

Bylaws  
Russian Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists  
West Sacramento

Russian Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists  
1000 Sacramento Ave  
West Sacramento, CA 95605  
2013 Revision

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## 1. Purpose of the Bylaws

### 1.1. Purpose.

These bylaws represent a collection of rules and regulations that shall govern the spiritual and organizational activity of the Russian Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists in West Sacramento (hereinafter called the church).

### 1.2. Scope of Authority. The scope of authority of the present bylaws is:

1.2.1. The legal foundation for the legitimacy of the church as well as the definition of the principles upon which the interaction between the church and state institutions shall occur.

1.2.2. Internal order of the spiritual life and organization of work within the church.

1.2.3. Relationship between the church and external religious and social organizations, as well as the church and private parties.

## 2. General Statements About the Church.

### 2.1. Principles.

The activity of the church is based upon the principles of voluntarism, equal rights of its members, self-government, legality, and open discourse.

### 2.2. Foundation.

The church is governed by the Bible (the canonical books of the Old and New Testament), as the final and complete revelation from God, and it acts in accordance with the doctrines of faith of Evangelical Christian Baptists and these bylaws. The church upholds the Biblical principle of respecting the US Constitution and laws of the country if they do not conflict with the Holy Scriptures.

### 2.3. Legal Status.

Legally, the church is a corporation. As such, it has all the rights and responsibilities in accordance with the US corporate laws. The church's round seal reads "Russian Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists. Incorporated Nov. 18, 1953. California."

### 2.4. Productive Activity.

The church is a religious nonprofit organization and it may engage in productive activity exclusively for the purposes of supplying for its own needs, charity, and missionary activity.

### 2.5. Responsibility.

The church shall be responsible for its own commitments. The church shall not be responsible for the commitments of its members. Church members shall not be responsible for the commitments of the church.

### 2.6. Legal Address of the Church.

Russian Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists  
1000 Sacramento Avenue  
West Sacramento, CA 95605

## 3. Articles of Faith.

### 3.1. Bible.

We believe the Bible as comprised of canonical books of the Old and New Testament to be God-inspired. It is the genuine Word of God, authoritative in its commandments, and the only true guide for faith and life. (Exodus 4:12; 2 Samuel 23:2; Psalms 119:160; Jeremiah 1:9; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

### 3.2. God.

We believe in the triune consubstantial God, eternal, unrestricted by space, perfect and

unchanging, manifesting Himself in three persons – Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalms 90:2; Genesis 17:3; Psalms 147:5; 139:7-12; Isaiah 40:28; 57:15; Malachi 3:6; Genesis 1:2; Hebrews 1:8)

3.3. Jesus Christ.

We believe that Jesus Christ is God's only-begotten Son and that He became incarnate through conception by the Holy Spirit and was born of a virgin. He redeemed the human race from sin through the shedding of His blood. He rose from the dead, ascended in glory, and He intercedes for believers before our Heavenly Father. (John 1:1, 14, 18; Hebrews 1:8, 13:8; Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20-25; Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:22, 24, 3:18; Romans 5:8-10; Matthew 28:6; Acts 2:24, 10:39-41, 17:31; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Acts 1:11; Ephesians 1:19-20; Revelation 1:18; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 6:20; 1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 7:25)

3.4. Holy Spirit.

We believe in the divine personhood of the Holy Spirit. He convicts the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment. He abides in believers, He guides them into all the truth, He empowers them for ministry, for a righteous life, and to resist sin. (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 3:3, 17; John 16:7, 13; 2 Corinthians 3:16; Galatians 4:6; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:1-4)

3.5. Creation.

We believe in the veracity of the biblical claim that creation is a creative act of the Creator. (Genesis 1:1, 21, 27; Exodus 20:11; Mark 10:6; Hebrews 1:10, 11:3)

3.6. Man.

We believe that man was created by God in God's own image and after God's likeness. As a consequence of his disobedience to God, man sinned, and became spiritually dead, and physically mortal. He became a slave to sin and is unable to free himself from this condition. (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7, 16-17, 3:1-7; Ephesians 2:1-3, 12; John 6:44; Romans 5:6)

3.7. Salvation.

We believe that a person is saved only by the mercy of God through faith in the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. He is our justification from all sins through His shed blood. By way of being born again a person becomes a child of God, partakes of eternal life, and acquires many spiritual blessings through Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:20-26; Acts 3:38-39; John 1:12-13, 3:4, 8, 16, 5:24; Ephesians 1:3)

3.8. Achieving Salvation.

We believe that believers' knowledge of their personal salvation is their privilege. We believe that God is strong enough to keep them from falling, yet walking in faith is necessary for a believer to accomplish their salvation and to grow spiritually. (1 John 3:14-15, 5:13; Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 10:12; Jude 24-25; Galatians 3:11; John 8:31; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Philippians 2:12; 1 Timothy 1:19)

