



Articles of Faith
Bylaws
Membership Covenant

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Originally created, approved, and adopted by the Elders of The Village Church, October 1, 2017.

Revised and edited by the Elders of The Village Church, August 13, 2019.

Revised and edited by the Elders of The Village Church, October 27, 2020.

Revised and edited by the Elders of The Village Church; Approved, and adopted by the Membership of the Church, on July 25, 2021.

Alterations to Article 6.4.2c, Article 7.4.1, and Article 8, approved and adopted by the Membership of the Church, March 27, 2022.

Alteration to opening paragraph of Article 5.2, approved and adopted by the Membership of the Church, May 7, 2023.

Alterations to Article 1 and Article 7.1, approved and adopted by the Membership of the Church, October 8, 2023.

Alterations to Articles 4, 6.2.2, 6.4.1e, 6.4.1h, 6.4.2a, 6.4.2c, 7.3, and 8, approved and adopted by the Membership on November 4, 2023

Article I - Name

The name of this church shall be Village Bible Church, hereafter referred to as “Village Bible” or “the Church” as found in these Bylaws and able to do business as “Village Bible” and “The Village.”

Article II - Mission Statement

Village Bible Church exists to bring glory and honor to the Lord our God and to make known the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world. We will carry out this mission through the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the baptism of those who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and the discipling of believers in the ways and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, as found in the Bible.

Article III - Purpose

The purpose of the Church will be, but is not limited to:

- The worship and glory of God through weekly, public worship gatherings, the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, observing the Lord’s Supper, and the baptism of new believers (Psalm 29:1-2, Luke 22:14-20, Mark 16:16, John 4:23-24);
- The training and equipping of the people of God for the work of God (Ephesians 4:12) including the employment and sending of Ministers of the Gospel, and others, to conduct and carry on the work of the ministry within the Church and beyond;The spreading of the Gospel and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15);
- Giving, with a cheerful heart, in support of the ongoing work of God’s Kingdom, both locally and globally (2 Corinthians 9:6-7);
- Caring for, to the best of our ability, those in need or distress, especially orphans and widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16, James 1:27);
- Living at peace with all men, as far as we are capable (Romans 12:18), and abstaining from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22);
- The collection and disbursement of any necessary funds for maintaining the Church and accomplishing the purposes for which it exists (Acts 4:32-35);
- Conducting any lawful acts and things which may be necessary, useful, suitable, or proper in working toward the accomplishment of the purpose for which the Church exists. This will be done in accordance with the governing laws of man, insofar as those laws do not come into conflict with God’s commands to His Church as found in His Word (Romans 13, 1 Peter 2:13-17).

Article IV - Government and Affiliations

Village Bible Church, directed by and in submission to the Word of God, is an autonomous, Bible-based, elder-led, congregational church, maintaining and governing its own affairs.

Independent from all external control, we recognize the benefits of cooperating with other churches, associations, conferences, conventions, and organizations in the pursuit of fulfilling the Purpose of the Church.

Official membership in any association, conference, convention, or organization must receive complete unified approval of the Elders and a vote of the Membership.

Article V - Articles of Faith

5.1 - Biblical Authority

At the core of Christian faith and practice is the belief that God has spoken to the world in the person and work of His Son, The Lord Jesus Christ, which is clearly and authoritatively revealed in the Christian Holy Bible, hereinafter referred to as “the Bible” or “the Word of God.” Various theological statements and confessions exist that reflect the boundaries of righteousness, laid out in the Bible, that are clear and to the point. However, ultimately, it is to God and His Word that we are in complete and full submission.

Being aware that theological disagreement or misunderstanding may arise, any Member of the Church, as defined in these Bylaws, is welcome to bring questions to the Elders regarding any such disagreement or misunderstanding. However, Church Membership comes with the biblical understanding of willing submission to the Elders function as the Church’s final instructive authority in matters of doctrine (Titus 1:9, 2:1, Hebrews 13:7).

5.2 - Foundational Beliefs

The following statements, though not comprehensive, do comprise the core foundational beliefs of Village Bible Church and come from both a biblical and historical perspective. Full agreement with every aspect of these Foundational Beliefs is required for membership. The rejection of any part of these beliefs will preclude a prospective Member from obtaining membership within the Church. The Elders may, in order to more clearly align with the Word of God, revise or edit these Foundational Beliefs. The process of revising or editing will begin with the Complete Unified Approval of the Elders regarding any necessary changes and reasons for such changes. The Elders will then formally communicate the necessary changes and their reasons to the Membership. Revisions and edits to these Foundational Beliefs will be put in place and take effect upon a vote of approval by the Membership.

The Bible - We believe that the Bible, all sixty-six books, both Old and New Testament, is the Word of God. The Bible is the only source for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (Isaiah 8:20, 2 Timothy 3:16). We believe that the words of God are flawless (Proverbs 30:5) and eternal (Isaiah 40:7-8, Mark, 13:31, Luke 21:33) and therefore, we believe that the Bible, as originally written, breathed out by God, is also flawless. The Bible is the only written revelation of God to humanity (2 Peter 1:19-21).

