

# Shoestring Valley Community Church

## Constitution

### ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization shall be Shoestring Valley Community Church (“SVCC”).

### ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, such purposes as: the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, web sites, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, daycare centers, and camps; the evangelizing of the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the educating of believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture; both in Sunday and weekday schools of Christian education; and the maintaining of missionary activities in the United States and any foreign country.

The ultimate purpose of this church shall be to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ as His corporate, visible, and holy representative to our local community and around the world (Matt. 5:16; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; 4:11). The objectives that advance this purpose are:

- 1. Evangelism (Outreach)** – Through providing evangelistic events and messages, through training our members in evangelism skills, through the support of home and foreign missions, through loving deeds, kind words, and cultivated relationships with unsaved people, and through the example and encouragement of its leaders, the church will encourage its members to be effective disciple-makers in their personal sphere of influence. (Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 4:2-6)
- 2. Exaltation (Upreach)** – Through promoting and practicing both personal and corporate worship, the church will encourage its members to trust, love, know, and reverence our Triune God, show gratitude for all His gracious acts, and enjoy His manifest presence. (John 4:23-24; Heb. 13:15)
- 3. Edification (Inreach)** – Through understanding and practicing the truths of God’s Word, through the regular observance of the ordinances (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper), through teaching and preaching God’s word, through Christian friendships, social occasions, and mutual ministry to one another, the church will train its members to build each other up in the faith and to stimulate each other to love and good deeds. (Matt. 18:19; Eph. 4:11-16; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Heb. 10:24-25)
- 4. Mission Statement** – The mission statement of SVCC describes the ongoing unique way we aim to fulfill the above general purposes. Namely...

Our SVCC mission is Christ’s mission—to extend His kingdom by sending out His people to reach the world with the gospel. We will do this....

- By equipping our members to become effective disciple-makers in their personal sphere of influence,
- By planting disciple-making churches in Lewis County, and

- By raising up, training, and sending out our people to reach the unreached nations of the earth.
5. **Vision Statement** -- The vision statement of SVCC describes the kind of culture we aim to create, our unique identity. Namely...

SVCC has a vision to minister three realities near and far. We aim to be a place:

- Where sin-prone, sin-bound people regularly experience God's grace, so that they might be saved and eagerly grow in Christ;
- Where "grace-loved" people are trained to apply relevant biblical truth, so that grace rebuilds lost foundations of spiritual, personal, family, and community life;
- Where "grace-loved" and "truth-trained" people gratefully pass along the good things they've received, so that the chain of grace continues unbroken.

## ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF FAITH

### 1. The Bible

- A. We believe the Bible alone is God's Word, uniquely authored (inspired) by God through human writers. (*Acts 1:16; 3:18; 1 Pet. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Num. 33:2; Jer. 1:9-10; Isa. 55:11; Ezek. 3:10-11*).
- B. We believe God's authorship extends equally and fully to the whole Bible and every word in it. (*Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-46; John 14:26; 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 2:13; Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 3:15-16*)
- C. We believe the Bible is without error in the original writings (*John 10:35; 17:3, 17; Luke 16:17; Titus 1:2; Ps. 12:6; 119:89; Matt. 5:17; 22:31-32; 24:35; Isa. 40:8*).
- D. We believe God safeguards the meaning of the Bible through the centuries so that the Bible we read today is God's Word (*Josh. 1:8; 2 Kings 22:8-13; Neh. 8:1; Matt. 26:14; Luke 21:33*).
- E. We believe the Bible is the final (supreme) authority for faith and life, and all human traditions, experiences, emotions, and ideas are judged by God's Word and must conform to its teachings to be judged true (*Matt. 4:4; Mark 7:6-13; 1 John 4:1-3; Col. 1:18-20; 2:4-5*).
- F. We believe everything necessary for salvation, faith and life is clearly revealed in the Bible (*Deut. 30:11-14; Ps. 19:7-8; John 10:35; 20:30-31; 2 Tim. 3:15-17*).
- G. We believe humble submission to the Lord is a precondition for understanding the Bible, and knowing the Bible is indispensable to living a truly Christian life (*1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Pet. 3:16; Col. 1:9-10; 3:16; Rom. 15:4; Heb. 4:12*).
- H. We believe every believer has both the privilege and the duty to interpret the Bible correctly (*Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 10:6-18*).
- I. We believe there is one correct interpretation of a verse based on the literal meaning of its words, the context where it is found, and the teaching of other passages (*Ezra 7:10; Neh. 8:7-8; Matt. 22:29-32; Luke 24:25-27, 32, 44-45; Gal. 3:16*).
- J. We believe this one correct interpretation, i.e. the truth, has many valid life applications that the Spirit helps obedient believers to understand and practice (*1 John 2:27; 1 Cor. 2:12-16*).
- K. We believe the Bible is a finished document, voiding all present day claims to authoritative, prophetic pronouncements and extra-biblical revelations (*Jude 3; 1 Cor. 13:10; Ps. 119:89; Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:6; Deut. 4:2*).