3.9. Church.

We believe that the Church is Christ's Body consisting of people who have repented before God, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are born again, have received holy ordinance of water baptism, and are baptized by one Spirit into one Body. The Church has God's commission to preach the Gospel to all nations, teaching everyone to obey God's commandments. (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18; Acts 20:21; Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30, 16:31; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8, 2:41-42)

### 3.10. Authorities.

We believe that governments are established with God's approval and that they are endowed with power to protect the good and punish the evil. We consider it our duty to obey laws, unless such laws restrict our beliefs and our fulfillment of Christian duties. We also consider it to be our duty to pray for our government and people in authority, so that they are able to regard the interests of their citizens, to protect peace, and to serve justice.

We recognize that it is prohibited by the Scriptures to swear, yet a reverent and majestic calling on our God, as a witness of the truth (where it is legally required and given) is permissible in special instances. We recognize that military service is exclusively a matter of every individual Christian's conscience.

We recognize that a Christian may hold a job in any line of work unless the duties of such position contradict the principles of faith. The church shall not be involved in political activity, nor shall it participate in political movements, but may express its stance on existing and proposed laws. (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Matthew 22:21; Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; Matthew 5:34-37; Jacob 5:12; Romans 1:5; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20; Matthew 26:52; Genesis 9:6; Luke 3:12-14; Romans 16:23)

## 4. Purpose, Goals, and Forms of Church Activity.

### 4.1. Purpose.

The main purpose of the church is accomplishing God's plan of saving people from eternal damnation. (1 Timothy 2:4)

### 4.2. Goals.

The chief goals of the church in achieving the main purpose are:

- Worshipping God in spirit and truth and following His decrees in good conscience. (John 4:24);
- Exhorting one another in faith in accordance with the Scriptures;
- Spiritual counseling of church members, as well as all those who seek it;
- Evangelism, including missionary and charitable activity, as well as setting up branch churches, planting new churches and other activities;
- Discipleship and spiritual education.

### 4.3. Forms of Activity.

The main forms of church activity are:

- Holding regular open-door worship services and membership meetings in the house of prayer;
- Holding festive worship services to celebrate the following Christian holidays:
  - Christmas – Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
  - Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
  - Presentation of Jesus at the Temple;
  - The Annunciation;
  - Palm Sunday – Solemn Entry of Our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem;
  - Maundy Thursday;
  - Easter – Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
  - Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
  - Day of Pentecost – Outpouring of the Holy Spirit;
  - Transfiguration of Our Lord;

- Day of Harvest;
- Holding funeral services at the residence, funeral home, and/or at the cemetery (according to the will of the deceased or at relatives' request);
- Holding various church activities either on church property or elsewhere;
- Evangelistic outreach;
- Holding congresses, seminars, conferences, courses, schools, etc.;
- Publishing and educational activity, production of radio and TV broadcasts.

#### 4.4. Sacred Rituals.

In its worship practice the church utilizes the following kinds of sacred rituals (sacraments):

- Water Baptism;
- Lord's Supper;
- Laying on of Hands;
- Prayer with Anointing;
- Confession;
- Wedding Ceremonies;
- Blessing of Children.

##### 4.4.1. Water Baptism.

- 4.4.1.1. Water Baptism is a commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:19). It shall be administered to any individual who has sincerely repented and who is born again, who promises good conscience to God, and who wishes to become a member of the local church, and to join the Church of Christ.
- 4.4.1.2. Water Baptism shall be done by complete immersion in a water reservoir, either open or closed, followed by a prayer of blessing, and laying on of hands by a minister.
- 4.4.1.3. As a general rule, Water Baptism shall be administered to persons 16 years of age or older. Candidates under 16 years of age shall be considered by the church board on a case by case basis.

##### 4.4.2. Lord's Supper.

- 4.4.2.1. The Lord's Supper is administered by the senior pastor or by any minister who is ordained by way of laying on of hands, and who is acting on behalf of the senior pastor, and it is done in observance of the commandment of Jesus Christ. (Luke 22:19)
- 4.4.2.2. The Lord's Supper is observed by way of praying the prayer of blessing over bread (followed by breaking of the bread) and over a cup or cups with wine. All church members maintaining their Christian dignity may participate in the Lord's Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)
- 4.4.2.3. As a rule, the Lord's Supper is observed every first Sunday of the month as well as Maundy Thursday before Easter.

##### 4.4.3. Laying On of hands.

The laying on of hands is performed when ordaining members elected by the church for certain kinds of spiritual ministry in the local church (deacon, pastor, etc.).