God - We believe that the God of the Bible is the only one, true God (Deuteronomy 6:4). He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign ruler of the universe (Genesis 1, Psalm 145:13-19, Ephesians 4:6). We believe that God is eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26, Matthew 3:16-17, Ephesians 4:4-6).

The Father - We believe that God the Father is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1) and that everyone and everything upon the earth is His (Psalm 24:1). Being our Father and Creator, we were created for His glory (Isaiah 43:7) and in His image (Genesis 1:26). We believe the Father is unequaled (Psalm 24:8) and unchanging (Malachi 3:6). We believe that the Father is Sovereign above all (Isaiah 42:8) and that every good and perfect thing comes down from Him (James 1:17). We believe that the Father is perfectly holy (1 Peter 1:15, Leviticus 11:44). We believe that the Father does not delight in death (Ezekiel 18:32) and desires for all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Son - We believe that the Son of God is Jesus Christ and that He was present and active in creation (John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16). We believe that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-38) and is the Word of God in flesh (John 1:14). We believe that Jesus lived as a man on the earth (Philippians 2:7-8) and was both fully God and fully human (Colossians 1:15-20). He was tempted like we are, in every way, but did not sin (Matthew 4:1-11, Hebrews 4:14-16). We believe that Jesus Christ offered Himself, once, as the only sacrifice for the sin of humanity by dying on a cross (Hebrews 9:11-14). Jesus alone is the Savior of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). We believe that Jesus rose bodily (Luke 24:36-40) from the dead after three days, ascended to Heaven, and will return again to gather His followers to Himself, and to judge the world because of sin (Luke 24:1-7, Acts 1:9-11, John 14:2-3, Matthew 25:31-46, Colossians 3:5-6).

The Holy Spirit - We believe that the Holy Spirit was active in creation (Genesis 1:2). We believe the Holy Spirit moved men to write the words that they heard from God (2 Peter 1:21). We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts man of sin (John 16:7-8). We believe that in salvation the Holy Spirit: regenerates us to new life (Titus 3:5) through faith in Jesus Christ as the risen Son of God (Ephesians 2:8); immediately becomes the seal of our inheritance to eternal life with God (Ephesians 1:13-14); and sanctifies us to live a holy life in this world (1 Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 10:14, 1 Peter 1:2). We believe that the Holy Spirit is manifested through the life of a redeemed follower of Jesus Christ by a variety of gifts and abilities that the Holy Spirit uses and distributes as He desires (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).

Satan - We believe that Satan was an angel created by God (Ezekiel 28:13). Through the sin of pride, he rebelled against God and was cast out of Heaven (Ezekiel 28:16-17). We believe that Satan is currently active in the present world as the prince and ruler of darkness and the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:2, 6:12) and stands day and night accusing the people of God before God (Revelation 12:10). Satan is described in the Bible as a thief, murderer, the father of lies, and a devouring lion (John 10:10, John 8:44, 1 Peter 5:8). We believe that Satan was conquered by the Son of God from eternity past (Genesis 3:15) and that his ultimate end is to be condemned to an everlasting punishment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

Humanity - We believe that all of humanity is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) and that God has created humanity to be male and female (Genesis 1:27). We believe the original man, Adam, though able to sin (Genesis 2:15-16) was created in a sinless state (Genesis 2:25). Adam violated the command of God (Genesis 3:7), damaging our image forever and bringing sin and death to all mankind (Romans 5:12). This sin has caused humanity to be alienated from God and hostile in mind toward Him (Colossians 1:21). The sin condition of humanity cannot be changed apart from the divine work of God (Romans 5:6 & 8, Ephesians 2:1, 4-5).

Salvation - We believe that salvation is totally and completely dependent upon the mercy of God (Ephesians 2:4, Titus 3:5) and that it is by His grace alone that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8). Salvation is the free gift of God (Romans 3:23) and is accepted on the basis of faith alone in Jesus Christ by the confession of our mouth that He is Lord and the belief in our heart that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10, 13). In salvation, the sinner is completely justified before God (Romans 5:1), who alone is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:26). In justifying the sinner, the guilt of sin and the punishment for sin is removed by the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9-10). Salvation cannot be earned in any way (Ephesians 2:8-9). We believe that genuine salvation is evidenced by repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21), and a life lived according to the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:16, 22-26). We believe salvation is secure for eternity, unable to be lost or taken away (John 10:28-30, Ephesians 1:13-14 & 4:30, 1 Peter 1:3-5).

Baptism - We believe that every saved follower of the Lord Jesus Christ should follow his example and be obedient to him in baptism (Matthew 3:16, 28:19). We believe that baptism is done by full immersion in water (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Acts 8:38-39). We believe that baptism should, as soon as possible and as part of their confession of Jesus as Lord of their life, accompany a person's belief that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38-41).

The Lord's Supper - We believe that the Lord's Supper is commanded by Christ to be done in remembrance of His sacrifice for sin (Luke 22:14-20). It is the proclamation of His death until He returns. The Lord's Supper is only for those who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have carefully examined their heart (1 Corinthians 11:20-29).

