and at its discretion. In the absence of the Senior Pastor or Chairman the Vice-Chairman will preside over meetings of the membership.
2. **Vice-Chairman:** The Assistant Chairman shall assume all of the above-mentioned duties of the Chairman in his absence.
3. **Treasurer:** The treasurer shall be annually elected by the Elders and may serve three consecutive years after which he must take a year sabbatical before allowed to serve again. At the end of a treasurer's term the Elders may elect to have an audit of the books by a firm selected by the Elders. The treasurer shall receive and keep in a designated place or depository all moneys of the church. Payments from funds in the custody of the treasurer shall be made only by check signed by the treasurer or authorized signatories as appointed by the elders. Authorization for payment from any fund shall be by vote of the membership at the annual business meeting when the annual budget is approved, or else by a vote of the Elders as they deem best. The treasurer shall keep accounts of all such funds and shall submit an annual detailed report and any additional reports which may be requested by the Elders. All bank deposits of the church funds shall be made and kept in the name of the church.
4. **Secretary:** The Secretary shall be elected annually by, and from among the existing elders and will be responsible to keep, or cause to be kept, a book of minutes of all meetings of the membership. The Secretary shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all meetings of the membership in accordance with the bylaws of this church. The secretary will also serve as clerk at all congregational meetings.

Both the Treasurer and Secretary shall be appointed annually by the Elders from among those members of the church who have been members at least one year. Persons who fill these positions must show evidence of an exemplary spiritual life. Removal of either the treasurer or the secretary shall be under the authority of the Elders and at its discretion.

ARTICLE 3. GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

The goals, activities, and life of the Valley Bible Church shall be governed according to the following outline:

- A. Jesus Christ as Chief Shepherd:** This church ultimately submits to Jesus Christ as its spiritual Head. The authority of Christ is mediated to His people through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, the Bible (John 14:15-21, 23-26; Ephesians 1:22-23).
- B. Elders:** Jesus Christ has called Spirit-filled men to be shepherds and servant-leaders of His people. Therefore, this church shall be directly governed through leadership by a group of qualified elders (see Article 2.A). Such leadership will function according to the following principles:
 - 1. Plurality:** The elders of this church shall lead as a group, with no elder or elders having any degree of authority above the rest. While it is recognized that there may be leaders amongst leaders within the body of elders, all elders shall exercise the same authority (Acts 11:29-30; 14:23; 20:17).
 - 2. Oversight:** The day-to-day affairs of the church will be overseen by the Elders. They may delegate certain positions and tasks to various people in the flock as they see fit. The Elders shall have authority to remove persons from any area of ministry or service if they deem it prudent to do so (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
 - 3. Spirit of Unanimity:** The Elders shall strive to reach all decisions prayerfully and with humility in order that its decisions are unanimous. Each elder must consider the wisdom and insight of the other elders ahead of his own. This will maintain confidence that the elders are acting in accordance with the will of God (Philippians 2:1-8).
 - 4. Spiritual Authority:** As Jesus Christ has given authority to elders to shepherd His people, so the Elders shall exercise spiritual authority by being examples to the flock in character and conduct, by teaching biblical truth, and by disciplining the flock in a spirit of love and truth. As shepherds and overseers of the flock, the Elders shall have final authority in all policies, practices, and decisions affecting the life of this church. They are accountable to Jesus Christ Himself for how they lead (Hebrews 13:17).
- C. Deacons:** See Article 2.B.
- D. Other Officers:** The other officers of the corporation (see Article 2.C), the Chairman of the Elders, the Vice-Chairman, the Treasurer, and the Secretary, shall have authority to carry out their defined tasks, but are accountable to the Elders. These positions shall be appointed and/or renewed annually by the Elders, and it shall make review to determine if any person should be removed from any of these positions.
- E. Additional Pastoral Staff and Other Ministry Leaders:** Additional pastoral staff and other leaders of the various ministries and committees of this church shall have authority to oversee those who serve under them; however, all such staff and leaders are

accountable to the Elders. The Elders shall have authority over the selection and removal of additional pastoral staff and other ministry and committee leaders.

F. All Other Paid or Unpaid Workers: The Elders shall oversee the selection and removal of all other paid or unpaid workers who serve in the church in some specific capacity.

G. Congregation: The congregation, as people under the leadership and care of the Elders and Deacons, shall lovingly and humbly submit to them. The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who clearly identify with this church, shall not attempt to meet to gather consensus or undertake any petition of any kind in order to influence the leadership, doctrine, or policies of this church. Authority rests with the congregation in that it affirms or disaffirms by vote of confidence the Elders and Deacons of the church on an annual basis. When affirmed by vote of confidence, authority rests with the Elders.