##### 4.4.4. Prayer for the sick with anointing is performed by church pastors upon request. (James 5:14-15)

4.4.5. Any spiritual minister of the church (pastor, deacon – at the request of the confessant) may hear confession of any church member or any person, and must maintain the secrecy of the confession. (James 5:16)

4.4.6. Weddings.

The institution of marriage is established by God and is clearly described in the Bible (Genesis 1:27-28). The church recognizes marriage as the joining of one man (gender at birth) and one woman (gender at birth) in a lawful matrimonial relationship. The wedding ceremony with prayer and laying on of hands is conducted by the church pastor for a man and a woman, members of the church, who desire to enter into marriage relationship having maintained chastity and integrity before marriage (Hebrews 13:4). In all other cases of marriage between a man and a woman, words of guidance are given in accordance with the Holy Scriptures without the laying on of hands. Based on the biblical principles and the constitutional right of religious expression, the church, her representatives, ministers, employees, and church members do not participate in offering words of guidance and/or blessing of same-sex unions or same-sex marriages. Pursuant to these bylaws, the church building, property, the church premises and resources may not be used to hold such events.

4.4.7. Blessing of children with the laying on of hands is performed by ministers at the request of the parents in compliance with the example set by Jesus Christ. (Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 19:13-15)

5. Internal Order and Church Structure.

5.1. Membership.

5.1.1. Eligibility for Membership:

- Faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior;
- Repentance and being born again;
- Water Baptism by faith in Jesus Christ;
- Christian behavior in accordance with the precepts of the Holy Scriptures and the present bylaws;
- Commitment to membership in only one local church.

5.1.2. Accepting new converts as church members shall be done in the following order:

- Teaching them the basics of our doctrine as well as provisions of these bylaws;
- Examination by the church concerning the sincerity of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- Administering Water Baptism.

5.1.3. Accepting members arriving from other churches shall be done in the following order:

- Submitting an application for membership;
- Applicant making themselves familiar with the church bylaws, doctrine, and life of the church (attending orientation meetings for new church members);
- Interview with applicant conducted by minister(s) of the church. A minister shall schedule an appointment within one month from the date the application was submitted (having a proof of prior membership is recommended);
- The minister shall introduce the applicant at a membership meeting to be considered for acceptance as a new member;

- The applicant shall be accepted as a member of the church by the membership meeting via a majority vote of those present.

In certain circumstances, the matter of accepting a member may be decided at the pastors' council meeting or the church board meeting. The church reserves the right to deny the applicant acceptance as a member. Members of the church may not be individuals practicing any kind of intimate relationships outside those approved by God, and those being a marriage union between one man (gender at birth) and one woman (gender at birth) (Genesis 2:18-25; Romans 1:24-28; Leviticus 18; 1 Corinthians 7:2)

5.1.4. Ministers ordained by way of laying on of hands arriving from other churches shall be accepted with the rights of lay church members.

5.1.5. Withdrawing from church membership shall be handled as follows:

- The member shall submit an application to leave the church membership stating the reason;
- Interview with applicant shall be conducted by minister(s) of the church (a minister will schedule an appointment for the interview within two weeks from the date the application is submitted);
- The minister shall present the applicant (or the application) at a membership meeting or a general congregational meeting;
- The applicant shall be released from membership in the church at their own request.

A church member whose sin was exposed or who was brought to account for their behavior may not be released from church membership at their own request until their matter is fully resolved.

5.1.6. Rights and responsibilities of church members.

5.1.6.1. Church members have the following rights:

- They have a right to vote when deciding church issues as well as a right to participate in electing church ministers and leaders of church departments;
- They may participate in services and in governing the church according to standard procedure;
- They have a right to request information about the financial dealings of the church according to standard procedure;
- They have a right to turn to the church office (through the church secretary, in writing) for help in protecting their rights and legitimate interests that are established by these bylaws;
- They have a right to support the church financially and participate in other needs of the church;
- They have a right to voluntarily withdraw their membership from the church in accordance with these bylaws.

5.1.6.2. Church members have the following responsibilities:

- Spread the Gospel by word, deed, and practical living;
- Partake of the Lord's Supper regularly and in a worthy manner;
- Regularly attend worship services and membership meetings;
- Support the church's standing in the community;

- Carry out decisions made by membership meetings;
- Comply with the precepts of the present Bylaws;
- Regularly pay membership dues and participate in other financial needs.

## 5.2. Church Leadership.

5.2.1. Governance of the church is set upon the principle of autonomy, i.e. independence from the state, unions, associations, and similar organizations.

5.2.2. The church may become part of a union or similar association of the same denomination while maintaining its autonomy.

### 5.2.3. Church Membership Meetings.

5.2.3.1. A membership meeting is a meeting of church members presided by the senior pastor or an assistant pastor acting on behalf of the senior pastor or a person so assigned by the church board.

5.2.3.2. A membership meeting is the highest governing authority of the church. The meeting has the power to make decisions on any issues of church activity.