## 2. The Triune God

We believe in the one God, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who are co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and who thus share the same attributes and perfections. The Triune God is complete in and of Himself, is abounding in all goodness, and performs all His deeds out of the overflow of His inexhaustible fullness and shared joy. He is eternal, holy, merciful, loving, just, changeless, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and concerned with all men. (*Ex. 3:14; Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4; Ps.110:1-3; Dan 4:34-35; Matt. 3:15-17; 28:19; John 1:1, 14; 8:24, 58; 10:30; 17:4-5; Acts 5:3-4, 9; 16:6-7; 20:23, 28; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:3, 6-13; James 2:19; Rev. 5:1-13*)

### A. God the Father-- The First Person

We believe God the Father is the source of all things, the ultimate Sovereign who governs the universe according to His perfect plans, and the One whose love sent His only begotten Son to provide the gift of salvation to the world. His nature can also be seen in creation, in calling and caring for Israel, and in the perfect fulfillment of all His promises and plans. (*Gen. 1:1;12:1-3; Ex. 3:14; 34:6-7; Ps. 19:1; 33:11; 90:2; 115:3; 139; Isa. 41:4, 21-26; 43:13; 44:6-7; 45:21-22; 46:8-11; 48:3-7; Matt. 6:9-13; John 3:16; 5:26; Acts 15:16-18; Rom 11:36; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:3-5*)

### B. God the Son-- The Second Person

- i. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and agent of creation, became man without ceasing to be God. (*Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; John 1:1-6, 14; 8:23-24; 17:5; Matt. 1:23; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 John 1:1-4*)
- ii. We believe He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God to us and redeem sinful humanity. (*Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 12:45; 14:9; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Heb. 1:3*)
- iii. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for all mankind, stood in our place as a righteous substitute, took the full force of God's anger towards our sin, and offered a payment that completely satisfied all of God's just judgments against us. (*Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 2:9; 7:25-27; 9:26; 10:10, 12, 14; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 4:10*)
- iv. We believe His atoning sacrifice has enough value to redeem every person and enough power to justify everyone who trusts in Christ alone for eternal life. (*John 1:29; 3:16; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:14*)
- v. We believe in the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (*Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-29; Acts 1:9-10; 2:32; 3:15; 10:40-42; 1 Cor.15:4-8, 12-20; Rev. 1:18*)
- vi. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where He ministers as our high priest, praying friend, and defense attorney. (*Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb.1: 3; 4:14-16; 8:6; 12:2; 1 John 2:1*)

### C. God the Holy Spirit-- The Third Person

- i. We believe the Holy Spirit is a Person with mind, will, and emotions. (*Acts 5:3-4, 9, 32; 16:6-7; 20:23, 28; Eph. 4:30*)
- ii. We believe the Spirit was active in creation and with men in the Old Testament period-- indwelling them temporarily to perform mighty acts or reveal truth. (*Gen. 1:2; Num. 11:25-29; Judges 14:19; 15:14; 16:20, 28-31; 1 Sam. 10:6; 16:4; 2 Kings 3:15-18; Ps. 51:11*)

- iii. We believe the Spirit presently convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. (*John 16:8-11; Rom. 8:16; Heb. 2:4; 1 John 5:11-13*)
- iv. We believe the Holy Spirit immediately imparts life to the person trusting in Christ—immersing them into the body of Christ, forever indwelling them, and marking them out as reserved for the day of redemption. (*Acts 15:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9-11, 15-16; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5*)
- v. We believe the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who uses the Word of God to guide believers into conformity with Christ's person and will. (*John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:12-16; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:17-18*)
- vi. We believe it is the privilege and duty of every believer to yield to the moment-by-moment control of the Holy Spirit. (*Gal. 5:16; 6:8; Eph. 4:30; 5:18-20; Rom. 8:6-7*)
- vii. We believe the Holy Spirit freely bestows at least one spiritual gift on every believer, enabling them to build up other Christians in their faith. (*1 Cor. 12:7-11; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11*)
- viii. We believe the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit (divine revelations, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and miracle-workers) are of a temporary, foundational nature—being superseded by the completed and perfect revelation of God in the Bible. Such gifts are given to the church as a supernatural witness in times and places where no such witness through the Word exists, proving that the new gospel message is truth from God and must be accepted in order to be saved. (*Acts 2:4-6, 33; 3:12-13, 16; 4:9-12; 5:14-15; 7:8; 8:13, 25; 13:12; 14:3; 19:11-12; Rom. 15:18-19; 1 Cor. 13:9-10; 14:20-22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Heb. 2:3-4*)

### 3. Man and Sin

- A. We believe God, by a direct act, created man in His own image and likeness that we might know Him and enjoy Him forever. (*Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Eph. 4:24; Jam. 3:9*)
- B. We believe Adam, the first man, sinned against God. (*Gen. 3:1-13*)
- C. We believe Adam's sin was transmitted to the whole human race so that all people inherit a sin nature and are born alienated from God. (*Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 2:1-3; Ps. 51:5; 58:3*)
- D. We believe the essence of sin is an enthronement of self at God's expense. (*Gen. 3:5; Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5; Isa. 1:12-22; 14:13-14; Luke 4:1-13; Matt. 16:23; John 5:44*)
  - i. It is lawlessness, living as one pleases in disregard of what God is like or what He says in His Word. (*1 John 3:4; Deut. 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25; 1 Sam. 15:23; Ps. 32:1; Matt. 7:23; 2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Tim. 1:9*)
  - ii. It is unrighteousness, doing what is wrong by God's standards and/or failing to do what is right. (*James 3:2; 4:17; 1 John 5:17*)
  - iii. It is ingratitude, withholding thanks from God for His many good gifts and choosing instead to accuse Him of withholding good things from us. (*Rom. 1:21-22; 2:4; James 1:17-18; Jude 14-16; Job 40:2*)
  - iv. It is unbelief, choosing to rely on oneself or other gods instead of depending on God alone, and viewing Him as not wholly good and therefore unworthy of one's trust. (*2 Kings 17:14-15; Jer. 2:13; Rom. 1:23-25; 14:23; James 1:6-8; Heb. 3:12-19; 11:6*)