ARTICLE 4. MEETINGS

A. Public Worship and Instruction: Meetings shall be held for public worship each Sunday morning for praise, prayer, and Bible teaching. Other meetings for these purposes, such as Sunday school, prayer meeting, small groups and Sunday evening services, shall be scheduled as the Elders sees fit.

B. Board Meetings:

1. Elders: The Elders shall meet regularly (at least monthly) to conduct its responsibilities, including planning, prayer, and policy making. For purposes of decision making at a given meeting, a quorum shall consist of at least 51% of the elders on the Elders; however, in making important decisions, the elders shall strive to know the decisions of all elders for the purpose of unanimity.

C. Annual Meeting: This church, as a corporation, must conduct an annual meeting for the purpose of approving the previous year's financial statement, approving the church's annual budget, and casting votes of confidence for elders and deacons. This meeting must be announced from the pulpit and in the church bulletin for at least three Sunday mornings prior to the meeting. For purposes of voting, a quorum shall consist of a minimum of 25% of the membership.

D. Other Congregational Meetings: At any time the Elders may call a special congregational meeting for the purpose of doing business, in order to bring recommendations before the congregation for approval. The purpose and content of such meetings shall be at the discretion of the Elders. Such meetings must be announced from the pulpit and in the church bulletin for at least three Sunday mornings prior to the meeting. For purposes of voting, a quorum shall consist of a minimum of 25% of the membership.

E. Other Church Meetings or Events: Ministries functioning in the name of the church shall in no way be in action or deed an independent group, and shall be subject to discipline or control by the Elders, and all moneys and/or physical properties gathered in the name of the church by the direction of such meetings or groups shall become the property of the church and under the complete control of the Elders and/or its supervision.

- F. Rules Governing Business Meetings:** Robert's Rules of Order will be recognized as the general pattern for the conduct of business meetings of the church except where they are inconsistent with the Scriptures or this Constitution and By-Laws.

ARTICLE 5. ITEMS REQUIRING CONGREGATIONAL APPROVAL

For purposes of voting, a quorum shall consist of the members present at congregational meetings (see Article 4.C-D). (On the occasion of congregational votes in which legally binding decisions are to be made, any members who are not yet of the legal age of 18 will be asked to abstain.) The following items must be brought before the membership for approval by vote:

1. Previous year's financial statement and budget for the new year – approval by simple majority – see Article 4.C.
2. Selection of new Elders and new Deacons by vote of confidence – approval by 3/4 majority – sees Article 2.A.3 and 2.B.3.
3. Selection of new Senior Pastor – approval by 3/4 majority – sees Article 2.A.3.
4. Tenure of existing Elders and Deacons – see Article 2.A.4-5 and 2.B.4-5.
5. Purchase and/or sale of real property – approval by 3/4 majority – see Article 6.
6. Amendments to the Constitution – approval by 3/4 majority – see Article 9 and 10.

ARTICLE 6. PROPERTY AND ASSETS

This church, as a corporation, shall have power to buy, hold, and sell real property in its name, as well as other tangible property and assets. No real property may be bought or sold without approval of the membership according to Article 5.5. In case of a division in the church caused by conflict, all property and assets shall remain in the possession of those adhering to this constitution. In case of dissolution of the church, all property and assets shall be handled according to Article 10.

ARTICLE 7. CONFIDENTIALITY OF CHURCH RECORDS

No member or non-member shall have the right to inspect the church records as to the following:

1. Financial contributions of any member or non-member.
2. Discipline of any member or non-member.
3. The selection and removal of any staff.
4. Any other records which the Elders determines to be in the best interests of the church to keep confidential.

The church financial statements (apart from records of individual contributions) shall be made available upon request.

ARTICLE 8. DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

This church is not now affiliated with any denomination and as such shall not give allegiance to the doctrine of any denominational group or identities. Should any such affiliation take place in the future, such affiliation may only be done in such a manner that the property of this church remains the property of the church as not incorporated and that such property does not pass to the

denomination but remains the property of and exclusively controlled by the Valley Bible Church of Billings, Montana.

ARTICLE 9. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Doctrinal Statement, Constitution and By-Laws except Article 10 (Dissolution) may be amended as deemed necessary by the Elders. Any amendments must be submitted to the voting members by the Elders in written form and must follow the protocol in Article 4.D. (Congregational Meetings). In order for the amendment to be adopted it must receive a 3/4 majority vote.

ARTICLE 10. DISSOLUTION

In the event of dissolution, for any reason, of the Valley Bible Church, after payment of all financial obligations of record on the date of such dissolution, the buildings, land, and all other assets of the Valley Bible Church shall be given to another corporation or entity with similar values and goals as those of VBC, as ascertained by the Elders at the time of dissolution, to be used, administered, or sold by the chosen corporation or entity as the officers of that organization shall determine.

No portion or part of Article 10 shall ever be subjected to amendment or changes of any kind whatsoever and is hereby declared immune.