The Church - We believe the church, locally and around the world and throughout all time, is made up of those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The church is one body made up of many parts, but the head alone is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:17-18). We believe the church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). We believe that the church exists: for the glory of God (Ephesians 3:21); to encourage followers of Jesus Christ to live holy lives (Romans 12:1); to equip followers of Jesus Christ for the work of the Kingdom of God in fulfilling the Great Commission (Ephesians 4:12, Matthew 28:18-20); and to make known the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10).

The Great Commission - We believe that the work of every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is to make disciples. This is done by preaching the Good News of His salvation to everyone, by baptizing new believers, and by teaching all that Christ commands (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-49, and The Book of Acts).

Second Coming and Judgement - We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will return visibly and physically (John 14:3, Revelation 22:20). We believe that all mankind, except those still alive at the second coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), will experience physical death (Hebrews 9:27) and their physical body will see decay (Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastes 3:20). We believe that at His second coming, the Lord will gather all people to Himself (Matthew 25:31-32). We believe in Christ's return he will bring final, eternal judgement (Revelation 20:11-15, 22:12-15); the righteous to eternal life and the wicked to eternal punishment (Daniel 12:2, Matthew 25:46, John 3:36). We believe that the righteous will dwell with God for eternity free from the pain and sorrow of this life (Matthew 25:34, Revelation 21:3-4, 22:14). We believe that God will pour out His wrath upon those who live in disobedience to Him eternally in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41, Ephesians 5:3-6, Colossians 3:5-6, Revelation 21:7-10, 22:15).

5.3 - Statements on Gender, Marriage, Sexuality, and Sanctity of Life

These Statements on Gender, Marriage, Sexuality, and Sanctity of Life are grounded in the Word of God. These statements are not subject to change through: popular vote; referendum; prevailing opinion of Members or the general public; influence of or interpretation by any government authority, agency, or official action; or legal developments on the local, state, or federal level. The Elders may, when necessary and in order to more clearly align with the Word of God, revise or edit any one or all of these statements. The process of revising or editing will begin with the Elders communicating the necessary changes and reasons for such changes to the Members of the Church. Revisions and edits to these statements will only be put in place and take effect through complete unified approval of the Elders and formal communication to the Membership.

In our effort to demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus Christ, these statements do not in any way condone or allow for bigotry, bullying, or hate; those behaviors and actions are out of line with the Word of God, the Articles of Faith and Bylaws of the Church, and the Membership Covenant of the Church. Furthermore, any such behaviors are condemned as sinful and will come under Church Discipline, as commanded in the Word of God and defined in these Bylaws.

These statements give the Elders the right and authority to prohibit acts or omissions, including but not limited to: (a) permitting any Church assets or property, whether real, personal, tangible, or any property or asset of any kind that is under the direction or control of the Church, to be used in any manner that would, or by determination of the Elders could, be perceived by any person to be inconsistent with these Statements on Gender, Marriage, Sexuality, and Sanctity of Life; and (b) permitting the use of any Church facilities for any person, organization, corporation, or group that would or might use the facilities to convey, intentionally or otherwise, what could be perceived as a favorable impression about any definition contrary to these statements.

In our desire to preserve the purpose and integrity of the Church as the local body of Christ, and to provide a biblical example within the Church Membership and to the world around us, it is necessary that anyone employed by the Church, in any capacity, or united to the Church in Membership, should agree with and abide by the biblical standard of these statements.

5.3.1 - Gender

We believe the body is God's creation, being created male or female (Genesis 1:27). As such we believe that gender is biologically determined by God, in the womb, and that gender identification is not up to man (Romans 1:26-32). We believe that any attempt to modify or alter gender is a violation of God's command and design for humanity to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28).

5.3.2 - Marriage

We believe that the covenant of marriage exists according to God's holy ordinance. No man has the authority to overrule what is biblically described as the union of one man and one woman in sacred fidelity to one another (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:1-6). We believe that divorce was never a part of God's design (Malachi 2:16, Matthew 19:7-9) but that, throughout time, the continuing effect of sin causes man to redefine marriage and forsake God's design. The terms of marriage prescribed in the Word of God remain the sole authority on marriage.

We believe that sexual intimacy is only permissible within the covenant of marriage according to God's holy ordinance (Hebrews 13:4). Any sexual activity outside of the marital relationship of one man and one woman is sin, being clearly condemned by the Word of God (Matthew 15:19, Ephesians 5:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

5.3.3 - Sexuality

We believe, according to the Word of God, that any and all forms of sexual immorality including, but not limited to: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, pornography, masturbation, or the lustful intent towards these things is sinful and ultimately unsatisfying (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ provides freedom, redemption, and restoration for those enslaved to the sinful expressions of sexual immorality or any other sin (1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 5:1, Ephesians 2:1-10).

5.3.4 - Sanctity of Life

We believe that life begins at conception in the womb (Psalm 139:13) and that God has numbered the days of a man's life (Psalm 139:16). According to the Word of God, the shedding of innocent blood is a violation of God's command (Exodus 20:13) and a thing hated by God (Proverbs 6:16-17). Therefore, we believe that any and all forms of abortion, suicide, murder, and euthanasia are sin.