- E. We believe all people are guilty of personal sin, are without excuse, merit God's wrath, and therefore are subject to physical, spiritual, and eternal death (Hell). (*Prov. 20:9; 1 Kings 8:46; Job 14:4; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 1:20; 2:1-11; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 John 1:8-10; Ps. 11:6; Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:42-49; 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Rev. 20:11-15*)
- F. We believe the corruption of sin affects the entire person-- mind, will, and emotions -- to the point where man is utterly unable to remedy his lost condition by reforming himself. (*Job 14:4; Jer. 13:23; 17:9; Mark 7:21-22; John 8:34; Rom. 3:1-24; 7:7-11; 1 John 2:11-13*)
- G. In a fallen world, however, God has made provision for victims of unjust divorces to have a new life. When an unbelieving spouse divorces their Christian partner or when divorce happens because one spouse is sexually unfaithful to the other, God grants the right of remarriage to the victim of sinful conduct. (*1 Cor. 7:15-16; Matt. 5:21-32; 19:9*)
- H. In all other cases, divorce is forbidden and the right to remarry with God's approval is forfeited. (*1 Cor. 7:10-14; Matt. 19:9; Luke 16:18*)

#### 4. Salvation

- A. We believe salvation is God's rescuing us from the power and effects of sin. It is a free and generous gift given to undeserving people by an unimaginably generous God. (*Eph. 2:1-9; Titus 3:2-7; John 1:12-13; 3:16-18; Rom. 5:8-10,15-17; 6:23*)
- B. We believe salvation is received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose shed blood purchased our deliverance from sin's penalty, power, and presence. (*John 20:30-31; Rom. 1:18; 3:22; 4:5; 10:9-10; Acts 16:31; Col. 1:13-14; 2:13-14; 1 Thess 5:9*)
- C. We believe God chooses each believer for salvation before the foundation of the world, enabling him to believe through the Holy Spirit. (*Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:4-6; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2:10; John 6:29; Acts 13:48; 16:14*)
- D. We believe God imparts the divine nature and divine life at the moment of faith to each believer by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. (*2 Cor. 4:10-11; 5:17; 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13; 1 John 3:9; 5:11-13; 2 Pet.1:4*)
- E. We believe God fully and finally forgives each believer, forever removing all our sins and placing them upon Christ at His cross. (*Ps. 103:12; Isa. 38:17; 43:25; Mic. 7:19; John 19:30; Acts 3:19; 13:38; Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 1:14; 2:13-14; Rev. 1:5*)
- F. We believe God has reconciled believers to Himself. Christ experienced the estrangement, hostility, and punishment we deserved, removing all offense and establishing peace between God and us. (*Rom. 5:1, 11; 8:1, 31-39; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:13-18; Col. 1:20; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10*)
- G. We believe God declares each believer righteous in His sight. All of Christ's righteousness is credited to his account the very moment he believes. (*Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1; 8:1, 33-39; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9*)
- H. We believe God cleanses believers from all the filth and shame of sin, setting them apart for Himself upon salvation and making them saints (holy-ones). (*Acts 15:9; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:3; Titus 3:5-6; 1 John 1:7, 9*)
- I. We believe God has adopted believers as His children, making us eternal objects of His love and granting us all the privileges of sonship. (*John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15-16, 23; Gal. 3:26-4:7; Eph. 1:5-6; 1 John 3:1-3*)

- J. We believe God keeps those who are truly born again permanently saved, making them secure in Christ forever. (*John 6:39; 10:28-30; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 1:5; Jude 1*)
- K. We believe God commands all Christians to manifest both love and purity, to do good works, and to abstain from all evil through His power. (*2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 2:10; 1 Thess. 5:22; Titus 2:11-14; 3:1, 8, 14; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 1:5,18-19, 23; 1 John 2:15-16; 3:16-18*)