5.2.3.3. A regular membership meeting shall convene at least once every three months.

5.2.3.4. A special membership meeting may be called:

- By the senior pastor;
- By the church board;
- When requested by 10% or more of the church membership.

5.2.3.5. Decisions of the membership meeting concerning all matters shall be made in an open vote or by secret ballot. Decisions by the membership meeting shall be considered valid if voted for by a simple majority, i.e. 50% plus one vote of those present. Exceptions to those instances shall be elections and confirmation of elected individuals, amendments to the bylaws, and decisions concerning financial matters. For those decisions to be considered valid they must receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present. Those absent from membership meetings must adhere to the decisions approved by the members present.

5.2.3.6. The church secretary shall take minutes of the membership meeting, which shall be approved by the church board at its earliest meeting.

### 5.2.4. Church Board.

5.2.4.1. The church board shall be the governing body of the church during the time period between the membership meetings.

5.2.4.2. The senior pastor shall be the chairman of the church board.

5.2.4.3. The number of the church board members shall be based on the ratio of 15 persons per 1000 church members; however, the total shall not to exceed 35 persons.

5.2.4.4. In order to have a quorum, 2/3 of the church board members listed on its complete roster must be present.

5.2.4.5. Church board decisions concerning all issues shall be made by a show of hands or a secret ballot and shall be valid with a simple majority.

5.2.4.6. Members of the church board who have financial interest in the decisions made by the board may participate in the discussion but not in the vote.

5.2.4.7. Meetings of the church board shall be conducted by the senior pastor or one of the board members so confirmed by a show of hands of those present.

- 5.2.4.8. The church board shall report to the membership meeting and shall carry out its decisions.
- 5.2.4.9. The church board shall meet at least once a month.
- 5.2.4.10. The extended church board is an advisory body. It shall convene at the discretion of the church board, and it shall include all brethren involved in any ministry in the church.
- 5.2.4.11. The church secretary shall take minutes of all church board meetings and extended church board meetings. The minutes shall be read aloud and approved at the earliest meeting of the church board.
- 5.2.4.12. An abstract from the board meeting minutes regarding matters that concern an applicant may be issued to the applicant by the decision of the church board.
- 5.2.5. Senior Pastor.
- 5.2.5.1. The senior pastor shall be in charge of the church leadership, as well as in charge of the pastors' council and of the church board.
- 5.2.5.2. Responsibilities of the senior pastor:
- Organizing and conducting worship services;
  - Conducting membership and church board meetings;
  - Performing spiritual sacraments at the church;
  - Providing spiritual instruction to deacons, preachers, choir directors, youth leaders, and other spiritual ministers in the church;
  - Pastoral care for church members;
  - Representing the spiritual interests of the church and its members before government institutions;
  - Presenting to the church an annual report on his activities and the activities of the church board.
- 5.2.5.3. Areas of the senior pastor's authority:
- He shall have the right to request that church members answer for their behavior;
  - He shall have the right to probe into conflicts in the lives of church members or their families;
  - For the purposes of deciding doctrinal and spiritual matters arising in the church life the senior pastor shall have the right to create an expanded pastors' council consisting of some of the most respected pastors ordained by way of laying on of hands that will be presented to the membership meeting.
- 5.2.6. Assistant Pastors.
- 5.2.6.1. To provide adequate leadership, the church shall elect assistants to the senior pastor based on the ratio of at least one assistant pastor per 500 church members.
- 5.2.6.2. Of all those elected for the position of assistant pastor the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes shall become the deputy pastor.
- 5.2.6.3. The deputy pastor shall perform all functions of the senior pastor acting on instruction from him and at times of his absence.
- 5.2.6.4. The senior pastor shall delineate the scope of duties of the deputy pastor and assistant pastors, which shall then be made known to the church and to the church board.