Article VI - The Church

6.1 - Membership

6.1.1 - Requirements

It is to be understood that any person, having believed that God raised Jesus from the dead and having publicly confessed Jesus Christ as Lord in the waters of baptism, has become a Member of the Lord's universal Church, which the Bible says is the Body of Christ. Any person with such belief and confession will be eligible for membership at Village Bible Church. The path to membership within Village Bible Church consists of a person's belief and confession of the Lord Jesus Christ, Scriptural baptism by immersion in water, agreement with the Articles of Faith and Bylaws of the Church, and commitment to the Membership Covenant of the Church.

6.1.2 - Membership Covenant

Church Members have a biblical responsibility to maintain an active role in the Church. Each individual's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and to one another brings glory to God the Father and contributes to the overall health of the Church. For this reason it is important for Members of the Church to understand that they are agreeing to live in submission to God and His Word; in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Bylaws of the Church; in support of the leadership of the Church; and in commitment to one another through the following Membership Covenant:

- I have through faith believed that God raised Jesus from the dead and in baptism I have publicly confessed that I am following Him as my Savior and Lord (Acts 2:41, Romans 10:9-10).
- I will live a life of devotion to: the teachings of Jesus Christ; the fellowship of believers; the proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the Lord's Supper; and to prayer (Acts 2:42).
- I will endeavor to maintain and increase in the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, evangelism, and the recognition and confession of my sin (2 Peter 1:3-8, 1 John 1:8-10).
- I will support and care for fellow Church Members through: regular worship and fellowship together; continual prayer for them; helping to bear life's burdens; and by standing guard against temptation and sin in their lives (Galatians 6:1-2, Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16).
- I will support the ministry of the Church through: regular attendance of worship gatherings and members meetings; an active role in and acceptance of matters of church discipline; and through the cheerful giving of

my time, abilities, resources, and finances (Matthew 18:15-17, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Hebrews 10:25).

- I will support, pray for, submit to, and encourage the Elders of the Church in their authority, established by the Word of God, as those responsible for keeping watch over my soul through their devotion to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the equipping of the saints (Acts 6:4, Ephesians 4:12, Hebrews 13:17).
- I will support and practice standards of personal conduct that are in accordance with the Word of God and fitting for followers of Jesus Christ, in all of my relationships, both within and outside of the Church (Colossians 3:1-4:6).

6.1.3 - Addition to Membership

After meeting the biblical requirements for Membership, an Elder will recommend a vote of the Membership to add the person seeking to become a Member of the Church.

A Member will be a Member of the Church for life unless otherwise altered by the Member's personal request, relocation to another church, death, or Removal from Membership as a result of Church Discipline, as laid out in these Bylaws.

6.1.4 - Removal from Membership

The recommendation for the removal of a person or persons from Membership shall come at the sole discretion of the Elders and may only be sought when all biblical counsel has been exhausted and as a last attempt to turn a person back to Lord. Then, with the authority given by God through the instruction of His Word (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:4-5), with complete unified approval of the Elders and vote of the Membership, the Church will remove the person or persons from Membership. This action will be taken with the intent to leave the person alone to deal with the Spirit of God and be led to repentance, reconciliation, and restoration to God.

6.1.5 - Restoration to Membership

In the event that a person is removed from Membership, restoration to membership within the Church is possible. In keeping with the instruction of 2 Corinthians 2:5-8 and Galatians 6:1, a person who displays fruit in keeping with repentance and who is willing to recommit to the Membership Covenant of the Church, as laid out in these Bylaws may, through a unified approval of the Elders and vote of the Membership, be restored to Membership within the Church.

6.2 - Meetings and Voting

6.2.1 - Public Worship

The Church shall maintain weekly, public worship gatherings. Meeting times and places for public worship gatherings will be determined by unified majority approval of the Elders.

6.2.2 - Members Meetings

The Membership, as defined in these Bylaws, will be called upon to attend regularly scheduled meetings for purposes that may include but are not limited to: aiding the Elders with major decision making as it relates to the direction and fulfillment of the purposes of the Church; and in the matters of the selection or removal of Elders and Deacons, the addition or removal of Members, and for matters of Church Discipline, as defined in these Bylaws.

The Elders may, when necessary, call for special meetings of the Membership for any of the above listed matters.

A Member shall be able to call a special meeting of the Membership by submitting a written request to the Elders, with supporting signatures from 20% of the Membership and detailed purpose for the meeting. The Elders will be responsible to hold the meeting within 30 days of receiving the request.

6.2.3 - Voting

For any meeting where a vote of the membership will take place, a notice of at least two weeks prior to the meeting shall be given during the public gathering of the Church. A two-thirds majority of the membership present is required to determine the matter being voted on.

6.3 Ordinances

In obedience to God, the Church will maintain the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 22:14-20). These ordinances are to be continued by God's people until His return (1 Corinthians 11:26). The ordinances shall only be administered by those who through profession of faith in Jesus Christ have been saved and commissioned by Him (Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 4:1) and who are joined to the Church in covenant Membership, as set forth in these Bylaws.

6.3.1 - Baptism

Baptism signifies fellowship in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:12); the remission of sins (Mark 1:4, Acts 22:16); being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4); and being marked off as belonging to God (Acts 2:41). Baptism shall be administered to any person who has professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, believed the gospel, and repented of sin (Acts 2:38-41).