## 5. The Church

- A. We believe the Church--the body and the bride of Christ-- is a unique spiritual entity made up of all born-again persons of this present age (from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture). (*Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:37-47; 1 Cor.12:12-13; Col. 1:26-27; Rev. 3:10; 12:1-6; 19:7-9*)
- B. We believe the church to be separate and distinct entity from Israel, and that God will literally fulfill all His unique promises to Israel in the future. (*Dan. 9:24-27; Rom. 11:1-32; Eph. 2:15, 19-22; 3:4-11; 4:11*)
- C. We believe the local church is a duly organized group of baptized believers, of like-minded biblical faith, who unite in a specific place to share the gospel, edify one another in Christ, and glorify God. (*Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; Rom. 14:1-15:7; 1 Cor. 14:26-40; 1 Tim. 3:15-16*)
- D. We believe in the self-government under Christ of the local church, submissive to yet free from domination by worldly authorities. (*Acts 4:19; 5:29; Luke 20:25; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 1:22; 1 Pet. 2:13-16*)
- E. We believe in the elder rule form of church government. (*Acts 6:2-4; 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 13:17; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; Rev. 4:10; 5:5, 8, 11, 14*)
- F. We believe the local church is commanded to observe two ordinances: believer's baptism by immersion, and communion. (*1 Cor. 11:23-28; Matt. 28:18-20*)
- G. We believe the local church is commanded to proclaim the gospel to all nations, and to nurture believers unto maturity in Christ. (*Matt. 28:18-20; Acts. 9:31; 1 Cor. 11:23-28; 2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 3:19*)
- H. We believe the local church, and all who attend our fellowship, should demonstrate love for others, not only towards fellow believers, but also towards both those who are not believers, those who oppose us, and those who engage in sinful actions. We are to deal with opponents graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions. (*Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10, 17-21; 13:8-10; Phil. 2:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18*)
- I. We believe Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the local church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (*1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32*)

## 6. Angels

- A. We believe angels are spirit beings of limited power who were created to serve and worship God. The holy angels continue to serve God according to His original purpose. *(Luke 1:11, 18, 26-37; 24:4-7; Acts 1:10-11; Heb. 1:4-14; Rev. 5:11)*
- B. We believe Satan was created holy but rebelled against the Creator, involving numerous angels in his fall. He then introduced sin to the human race by the temptation of our first parents, Adam and Eve. *(Gen. 3:1-5; Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-19; Rev. 12:4)*
- C. We believe Satan and the demons tempt humans to sin, bring accusations against believers before God, deceive people through lies, incite conflict between believers, war against believers through persecution, and corrupt the true church with evil people and practices. *(Job 1:6-7; 2:3-5; Zech. 3:1; Matt. 4:1-11; 13:26-43; John 8:44; Acts 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 12-13; 1 Thess. 3:5; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 12:10; 20:2-3, 8)*
- D. We believe Satan and the demons were defeated by the death and resurrection of Christ and will be tormented eternally in the lake of fire. *(Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 20:10)*
- E. We believe demonic control over Christians is external-- in that Spirit-indwelt believers cannot be indwelt by a demon, avoidable-- since it is brought on by a free choice to walk in sin, and always breakable-- though repentance and new submission God. *(Matt. 12: 29; Rom. 16:19-20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 10:13; 2 Cor. 2:10-11; 4:4; Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim. 2:26; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-10; 1 John 4:1-4)*

## 7. Future Events

- A. We believe in the near and sudden coming in the clouds of Jesus Christ for His Church, prior to the Tribulation period. *(Acts 1:11; Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Thess. 5:1-4; Rev. 1:1, 3, 22:6-7; 10, 12, 20)*
- B. We believe at that time all church age saints will be raptured or raised, then glorified and rewarded. *(John 14:1-4; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 4:5; 15:51-55; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:1-5; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Heb. 10:35-36; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 3:1-3)*
- C. We believe Christ will return at the end of the Tribulation to judge both Israel and the Gentile nations, set up His Millennial kingdom, overthrow Satan, and re-gather Israel to their promised land according to the Old Testament promises. *(Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 35:1-10; 60:1-22; 62:1-12; Jer. 30:1-3; Ezek. 20:42; 36:24; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13-14; Joel: 3:1-3, 12-21; Luke 17:20-37; 21:7-36; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-6)*
- D. We believe in the physical resurrection of all the dead:
  - i. The unsaved dead will experience eternal separation from God and eternal punishment in the lake of fire; *(Ps. 11:5; Isa. 66:24; Matt. 25:41; Mark 9:42-50; Luke 16:24; 2 Thess. 1: 6-10; 2 Pet. 3:7; Rev. 14:10-11; 20:11-15)*
  - ii. The saved dead will enjoy a glorious eternity in the presence of God in a new heaven and a new earth. *(Ps. 16:10-11; 1 Cor. 2:9; 1 John 3:1-3; Rev. 21-22)*

## 8. Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

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

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4.) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

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

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of SVCC as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the SVCC members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by SVCC in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22.)

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

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of SVCC.

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, SVCC will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the pastors and staff of SVCC shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of SVCC shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.

## **9. Sanctity of Human Life**

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

## **10. Authority of This Statement of Faith**

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible, and therefore is held as the standard of teaching and practice of members of SVCC. For purposes of faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Board of Elders is SVCC’s final interpretive authority on the Bible’s meaning and application.

## **ARTICLE IV -- MEMBERSHIP COVENANT**

- A. Preamble:** Because we have received the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and rely on His sin payment alone to make us right with God, and since we have obeyed His command to be immersed in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we choose to enter into the fullness of community with our fellow believers at SVCC. We make the following promises to our Lord, each other, and ourselves, knowing we cannot keep them without God’s abundant help. These



commitments express our gratitude to our Savior as forgiven, imperfect people who need His Cross.