- 5.2.6.5. The following persons together shall make up the pastors' council: the senior pastor, his deputy, and assistant pastors. The pastors' council shall draw up a strategy for the church's activity and development.
- 5.2.6.6. The pastors' council shall initiate elections of ministers.
- 5.2.7. Church Deacons.
- 5.2.7.1. Deacons shall be elected to provide spiritual counseling ministry in the church. The number of deacons shall be based on the ratio of at least 2 deacons per 100 church members.
- 5.2.7.2. The pastors' council shall delineate the scope of duties of deacons.
- 5.2.8. Church Deaconesses.
- 5.2.8.1. Deaconesses shall be elected to provide spiritual counseling ministry among sisters and to complete some specific tasks in the church (preparing the Lord's Supper, participation in baptisms, etc.).
- 5.2.8.2. The number of deaconesses shall be set by the church board depending on the needs of the church.
- 5.2.8.3. The pastors' council shall delineate the scope of duties of deaconesses.
- 5.2.9. The Church Committee.
- 5.2.9.1. The church committee is established by the church to be a liaison between the church and state agencies, businesses, social, and other organizations. The church committee is the executive body of the "Corporation of Russian Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists" and it shall consist of three persons.
- 5.2.9.2. Administrative, facilities, and financial matters of the church shall all be within the purview of the church committee.
- 5.2.9.3. The church committee shall consist of the committee chairman, the church secretary, and the treasurer.
- 5.2.10. Chairman of the Church Committee.
- 5.2.10.1. The committee chairman shall be elected by the church to provide leadership to the church committee.
- 5.2.10.2. Committee chairman's responsibilities:
- Representing interests of the church and its members before government agencies, account keeping on day-to-day operations, and performing other administrative and stewardship duties;
  - Preparing and signing all contracts and other administrative and stewardship documents approved by the church board;
  - Writing and signing checks cosigned by the treasurer as needed by the church according to the approved budget or a decision by the church board;
  - Providing an annual report to the church on his own activity and that of the church committee.
- 5.2.11. Secretary.
- The secretary shall be elected by the church to handle the clerical and record-keeping work of the church and the church board.
- 5.2.12. Treasurer.
- The treasurer shall be elected by the church to handle financial and accounting responsibilities.

#### 5.2.13. Auditing Commission.

- 5.2.13.1. An auditing commission consisting of at least three persons shall be elected by the church to audit cash transactions, accounting, inventory, financial dealings, etc.
- 5.2.13.2. The chairman of the auditing commission shall be elected by the church from among the commission members. This person shall be a member of the church board with a consultative vote.
- 5.2.13.3. The auditing commission shall report to the church membership and must submit its report to the membership meeting at least twice a year.

#### 5.2.14. Church Departments.

- 5.2.14.1. Various departments shall be created in the church to assist in reaching specific goals.
- 5.2.14.2. The church board shall delineate the goals, objectives, structure, and activities of departments.
- 5.2.14.3. To lead the departments, department heads shall be proposed by the church board pending confirmation by the membership meeting.
- 5.2.14.4. The church board shall generate a list of departments whose heads join the church board without going through election process pending confirmation by the membership meeting.

### 6. Procedure for Electing Ministers.

The church has the exclusive right to control the quantity and personal composition of its ministers. Any church member has the right to propose a candidate for any kind of ministry. Proposing oneself or insisting on one's own candidacy is considered immodest. Each elected position has an age requirement. In some cases, a candidate who does not meet the age requirement may be placed on the ballot upon a recommendation from the pastors' council. Discussing proposed candidates for any elected position shall be done in the candidate's absence.

#### 6.1. Nomination Committee.

- 6.1.1. The church board shall propose candidates for both the chairman and members of the nomination committee to be considered by the church. Their election shall occur in an open vote by simple majority of those present at the membership meeting.
- 6.1.2. The nomination committee shall monitor expiration of the term of office for all elected positions in the church and suggest that the church board set a timeframe to propose candidates and an election date.
- 6.1.3. The nomination committee shall receive nominations from church members during the stated window, process them in accordance with requirements of these bylaws, and report the results of its work to the church board.
- 6.1.4. After the church board reviews all the nominations, the nomination committee will present to the church the list of candidates for all elected positions in the church no later than two weeks prior to the election date.

#### 6.2. Church Board.

- 6.2.1. Any brother 25 to 70 years of age, capable of ministering actively and fruitfully, who has been a member of the church for at least one year, and who enjoys the respect and trust of the church, may be elected to be a member of the church board.
- 6.2.2. Members of the church board shall be elected for three-year terms with the possibility of subsequent reelection. To be placed on the ballot each candidate must have the support (in

terms of the number of nominating votes) of at least one percent of all the votes from the church membership roll.

- 6.2.3. The following officials elected by the church shall make the church board without going through an additional election: the senior pastor, the assistant pastors, committee chairman, secretary, chairman of the auditing commission, as well as heads of church departments as appointed by the church board and confirmed by the church.
- 6.2.4. The current church board will establish a one-month window to nominate candidate(s) to the church board no later than two months before the end of board members' terms.
- 6.2.5. Each candidate shall be considered by the church board which will then give the church recommendations regarding nominated candidates.
- 6.2.6. Elections shall occur at membership meetings by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive votes of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of those present.
- 6.2.7. The church board may recommend to the church removing church board member(s) from office – those deemed unsatisfactory in their ministry, those who behave in an unworthy manner, or who have had unexcused absences from more than 25% of meetings in a calendar year.