A person desiring baptism will meet with an Elder(s) to give testimony to these things. Upon the satisfaction of the Elder(s), that these biblical requirements have been met, the person desiring baptism shall be baptized through immersion in water in the presence of the publicly gathered Church.

We reject the teaching which says that baptism is the means of salvation. This is an affront to the biblical doctrine of justification through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ.

6.3.2 - The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, having been given by the Lord to His followers, on the night He was betrayed (Luke 22:14, 1 Corinthians 11:23), shall be observed following His command that this be done in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19). The Bible does not prescribe how often or when The Lord's Supper is to be observed; simply, the Lord commands that it be done. The Lord's Supper, then, shall be observed regularly, during the public worship gathering of the Church, at the discretion of the Elders.

The Lord's Supper, at Village Bible Church, shall be open to any person who has been united to Christ on the basis of faith, and is not closed to Members only. To guard all those who would approach the table and eat the bread or drink the cup in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27), the biblical warning to examine oneself will be given prior to the distribution of the elements of The Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28).

The elements used in observing the Lord's Supper, as illustrated in the Bible, shall be bread and juice from the fruit of the vine (Mark 14:22-25). These elements symbolize the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

We reject that the observance of The Lord's Supper in any way absolves or frees from sin the one who partakes of the bread and the cup. We reject that the bread and the juice in any way change in substance through the observance of The Lord's Supper into the actual flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are wholly unsupported in the Word of God.

6.4 - Church Leadership

In the Bible, God has ordained two offices of leadership within the church—Elders and Deacons (Philippians 1:1). These offices are not optional but necessary for meeting the full spectrum of needs within the Church. The Bible charges Elders with the doctrinal and spiritual care of the church; it charges Deacons with the care of the Church's tangible needs. Though the Bible envisions Deacons as serving under the authority of the Elders, this in no way reflects inferiority but rather God's design in delineating the roles of ministry.

6.4.1 - Elders

6.4.1a - Definition, Number, and Authority

The term Elder, as found throughout these Bylaws, refers to any Vocational or Lay Elder in whom the biblical qualifications of an Elder have been met and upon whom the biblical authority and responsibilities of an Elder have been conferred. The term "Elders" refers to the collective body of Vocational and Lay Elders. Biblically, the term Elder and Pastor are synonymous; so it shall be within the Church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Timothy 3:2, 5; 1 Peter 5:1-2).

The Word of God clearly shows that a plurality of elders is healthy and wise (Exodus 18:21, Proverbs 11:14, Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 24:6). The Word of God does not prescribe a specific number of elders that a church should maintain, it simply prescribes a plurality of elders (Acts 5:6, Acts 20:17, Titus 1:5).

6.4.1b - Vocational Elder and Lay Elder

A Vocational Elder is one who is in the employ of the Church and receives, in full or in part, his means of living from the Church. A Lay Elder is one who is not in the employ of the Church and receives his means of living from outside of the Church. A Vocational Elder has no determination of his own personal salary or benefits.

6.4.1c - Qualifications

The minimum qualifications for an Elder are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 2 Timothy 4:1-2, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. An Elder must be a man. They must hold firm to the Word of God. They must be in agreement with the Village Bible Church Articles of Faith and be a Member of the Church, as set forth in these Bylaws. Those serving as Elders must understand that the office of Elder requires their willing submission to these qualifications in both their public and private lives.

6.4.1d - Responsibilities

The Word of God authorizes Elders to exercise oversight of the Church (Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:2), as such the responsibilities of an Elder include: devotion to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4), matters of doctrine (Titus 1:9), the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12), and the spiritual care of the Membership of the Church (Acts 20:31, 1 Timothy 3:5, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:3). Other responsibilities may include, but are not limited to: leading the Church in the direction of fulfilling its purpose, formulation of the Church budget, and oversight of Church finances and benevolent ministry (Acts 4:34-35, 1 Timothy 5:3-16), as set forth in these Bylaws.

The Elders will supervise all Church staff members and may delegate any responsibilities that seem reasonable to any person employed by the Church.

6.4.1e - Selection and Term of Office

The Membership of the Church has the responsibility of recommending names of men as elder candidates.

The candidate must undergo a season of testing and examination by the Elder(s) to be certain that the candidate meets, exhibits and is growing in the biblical qualifications of an Elder. Upon the successful completion of this season, the candidate will undergo a season of examination by the Membership. Any Member with private knowledge of any Biblical disqualification in any elder candidate has the responsibility, during the period of examination, to make the disqualifying reason known. In order that this may be done with discretion and in love, it is advised that a path similar to the one laid out in Matthew 18:15-17 be followed.

Upon the close of this season, through Complete Unified Approval of the Elders, the candidate will be recommended for a vote of the Membership. Upon a vote of approval, the candidate will be introduced as an Elder in the Church and committed to the Church for service through prayer and the laying on of hands.

The office of Elder will be held until resignation, death, or removal. Removal of an Elder will only take place as set forth in these Bylaws.

6.4.1f - Elders Meetings

For the purposes of exercising oversight of the Church, regular meetings of the Elders will be held at such a time and place as determined by the Elders.

6.4.1g - Unified Majority Approval and Complete Unified Approval

Throughout these Bylaws there are issues that require Unified Majority Approval and issues that require Complete Unified Approval of the Elders.