**B. We commit ourselves, by the grace of God, to build up our fellow Christians:**

- We will endeavor to walk closely with our Savior, to yield ourselves to Holy Spirit's moment-by-moment control, to turn away from evil desires and habits, and to give delight to God (Eph. 5:15-18; Gal. 5:16, 19-25; Phil. 3:7-8; Rom. 13:13-14).
- We will endeavor to cooperate with the Elders as they guide us in the paths of God, feed us with the truths of God, and to protect us from the enemies of God (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13)
- We will endeavor to be lovingly honest with each other. (Eph. 4:15, 25).
- We will endeavor to use our God-given spiritual gift to help others grow in the faith (1 Pet. 4:10-11).
- We will endeavor to speak encouraging words to the hurting souls in our midst (1 Thess. 5:14).
- We will endeavor to pursue those members who are slipping away from Christ so they can return to Him (Heb. 3:12-13).
- We will endeavor to pray for one another (Eph. 6:18).

**C. We commit ourselves, by the grace of God, to be active participants in congregational life:**

- We aim to attend worship services regularly, unless infirmity or travel prevents it (Heb.10:24-25).
- We aim to share with each other our joys and our sorrows, our blessings and our needs, and our victories and our sins (1 Cor.12:25-26; Rom. 12:10, 15; James 5:16; Gal. 6:2).
- We aim to give generously and regularly to our local church (1 Cor.16:1-2; 2 Cor.8:2-5; 9:6-8).
- We aim to serve in at least one ministry that benefits others in the congregation (1 Cor.12:5, 7).

**D. We commit ourselves, by the grace of God, to guard the unity and purity of the church:**

- We plan to follow the steps of conflict resolution commanded by Jesus when we have a complaint against a fellow member (Matt. 18:15-20).
- We plan to confront misconduct in a humble, gentle way rather than ignoring it (Gal. 6:1-2; Prov. 27:5-6).
- We plan to safeguard the reputation of our fellow believers by refusing to speak evil of them behind their backs (Prov. 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; Eph. 4:29-31).
- We plan to forgive the wrongdoing of our fellow Christians (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).
- We plan to check ourselves for sin before making accusations against a fellow believer (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We plan to honor and remain in fellowship with our fellow believers even when we disagree over matters of personal opinion, taste, and preference. (Rom. 14:1-15:7).

**E. We commit ourselves, by the grace of God, to advance the mission of the church:**

- We will strive to do our part in sharing Christ with the lost through: prayer, doing kind deeds, living an exemplary life, telling our salvation story, and affirming our public allegiance to Christ even when it is unpopular or costly to do so (Col. 4:2-6; Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:15; Titus 3:8).
- We agree to uphold and abide by the Constitution and Statement of Faith of SVCC.

## **ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION 1 - DEFINITION**

Members of SVCC are those adults (age 18 or older) who have entered into a covenant (agreement) with one another to uphold each other in the faith, having been born-again (as specified in Article III, #4D) and then baptized. They have furthermore acknowledged submission to the church's Statement of Faith, and are committed to unity and cooperation with other members in the church.

### **SECTION 2 - RECEIVING OF MEMBERS**

It is not necessary to be a member of SVCC to fellowship with or receive benefit from any ministry in this church. Membership shall be available to all who have had and whose lives evidence a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; who renounce sin; who endeavor to live a wholly dedicated life to the Lord; who fully subscribe to our Statement of Faith contained herein; who enter into church covenant contained herein; and who agree to submit to the authority of the church and its leaders as set forth herein. To do so, the following steps must be followed to become a member:

1. The person must express a desire to become a member of this church
2. Individuals shall attend a class designed for the purpose of instruction in the principles of the function of the church as outlined in scripture and in the church constitution.
3. At the end of the class each candidate will be asked to sign the Church Covenant and Statement of Faith.
4. They will be interviewed by the elders.
5. They will then be presented to the congregation for its evaluation and input.
6. After a minimum two-week period the elders will vote to receive the candidate(s).
7. If accepted, they will be introduced as members to the rest of the body. Any membership in any other local church must be withdrawn before becoming a member of this church.

### **SECTION 3 - PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. Each member has the privilege and responsibility to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, to regularly assemble together and encourage one another (Heb. 10:24-35).
- B. Each member has the privilege and responsibility to "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess 5:12-13)

- C. Each member has the privilege and responsibility to contribute financially to the Lord and His ministry here (2 Cor. 9:6-15).
- D. Each member has been given one or more spiritual gifts to be exercised for the common good of the body (Rom. 12:1-7; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:1-16). If a person is to have an official, SVCC recognized ministry, he or she must be a member of the church. All teachers and ministry leaders shall be members of the church for at least a year.
- E. Each member has the privilege and responsibility to participate in decisions being made as elders try to discern Christ's leading for His church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 15:22). Elders should seek input from the congregation, especially on more important decisions such as choosing of elders, choosing of deacons, sending of missionaries, discipline of members, major expenditures, etc.
- F. Members of this church have no personal rights to the church property upon termination of membership or while they are members of SVCC; they shall be entitled to no personal interest in the assets. In the event of dissolution of this corporation, its assets, after payment of liabilities, shall be distributed to "Northwest Independent Church Extension," 7920 44st Street West, P. O. Box 99787, Tacoma, WA 98499.
- G. Members of SVCC will not pursue legal action to sue elders, deacons, church staff or the corporation in connection with the performance of their biblical duties. Disagreement between members should be resolved in accordance with Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; and Rom. 14:19.