### 6.3. Senior Pastor.

- 6.3.1. Any brother who is a church member 30 to 65 years of age ordained by way of laying on of hands at the time of election, who has been in active ministry at the church for at least a year, and who meets the requirements set forth in the Holy Scriptures (1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9) may be elected senior pastor.
- 6.3.2. Each candidate nominated for senior pastor must have the support (in terms of the number of nominating votes) of no less than 3% of the membership roll to be placed on the ballot.
- 6.3.3. The church board shall consider all candidates and give the church recommendations on the nominated candidates.
- 6.3.4. The election shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive no less than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the votes of those present.
- 6.3.5. The election may take place in two rounds if necessary.
- 6.3.6. If after the second round, no candidate gets  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the votes, the church board shall again establish a one-month window for nomination(s) for senior pastor and set the date of subsequent elections.
- 6.3.7. The senior pastor shall report on his work annually. Once every two years after pastor's annual report, a vote shall be cast by secret ballot to extend his term of ministry. To continue his ministry he must receive no less than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the votes of those present.
- 6.3.8. If the current senior pastor did not receive the support of the church, then the deputy pastor shall become acting senior pastor. The church board shall establish a one-month window to nominate candidate(s) and set the date of subsequent elections for the senior pastor position.
- 6.3.9. If the elected senior pastor has not been ordained as a pastor then he shall be ordained by way of laying on of hands one year later.
- 6.3.10. Upon election of a new senior pastor, transfer of all business and documents from the previous pastor to the new one shall proceed with a direct involvement of the pastors' council.

### 6.4. Assistant Pastors.

- 6.4.1. Any brother who is a church member 25 to 70 years of age ordained by way of laying on of hands at the time of election, who has been in active ministry at the church for at least a year, and who meets the requirements set forth in the Holy Scriptures (1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9) may be elected assistant pastor.
- 6.4.2. Each candidate nominated for assistant pastor must have the support (in terms of the number of nominating votes) of no less than 2% of the membership roll to be placed on the ballot.
- 6.4.3. The church board shall consider all candidates and give the church recommendations on the nominated candidates.
- 6.4.4. The election shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
- 6.4.5. Assistant pastors shall report once every two years on their work. After the report, a vote shall be cast by secret ballot to extend their terms. To continue their ministry they must receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
- 6.4.6. If a current assistant pastor did not receive the support of the church, then the church board shall establish a one-month window to nominate candidate(s) and set the date of subsequent elections for the position of assistant pastor.
- 6.4.7. If the elected assistant pastor has not been ordained as a pastor then he shall be ordained by way of laying on of hands one year later.
- 6.5. Deacons and Deaconesses of the Church.
  - 6.5.1. Any brother who is a church member 25 to 65 years of age, who has been in active ministry at the church for at least a year at the time of election, and who meets the requirements set forth in the Holy Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:8-13) may be elected deacon.
  - 6.5.2. Each candidate nominated for deacon must have the support (in terms of the number of nominating votes) of no less than 1% of the membership roll to be placed on the ballot.
  - 6.5.3. The current church board shall establish a one-month window to nominate candidate(s) for the ministry of deacon and set the date of subsequent elections.
  - 6.5.4. The church board shall consider all candidates and give the church recommendations on the nominated candidates.
  - 6.5.5. The election shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
  - 6.5.6. Ordination by way of laying on of hands shall occur one year after the election.
  - 6.5.7. Any sister who is no younger than 60 years of age, who has been in active ministry at the church for at least a year at the time of election, and who meets the requirements set forth in the Holy Scriptures (1 Timothy 5:9) may be elected deaconess.
  - 6.5.8. The pastors' council will propose a candidate for the ministry of deaconess to be subsequently confirmed by the membership meeting.
  - 6.5.9. Confirmation shall occur at a membership meeting in an open vote and a candidate shall be considered elected if she receives no less than 50% of the votes of those present.
  - 6.5.10. Dedication of a deaconess for ministry shall be done through a prayer by the senior pastor without the laying on of hands.
- 6.6. Committee Chairman.