Unified Majority Approval requires greater than 50% but less than 100% of the Elders to be in unified agreement on an issue.

Complete Unified Approval requires 100% of the Elders to be in unified agreement on an issue.

In the matters of: major decision making regarding the direction and fulfillment of the purposes of the Church; the selection or removal of Elder(s) or Deacon(s); the matter of a person(s) addition to, removal from, or restoration to the Membership of the Church; and in matters of Church Discipline, as defined in these Bylaws, the Elders will call for a vote of the Membership before any such decisions of the Elders be enacted.

6.4.1h - Removal and Vacancy

The Bible says that an accusation against an elder must not be accepted unless it comes with the evidence of two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). When multiple accusations of moral failure exist with any Elder(s), the Elders shall immediately begin investigating the accusations. Moral failure is to be understood as not fulfilling the responsibilities of an Elder, failure to continue to meet and grow in the qualifications of an Elder, and dereliction in dealing with sin. In the event that the accusations prove false, the Elder(s) in question will be restored to service within the church. If, however, preliminary investigation reveals any credibility to the accusations, the Elders will, exercising great discretion and with loving care for all involved, communicate the situation at the next public gathering of the Church (1 Peter 4:17). During the investigation the Elders have the authority to suspend the accused from service; in the case of any Vocational Elder, with or without pay. In any case where the Elder(s) confess to the moral failure that they are accused of, the Elders will work to determine the best course of action forward, up to and potentially including removal from eldership, release of employment—if applicable—and subsequent Church Discipline.

The Elders will remove the Elder(s) through Complete Unified Approval. In any instance where removal happens as a result of disciplinary action, the goal of removal must be restoration of the brother to the Lord and to the Church. It will be the discretion of the Elders as to whether a path of restoration will include the possibility of reinstatement to the office of Elder.

In the event that there is a vacancy among the Elders, the process for filling this vacancy will follow the Selection of Elders as set forth in these Bylaws. In the event that any vacancy leaves only one Elder, that Elder will call the Church to a season of prayer over the men of the church to serve as Elders. After a season of prayer, the Elder will call for recommendations from the Membership of the Church for men to be examined as candidates for eldership following the Selection of Elders as set forth in these Bylaws. In the event that any vacancy leaves no Elder within the church, the men of the Church Membership will meet for prayer to seek the Lord for wisdom in how to move forward.

In the event that the plurality of Elders falls into sin and is collectively led astray—not fulfilling their responsibilities, or they are failing to continue to meet and grow in the qualifications of an Elder, or they are derelict in dealing with sin among the Elders—when the direction of Matthew 18:15-16 has failed, any 2 or 3 Members of the Church with a charge(s) of sin against the Elders, shall be able to call for a special meeting to address the charge(s) with the church, They shall submit, in writing, their request for the meeting, detailing the charge(s). The Elders will be responsible to hold the meeting within 30 days of receiving the request.

6.4.2 - Deacons

6.4.2a - Definition, Number, Responsibility

The term Deacon, as found throughout these Bylaws, refers to any man chosen by the Church and appointed by the Elders, in whom the biblical qualifications of a Deacon have been met and upon whom the biblical responsibilities of a Deacon have been conferred. No biblical specification as to the number of Deacons that a church must maintain exists. Therefore, the Elders will determine the number of Deacons necessary to meet the needs of the Church (Acts 6:3).

In the Bible, we see the first example of Deacons in Acts 6, where their responsibility was to serve the tangible needs of the Church, in order that the Apostles might remain devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word of God. The Bible, though explicit in the qualifications of Deacons, is not explicit in their responsibility. Deacons, outside of their role as a Member of the Church, do not serve as a governing body of the church. Deacons function under the authority of the Elders, supporting the spiritual leadership of the Elders by meeting the tangible needs of the Church.

6.4.2b - Qualifications

The minimum qualifications for Deacons are outlined in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. A Deacon shall be a man. He must hold firm to the Word of God. He must be in agreement with the Village Bible Church Articles of Faith, and be a Member of the Church. Those serving as Deacons must understand that the office of Deacon requires their willing submission to these qualifications in both their public and private lives.

6.4.2c - Selection, Appointment, Term of Office

The process of selecting Deacons will begin with the Elders communicating the existing need or needs of the Church, along with the number of Deacons necessary and the length of service required to serve those needs, to the Membership of the Church. The Elders will set a specified period of time for the Membership to recommend men who are able to serve the existing needs and who meet the minimum qualifications of a Deacon, as defined in these bylaws. Upon the close of a period of recommendation, those recommended to serve as Deacons will undergo a specified period of examination by the Membership to test if they are above reproach and qualified to serve, as the Bible directs in 1 Timothy 3:10. Any Member with private knowledge of any Biblical disqualification in any deacon candidate has the responsibility, whether during a period of recommendation or examination, to make the disqualifying reason known. In order that this may be done with discretion and in love, it is advised that a path similar to the one laid out in Matthew 18:15-17 be followed. In the event that multiple men are recommended and successfully come through a period of examination by the Membership to serve as deacons where only one deacon is necessary, a vote of the Membership will be held to select one man to hold the office.