#### **SECTION 4 – THE DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS**

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Cor 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin and promoting purity (1 Tim 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Gal 6:1). The Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for flagrant sin or serious doctrinal error, with the goal of the restoration of the offender.

- A. **THE GOAL OF DISCIPLINE:** Gal. 6:1 instructs those who are spiritual to restore a person caught in any trespass to fellowship with Christ. "Any trespass" is defined as persistent disobedience to God's commands in the New Testament. In addition, we are instructed to avoid any brother or sister who leads an unruly life or any person who teaches not according to the truth of God's Word (Ex. 20:3-17; Matt. 5:17-20; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:14-3:5; Titus 3:9-11).
- B. **THE STEPS OF DISCIPLINE:** Discipline is entrusted to the Elder board and is to follow the biblical pattern as set forth in Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:7-8; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10-11; and 2 John 7-11. Any member of this church who practices or affirms a doctrine or conduct that, in the judgment of the Elder board, is opposed to the teaching of the Word of God, or is threatening to the testimony of this church, or is divisive to the body, shall be subject to church discipline. Discipline will follow the said biblical pattern, and is an effort to bring the individual to repentance and protect the church from unrepentant sin. Discipline may involve exclusion from participation in ministry and communion, as well as dismissal from the fellowship of this church. An individual may be disciplined by the elder board short of dismissal from the fellowship, as they deem appropriate for the specific circumstance (for example, an individual may remain in certain circumstances a member of this church but be denied the

privilege of serving in a particular ministry). The elder board, as is required by Scripture, may report to the congregation the names of those who have lost membership by reason of church discipline, and the reason for that discipline, as described in Matthew 18:15-20.

- C. **CHARGES AGAINST ELDERS:** A formal charge against an elder is not to be received by the elder board except on the basis of two or three witnesses. If, after establishing the truth of the accusation and finding the accused man unrepentant, the board will publicly rebuke those elders who are unrepentant and who hold fast to their sin (1 Tim. 5:20). At that time also, the remaining elder board members will decide whether or not this man should continue in office.
- D. **THE STEPS OF RESTORATION:** As stated above, the purpose of all discipline is to maintain purity in the body and to restore the individual involved in sin to fellowship with Christ and His church. Should a person under discipline become repentant, he or she should request a meeting with the elders. Upon their satisfactory examination, he will be presented to the congregation for their consideration. After a minimum two-week period, allowing for input from the congregation, the elders will decide whether or not to restore the errant person to membership and the congregation will be informed concerning this reinstatement (2 Cor. 2:5-8).
- E. **ATTEMPTS TO EVADE DISCIPLINE:** If a person under church discipline should leave to attend another local church, we may attempt, for the sake of this other congregation's well-being, to inform that church's leadership about his or her disciplined status and the reasons behind it. The members of this church knowingly agree that a member cannot unilaterally withdraw his or her membership in the midst of the disciplinary process. A member may only withdraw his or her membership if they are not the subject of a discipline proceeding at the time, or only after a disciplinary process, of which they are the subject, has been concluded as determined by the elder board of SVCC.

## **SECTION 5 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

Only active members are members of SVCC. We do not have inactive membership.

Membership shall thus be automatically terminated when:

1. A member joins another local church.
2. A member moves out of the local area, and is unable to attend services of the church.
3. A member is expelled from membership by action of church discipline (See Article V, Section 4B).
4. A member brings a lawsuit against the church and/or a fellow member of it.
5. A member engages in a blatantly sinful lifestyle, in defiance of our Statement of Faith.
6. A member is granted a letter of transfer to any church of like-minded faith at the discretion of the elders. Such a letter will not be sent if a member is under church discipline (See Article V, Section 4).
7. A member does not attend regular church services for a period of six consecutive months. Exceptions to this attendance requirement may be granted to students, shut-ins, missionaries, or those serving in the armed forces by a vote of the elders.

## **ARTICLE VI – GOVERNMENT**

## **SECTION 1 – THE ELDERS**

### **A. Qualifications**

Elders shall be men who desire to serve God by leading His people; men whose lives are characterized by all the Scriptural requirements as set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9; and men who have conscientiously accepted the Articles of Faith and the Constitution of SVCC.

### **B. Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Consistent with Scriptural statements, the Elders shall undertake the duties and responsibilities outlined in such passages as 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Eph. 4:12; Acts 20:28-31; Ezek. 34; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12. These responsibilities include teaching, guarding against false teaching, oversight, admonition, and general shepherding of the flock.
2. The elders will enact decisions by a unanimous consent of a quorum of the elder board; and a majority of the total elder board members must be present at a given meeting to constitute a quorum.
3. The elders should also be aware of and provide general direction to their oversight area's deacons and ministry teams, taking care to balance faithful oversight with the trust and freedom the latter need to carry out their ministries.
4. "Major decisions", requiring congregational input, include things like appointing elders or deacons, purchasing or selling church property (worth more than \$2000.00), building projects, church discipline (Article V, Section 4), or other decisions deemed necessary by the elders (Article V, Section 3).
5. In addition, the elder board, as an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church, shall constitute both the board of directors and the board of trustees of the corporation. Our corporation's fiscal year shall begin on January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. As part of their corporate responsibility, elders shall recognize that all records pertaining to the church are the property of the church and shall, upon resignation or removal from office, surrender all records in their possession. As trustees, the elders shall exercise, with the input of the congregation, the following specific powers:
  - a. To purchase, hold, lease, or otherwise acquire real and personal property on behalf of the church, and to take real and personal property by will, gift, or bequest on behalf of the church;
  - b. To sell, convey, alienate, transfer, lease, assign, exchange, or otherwise dispose of, and to mortgage, pledge, or otherwise encumber the real and personal property of the church, to borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purpose and use of the church; to cause to be executed, issued, and delivered for the indebtedness, in the name of the church, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, or other evidence of indebtedness; and to secure repayment by deeds of trust, mortgages, or pledges; and;
  - c. To exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the church corporation.