- 6.6.1. Any brother 25 to 65 years of age who possesses the necessary professional and spiritual qualities, and who has been a member of the church for no less than three years at the time of election may be elected committee chairman.
- 6.6.2. Each candidate nominated for committee chairman must have the support (in terms of the number of nominating votes) of no less than 2% of the membership roll to be placed on the ballot.
- 6.6.3. The church board shall consider all candidates and shall give the church recommendations on the nominated candidates.
- 6.6.4. The election shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
- 6.6.5. The committee chairman shall report on his work annually. Once every three years a vote shall be cast by secret ballot to extend his term of ministry. To continue his ministry he must receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
- 6.6.6. If the current committee chairman did not receive the support of the church, then the church board shall establish a one-month window to nominate candidate(s) for the ministry of committee chairman and set the date of subsequent elections. The committee chairman who did not receive a vote of confidence from the church to carry on his ministry will continue to temporarily fulfill his duty under direct supervision from the pastors' council until a new chairman is elected, and will retain an advisory vote on the church board.
- 6.6.7. Upon election of a new committee chairman, transfer of all business and documents from the previous chairman to the new one shall proceed with a direct involvement of the church board.
- 6.7. Secretary.
  - 6.7.1. Any brother 25 to 65 years of age who possesses the necessary professional and spiritual qualities, and who has been a member of the church for no less than three years at the time of election may be elected secretary.
  - 6.7.2. Each candidate nominated for secretary must have the support (in terms of the number of nominating votes) of no less than 1% of the membership roll to be placed on the ballot.
  - 6.7.3. The church board shall consider all candidates and shall give the church recommendations on the nominated candidates.
  - 6.7.4. The election shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
  - 6.7.5. The position of the secretary elected by the church for his ministry shall be subject to confirmation every three years. The secretary shall report on his work once every three years. After his report a vote shall be cast by secret ballot to extend his term of ministry. To continue his ministry he must receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
  - 6.7.6. If the current secretary did not receive the support of the church, then the church board shall establish a one-month window to nominate candidate(s) for the ministry of secretary and set the date of subsequent elections. The secretary who did not receive a vote of confidence from the church will continue to temporarily fulfill his duty until a new secretary is elected, and will retain an advisory vote on the church board.
  - 6.7.7. Upon election of a new secretary, transfer of all business and documents from the previous secretary to the new one shall proceed with a direct involvement of the church board.
- 6.8. Treasurer.

- 6.8.1. Any person 25 to 65 years of age who possesses the necessary professional and spiritual qualities, and who has been a member of the church for no less than three years at the time of election may be elected treasurer.
- 6.8.2. Each candidate nominated for treasurer must have the support (in terms of the number of nominating votes) of no less than 1% of the membership roll to be placed on the ballot.
- 6.8.3. The church board shall consider all candidates and shall give the church recommendations on the nominated candidates.
- 6.8.4. The election shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
- 6.8.5. The treasurer shall report annually on his work. Once every three years after his annual report, a vote shall be cast by secret ballot to extend his term. To continue his ministry he must receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
- 6.8.6. If the current treasurer did not receive the support of the church, then the church board shall establish a one-month window to nominate candidate(s) for the ministry of treasurer and set the date of subsequent elections. The treasurer who did not receive a vote of confidence from the church will continue to temporarily fulfill his duties, under the committee chairman's supervision, until a new treasurer is elected.
- 6.8.7. Upon election of a new treasurer, transfer of all business and documents from the previous treasurer to the new one shall proceed with a direct involvement of the church board and the auditing commission.
- 6.9. Auditing Commission.
  - 6.9.1. Any person 25 to 65 years of age who possesses the necessary professional qualities, and who has been a member of the church for no less than three years at the time of election may be elected a member of the auditing commission.
  - 6.9.2. Members of the church board as well as heads of church departments may not be elected to be on the auditing commission.
  - 6.9.3. The auditing commission shall be elected by the church with the possibility of a subsequent reelection if necessary.
  - 6.9.4. The church board shall consider and recommend candidates to fill positions of the chairman and of members of the commission.
  - 6.9.5. The election shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected if they receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.
- 6.10. Department Heads.
  - 6.10.1. Any person 25 to 65 years of age who possesses the necessary professional and spiritual qualities, and who has been a member of the church for no less than a year at the time of election may be elected head of a church department.
  - 6.10.2. As to the departments whose heads make the church board, candidates for department heads shall be considered and recommended to the church by the church board in conjunction with the respective department. As to the departments whose heads don't make the church board, their candidates shall be considered and confirmed at a church board meeting.
  - 6.10.3. Confirmation of department heads, members of the church board, shall occur at a membership meeting by secret ballot and a candidate shall be considered elected for a three-

year term with the possibility of subsequent reelection if they receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present.

6.10.4. A department head shall report annually on his work to the church board. To continue his ministry he must receive no less than 2/3 of the votes of those present at a church board meeting.

6.10.5. Upon election of a new department head, transfer of all business and documents from the previous department head to the new one shall proceed with a direct involvement of the church board and, if necessary, the auditing commission.

## 7. Church Discipline.

Church discipline is based on biblical teachings and it includes rules of conduct in the church, in the family, and in society.

7.1. Family. Family is the most important place for Christian upbringing. Husband is the head of family. He is responsible for spiritual and economic well-being of the whole family. Spiritual and physical measures of upbringing in the family must comply entirely with the Holy Scriptures and evangelical norms of life in accordance with the church doctrine. Children must obey their parents in the Lord and respect them (Ephesians 6:1-2). Issues of sexual education of children are an exclusive right of their parents (Proverbs 22:6, 13:24).

7.2. The Church is the house of God, where principles and rules of conduct, in harmony with Scriptural norms and precepts of these bylaws must be respected.