The Elders will appoint those candidates, who successfully come through a period of examination and receive a vote of approval from the Membership, to service in the Church through prayer and the laying on of hands.

Deacons may serve for a specified period of time or until the Deacon resigns or is removed. Removal of a Deacon will only take place as set forth in these Bylaws. Any Deacon that serves for a set period of time, yet remains qualified, may serve again at a later time as a Deacon through the above provided means of selection and appointment.

6.4.2d - Removal

Removal of a Deacon from service to the Church will take place for any moral failure or failure to meet the qualifications of a Deacon as set forth in the Word of God. Subsequent Church Discipline may follow.

Only through Complete Unified Approval of the Elders will a Deacon be removed. The Elders will communicate the removal of a Deacon(s) at a Members Meeting. The goal of removal must be restoration of the brother to the Lord and to the Church. It will be the discretion of the Elders as to whether a path of restoration will include the possibility of reinstatement to the office of Deacon.

6.5 - Church Discipline and Disruptions

6.5.1 - Discipline

Throughout the Bible, discipline is clearly seen as necessary and healthy (Proverbs 3:11-12, Hebrews 12:11, Revelation 3:19). Should an offense arise between any two members or groups of members, Matthew 18:15-17 will serve as the guide toward resolution. An Elder or Elders will serve as mediation should the need arise. Should church disciplinary actions be deemed necessary, it will be the intent of the Church that such actions will lead to repentance, reconciliation, and restoration.

When willful expressions of sin exist, Church Discipline is necessary. Willful expressions of sin include but are not limited to sexual immorality, malicious gossip, divisiveness, dishonesty, and others (Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3-6), as well as any violation of God's commands for His people (1 John 3:10). In order to maintain the righteous standard of Jesus Christ, to avoid the appearance of evil to those outside of the Church, for the protection of the Members of the Church, and so that those under the influence of sin may be reconciled to a holy God, the following practice, set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, will be followed: an Elder or Elders will confront the member or members in a private meeting and call them to repentance; if after all biblical counsel has been exhausted there remains a lack of repentance, the Elders will move forward with recommending that the member or members be removed from Membership in the Church, as commanded by The Word of God in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5 and defined in these Bylaws.

6.5.2 - Disruptions

The Word of God gives authority to the Elders of the Church to maintain order and protection within the gathering of the Church (Acts 20:28-29, 1 Corinthians 14:40). In the event that an Elder, Deacon, or any designated person acting on the behalf and with the approval of any Elder or Deacon, deems any person or persons to be: a) actively promoting beliefs contrary to the sound doctrine of The Word of God or the Village Bible Church Articles of Faith, as found in these Bylaws; b) posing a threat whether mental, emotional, physical, or spiritual, to any other person, persons, or to the Church; or c) to be causing, about to cause, or capable of causing a disruption to the gathering of the Church or any related activities, the person or persons will be considered a trespasser and asked to vacate the location. No Elder, Deacon, or designated person acting on the behalf and with the approval of any Elder or Deacon, will incur any liability for acting in the good faith interest of the Church.

Article VII - Administration

7.1 - Business Office

The principal office for business transactions of the Church is 410 N. Ann St., Byron, MI 48418. This office is located in Shiawassee County.

The Elders have authority to change the principal office from one location to another, at their discretion. The Church Secretary will record any change in the location of the principal office.

7.2 - Nonprofit Status

Village Bible Church is a nonprofit ecclesiastical corporation under the laws of the State of Michigan and is organized under the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act of 1982, as amended.

7.3 - Board of Directors, Selection, and Responsibility

The Word of God calls God's people, as citizens of the land in which they live, to be subject to the governing authorities that He has instituted among them (Romans 13:1, 1 Peter 2:13-15). According to the laws of the State of Michigan for ecclesiastical corporations, the Church will maintain a Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors will consist of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and three (3) directors. Whenever possible the position of Chairman will be held by an Elder, selected by Unified Majority Approval of the Elders. The position of Vice Chairman may be held by any Member of the Church, selected through Unified Majority Approval of the Elders and a vote of the Membership. The position of Secretary and the position of Treasurer may be held by any Member of the Church and shall be filled by appointment through Unified Majority Approval of the Elders and a vote of the Membership. The positions of Secretary and Treasurer may be held by one person respectively or by two individual persons. The position of Treasurer may be held by a Lay Elder, but shall not be held by any Vocational Elder. Each of the three (3) director positions may be held by any member of the church, and shall be filled through Unified Majority Approval of the Elders and a vote of the membership. In the event of any vacancies among the Board of Directors, by reason of death, resignation, Church Discipline, or otherwise, the Elders will convene at the soonest possible time to fill such vacancies according to the guidelines prescribed above for the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors shall be responsible for maintaining the Church's adherence to the nonprofit ecclesiastical corporation guidelines and laws of the State of Michigan, insofar as they do not compromise the sound doctrine of God's Word and our submission to His authority.

7.4 - Accounting

7.4.1 - Fiscal Year and Budget

The fiscal year of the Church will begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December of each year.

The Elders will lead the formation of the annual budget. A proposed budget will be presented to the Membership for review prior to a vote of the Membership at the last Members Meeting of the year, before the start of the new fiscal year.