### **C. Selection and Term of Office**

1. We believe that the selection of elders is a process wherein there is an agreement of the Lord's leading by existing elders, the candidate himself (1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2, 5 – "a man"), and the congregation, that man shall be an elder.

2. Any man who evidences a maturity in Christ and a concern for the spiritual health of the flock as a whole, should ask the elders, or the elders should ask him, to explore eldership by attending elder meetings for a period of three months. Also, any member of the congregation can submit a name for consideration. During that period he should consider whether the Lord is leading him towards oversight, while at the same time the existing elders do the same.
3. If it seems evident, on the part of both parties, that the Lord is leading that man towards eldership, the elders will ask the congregation to pray and consider that man an elder candidate based on the qualifications of 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1. The elders will seek to obtain the congregation's input, either positive or negative, over a period of not less than one month (four Sundays), after which time the elders will make a final decision.
4. If all parties (the candidate, the current elders, and the members) are in positive agreement, he will be formally commissioned to an initial one-year term of office during a public church meeting.
5. If all parties are in positive agreement that this man's first, probationary year of eldership has been successful, he will be formally commissioned to an indefinite term of office during a public church meeting.
6. No man shall be considered as an elder candidate until he has been a member of the church for a minimum of one year. An exception to the above process would be made if a paid, teaching elder (a pastor) came to the church, but only if the church he comes from recognizes that he meets the qualifications of an elder (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1).

#### **D. Provision for Elders**

1 Timothy 5:17 makes provision for honoring (financially) those elders who rule well, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

#### **E. The Pastor**

1. The pastor is a paid, teaching elder who devotes himself full time to the ministry of SVCC and who serves an indefinite term.
2. In addition to satisfying the same qualifications and performing the same duties as the other elders, he shall:
  - i. Chair the elder board meetings, prepare agendas, and serve humbly as the primary leader of the elder board. A careful balance must be maintained, in that: a) he leads the board to address issues and enact decisions; b) he is an equal member of the board when it holds discussions and enacts decisions, and, like all the other elders, c) he is under the board's authority when carrying out its policies and decisions in his sphere of oversight on a day to day basis. He leads the elders; together, they lead the church as a team; individually, each elder is accountable to the whole board and is not to function as an independent operator.
  - ii. Supervise any other paid staff hired by the SVCC elder board, ensuring that staff members carry out the elder board's policies, decisions, and overall direction.
  - iii. Represent the church and act as its liaison to other churches and community organizations.

## **SECTION 2 – DEACONS**

### **A. Qualifications**

Deacons shall be those who have been members of SVCC for at least one year, and are able and desire to be servants of the local church body. They shall have conscientiously accepted the Articles of Faith and the Constitution of the church, and their lives will demonstrate adherence to all of the Scriptural requirements set for them in Acts 6:3 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

## **B. Duties**

1. It shall be the duty of those who serve as a deacon to undertake, with joy, the task (s) set before him or her, wherever possible utilizing a ministry team of committed, involved members with a shared passion for this task. It is the duty of deacons, and the ministry team(s) they lead, to serve the church body by meeting designated needs of congregation-wide importance. Specific needs requiring deacon qualifications (1 Tim. 3) will be determined by the elders according to the needs of the body. The elders shall delegate to the deacon and their ministry team the authority to recruit others, spend funds, and engage in other appropriate activities as the task requires.
2. Deacons in charge of short-range tasks (a construction project, developing a new ministry, etc.) shall report their team's progress in person once a month to their overseeing elder, who will then bring a report to the elder board. They shall also strive to keep the congregation updated on their team's progress at least three times a year.
3. Deacons in charge of long-range, ongoing tasks (promotion of prayer in the body, maintaining the building and grounds, conducting children's and youth ministries, etc.) shall report their team's progress in person once a month to their overseeing elder, who will then bring a report to the elder board. They shall also strive to keep the congregation updated on their team's progress at least three times a year.

## **C. Tenure**

Deacons shall be appointed to either a definite or an indefinite tenure consistent with the task they are entrusted with by the elders.

## **D. Appointment**

1. The need for appointing deacons may be recognized by a church member or elder at any time and brought to the elders for consideration. After consideration and determination that the need for a ministry is valid, it will be brought before the congregation with a request for nominations. Nominees must meet the scriptural qualifications (1 Tim. 3) and have a demonstrated ability to serve in that particular area of ministry. Self-nomination is allowed.
2. After nominations are received by the elders (not less than two weeks after the ministry need is presented), they, after evaluation, will present a list of candidates back to the congregation. If, after at least two weeks, there are no Scriptural objections, the candidate(s) will be commissioned as deacons at a public meeting of the church.
3. Termination of office may be effected by personal resignation, by church discipline (Article V, Section 4), by removal of membership, or by discontinuation of need and/or the successful completion of the assigned task.

## **SECTION 3 – THE CONGREGATION**

The congregation's role in church government involves input. This can include informal communication with the elders and/or deacons, the suggestion of candidates for offices of elder and deacon, filling out questionnaires or surveys submitted by the elders or deacons, etc.

Members are encouraged to communicate valid concerns and constructive suggestions to any elder or deacon who will, in turn, relay that information to the elder board and/or appropriate

ministry team. Elders and deacons, in turn, should seek input from the congregation, especially on major decisions (Article V, Section 3). In addition, there will be congregational meetings, called at the discretion of the elders, for the purpose of communication, including an annual business meeting to be held on the third Sunday of January during the Sunday School hour. All congregational meetings shall be preceded by two weeks' notice, and will be moderated by the elder board.

## **ARTICLE VII – TAX-EXEMPT PROVISIONS**

### **SECTION 1 – PRIVATE INUREMENT**

No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributed to its members, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in the furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article II (1 Tim. 6:8-10).

### **SECTION 2 – POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT**

No substantial part of the activities of the church shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. We will encourage, however, our members to exercise their First Amendment rights, to use their biblically-informed conscience when voting for candidates and issues, and to take a bold, unflinching stand for justice, morality, mercy, and truth—reflecting God's unchanging, holy character in the public sphere.

### **SECTION 3 – DISSOLUTION**

See Article V, Section 3

### **SECTION 4 – RACIAL NON-DISCRIMINATION**

The church shall have a racially nondiscriminatory policy and therefore shall not discriminate against members, applicants, students and others on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin.

### **SECTION 5 – DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS**

From time to time, the church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the elders. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article II.

## **ARTICLE VIII – SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES**

All Scriptural references in this document were taken from the New American Standard Bible.

## **ARTICLE IX – BINDING ARBITRATION**

### **SECTION 1 – SUBMISSION TO ARBITRATION**



Believing that lawsuits between believers are prohibited by Scripture, all members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration any matters which cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

## **SECTION 2 – NOTICE OF ARBITRATION**

In the event of any dispute, claim, question, or disagreement arising out of or relating to these bylaws or any other church matter, the parties shall use their best efforts to settle such disputes, claims, questions, or disagreements as befits Christians. To this effect, they shall consult and negotiate with each other in good faith and, recognizing their mutual interests not to disgrace the name of Christ, seek to reach a just and equitable solution. If they do not reach such solution within a period of sixty (60) days, then upon notice by either party to the other, disputes, claims, questions, or differences shall be finally settled by arbitration as described in Section 1 above, and such Procedures of Arbitration as are adopted pursuant to Section 4 below.

## **SECTION 3 – LIMITS ON ARBITRATION**

- A. Should any dispute involve matters of church discipline, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures for church discipline as outlined under Article V, Section 4, were followed.
- B. Should any dispute involve the removal from office of the pastor or any church officer, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures set forth in Article V, Section 4C, were followed.

## **SECTION 4 – ARBITRATION PROCEDURES**

The Procedures of Arbitration shall be as adopted by the elder board.

# **ARTICLE X – INDEMNIFICATION**

## **SECTION 1—ACTIONS SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION**

The church may indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including all appeals (other than an action by or in the right of the church) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee or agent of the church, against expenses, including attorneys' fees, judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding; and if that person acted in good faith and in a manner he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a pleas of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

## **SECTION 2—EXPENSES SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION**

If the extent that a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys' fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

### **SECTION 3—LIMITATIONS OF INDEMNIFICATION**

Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by the church only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 1 of this Article. The determination shall be made (a) by a unanimous vote of a quorum of the elder board consisting of elders who were not and are not parties to or threatened with the action, suit, or proceeding; or, (b) if the described quorum is not obtainable or if a quorum of disinterested elders so directs, by independent counsel in a written opinion.

### **SECTION 4—TIMING OF INDEMNIFICATION**

Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by the church as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the board of elders in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by the church.

### **SECTION 5—EXTENT OF INDEMNIFICATION**

The indemnification provided by this Article shall be deemed to be discretionary unless otherwise required as a matter of law or under any agreement or provided by insurance purchased by the church, both as to action of each person seeking indemnification under this Article in his official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding that office, and may continue as to a person who has ceased to be a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee or agent and may inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

### **SECTION 6—INSURANCE**

The church may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the church against any liability asserted against him and incurred by him in that capacity, or arising out of his status in that capacity, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify him against liability under the provisions of this Article.

## **ARTICLE XI – AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be revised or amended by a unanimous vote of a quorum of the elder board, in accordance with the procedures followed for making major decisions as outlined in Article VI, Section 1B, 4 and Section 3 (congregational input, two weeks' advance notice, etc.).

## **ADOPTION**

This Constitution was adopted by the unanimous consent of the elder board of SVCC, in accordance with the procedures followed for making major decisions as outlined in Article VI, Section 1B, 4 and Section 3.

This Constitution supersedes all other constitutions of SVCC, and, effective immediately, will serve henceforth as the revised by-laws of our corporation.

Date		

The Elders of Shoestring Valley Community Church

Revised 10/20/2015