In the event that a proposed budget is not approved before the start of a new fiscal year, the previous year's budget will be followed until a new budget is approved.

7.4.2 - Financial Control

The Elders will oversee the management of and will be accountable to the Church for the handling and use of Church finances. Stewards of ministry within the Church, to whom budgeted dollars are allocated, will be accountable to the Elders for the management of finances as it relates to their respective ministry in the Church. The Treasurer will be responsible for the depositing of weekly contributions and financial record-keeping.

7.4.3 - Counting Teams

A minimum of two persons, from separate households, of which only one may be the Treasurer or an Elder, excluding all Vocational Elders, will be responsible for the counting and recording of weekly contributions.

7.4.4 - Privacy Protection

No Member or other person has the right to examine any personnel, financial, medical, or other information that would, in the determination of the Elders, invade the personal privacy of the Staff, Church Members, contributors, attendees, or guests.

7.4 - Staffing

The Elders will have the authority to hire people to fill various positions, when necessary, within the Church.

Employment within the Church will be reserved for people, both men and women, who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, live in submission to the Word of God, are in agreement with the Village Bible Church Articles of Faith, and are Members of the Church, as set forth in these Bylaws. Additionally, the Elders reserve the

right to terminate the employment of any Church staff member who fails to meet this general standard of faith and practice.

Any stipends, wages, or benefit packages, when applicable, will be determined by the Elders through Unified Majority Approval. If any stipends, wages, or benefit packages come about outside of the annual budgeting process, a vote of the Membership will be required as an addendum to the annual budget before any such stipends, wages, or benefits be disbursed or provided.

Article VIII - Dissolution

“Dissolution” means the complete disbanding of the Church and the complete distribution of all property and assets so that it no longer functions as a church or as an ecclesiastical corporation. The process of dissolution, will begin with the Elders, who, through Complete Unified Approval, will call for a vote of the membership. In the event of the church having only one Elder, he will call for a vote of the Membership to dissolve the church. In the event that the church has no Elders, a meeting of the present Membership of the Church will be called for, and a vote, as defined in these bylaws, regarding dissolution, will be held. Upon a vote of approval to dissolve the Church, its property will be applied and distributed as follows:

1. All liabilities and obligations of the Church will be paid and discharged, or adequate provision will be made therefore;
2. Assets held by the Church with condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the Dissolution, will be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements;
3. Assets held by the Church without a condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance by reason of the Dissolution, will be transferred or conveyed to one or more domestic or foreign corporations, societies, or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, provided such organizations are of like-faith and striving for the gospel. Any such distribution will be done pursuant to a plan: a) recommended by the Elder(s) and approved by a vote of the Membership, or b) developed by the Members and approved by a vote of the Membership, if the Church has no Elders.

Article IX - Alteration of Bylaws

Whenever alteration of any portion or multiple portions of these Bylaws, excluding the Articles of Faith, become necessary—to further align with the Word of God or to further maintain adherence with the laws of the land, insofar as they do not compromise the sound doctrine of God’s Word and our submission to His authority—the Elders will communicate the necessary changes and the reason for any such changes to the Church Membership. The Elders will present the proposed changes to the Membership for review prior to the next possible Members Meeting. Any alteration to these Bylaws will only be established through Complete Unified Approval of the Elders and a vote of the Membership.

Village Bible Church Membership Covenant

Being saved according to God's mercy and by His grace, on the basis of faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, I enter into this Membership Covenant with others, so joined. I recognize my biblical responsibility to maintain an active role in the Church, knowing that each individual's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and to one another brings glory to God the Father and contributes to the overall health of the Church. For this reason, I understand that I am agreeing to live, first, in submission to God and His Word; second in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Bylaws of the Church; and finally in commitment to fellow members through the following Membership Covenant:

- I have through faith believed that God raised Jesus from the dead and in baptism I have publicly confessed that I am following Him as my Savior and Lord (Acts 2:41, Romans 10:9-10).
- I will live a life of devotion to: the teachings of Jesus Christ; the fellowship of believers; the proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the Lord's Supper; and to prayer (Acts 2:42).
- I will endeavor to maintain and increase in the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, evangelism, and recognition and confession of my sin (2 Peter 1:3-8, 1 John 1:8-10).
- I will support and care for fellow Church Members through: regular worship and fellowship together; continual prayer for them; helping to bear life's burdens; and by standing guard against temptation and sin in their lives (Galatians 6:1-2, Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16).
- I will support the ministry of the Church through: regular attendance of worship gatherings and members meetings; an active role in and acceptance of matters of church discipline; and through the cheerful giving of my time, abilities, resources, and finances (Matthew 18:15-17, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Hebrews 10:25).
- I will support, pray for, submit to, and encourage the Elders of the Church in their authority, established by the Word of God, as those responsible for keeping watch over my soul through their devotion to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the equipping of the saints (Acts 6:4, Ephesians 4:12, Hebrews 13:17).
- I will support and practice standards of personal conduct that are in accordance with the Word of God and fitting for followers of Jesus Christ, in my relationships, both within and outside of the Church (Colossians 3:1-4:6).

Covenant Agreement Signature: _____

Date: _____