Church members must follow rules of decency in their clothing (2 Timothy 2:9).

The church has the right to:

- Demand an explanation from church members concerning their behavior at home, in the family, in the church, at work, and in public places;
- Investigate conflicts of church members or their families;
- Take measures of church discipline towards church members who have violated biblical principles in order to return them to the Christian way of life.

7.3. Violations. The following things shall constitute a violation of biblical principles: slandering, lying, drunkenness, smoking, drug use, foul language, malicious talk, rowdiness, fornication, adultery, divorces, homosexual marriages and other sexual misconduct (Leviticus 18:22-30; Romans 1:26-32), abortions, marriage to people, who do not share the evangelical doctrine or openly denounce it, practicing occultism of any kind (Deuteronomy 18:9-12), etc.

7.4. Disciplinary Measures. The church shall have the right to apply measures of spiritual discipline to church members who have broken biblical, church, or moral principles of life and behavior. The church may use the following disciplinary measures: admonishment, rebuke, prohibition, probation, and excommunication (Matthew 18:15-17).

7.4.1. Admonishment (1 Thessalonians 5:11) – a call to correction with instruction.

7.4.2. Rebuke (Ephesians 5:11) – pointing out unchristianlike behavior or a sin that is being committed.

7.4.3. Pastoral prohibition followed by a notification of the pastors' council (2 Timothy 4:2).

7.4.4. Church probation (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

7.4.4.1. A church member who is on probation may not participate in any ministry in the church or on behalf of the church. He must refrain from partaking of the Lord's Supper and he shall lose his right to be present at membership meetings.

- 7.4.4.2. The duration of the probation, from 1 to 6 months, shall be determined by the church membership meeting and shall be set on an individual basis.
- 7.4.4.3. If the church member does not repent and correct his behavior within the assigned term of the probation, he then shall be subject to excommunication.
- 7.4.5. Excommunication from the church (1 Corinthians 16:22).  
Acting upon a recommendation from the pastors' council, the church board shall consider the issue of excommunicating a church member and shall render a decision on the matter. The decision of the church board shall then be made known to the church. In special cases, (like excommunicating groups of people, excommunicating ministers, etc.) an excommunication matter arising from a church board recommendation shall be considered by the church and a decision shall be made in an open vote of those present at the membership meeting where a simple majority shall decide the matter.
- 7.4.5.1. An excommunicated church member shall be removed from the membership roll and may not perform any ministry in the church or on behalf of the church. He shall lose his right to partake of the Lord's Supper and to be greeted.
- 7.4.6. Relieving from ministry.
- 7.4.6.1. Any minister (pastors, deacons, church board members, and other church members who minister in the church) may be relieved of the ministry.
- 7.4.6.2. Reasons for relieving of ministry may be: sin, causing a schism in the church, deviation into heresy, failure to comply with the requirements of the Holy Scriptures (1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9), unsatisfactory performance in ministry, health reasons, and a person's own desire.
- 7.5. Termination of Church Membership.
- 7.5.1. The issue of removing a person's name from the membership roll shall be taken up by the church board and the outcome shall be made known to the church.
- 7.5.2. Reasons for removal from the membership roll may be:
- Lack of partaking of the Lord's Supper in the church for more than six months;
  - Regularly missing church services for more than six months;
  - Leaving the church without notice for more than six months.
- 7.5.3. The church member whose name was removed from the membership roll shall not be given a letter of recommendation.
- 7.6. Restoration of Church Membership.
- 7.6.1. The main requirement for restoring membership shall be repentance of one's sin(s) or violation(s) as well as applying to the senior pastor with a request for restoring membership.
- 7.6.2. The senior pastor shall consider the application and shall bring it up at a pastors' council meeting within one month.
- 7.6.3. Should both the pastors' council and the church board so recommend the applicant will be presented by a minister at a membership meeting for his status as a church member to be restored.
- 7.6.4. The applicant's status as a church member will be restored by decision of the membership meeting (in an open vote, by 2/3 of votes of those present). After being restored as a member the applicant will be allowed to enter ministry no sooner than one year later per decision of the pastors' council.

7.6.5. A minister ordained by way of laying on of hands and later excommunicated for sin shall be restored as a lay member and shall not be allowed to perform any spiritual ministry.

## 8. Property, Financial, and Stewardship Activity.

### 8.1. Managing Assets.

The church is in charge of managing all its assets, real estate, and movable property.

Membership meeting authorizes the church board to manage and control church resources and assets.

### 8.2. Church Assets.

The church assets derive from the following sources:

- membership dues;
- voluntary donations of church members, private individuals, and wills;
- voluntary donations from churches, nonpolitical organizations (this requires approval from the church board);
- revenue from publishing activity and enterprises owned by the church;
- other sources not prohibited by the current legislation of the US.

8.2.1. All donated funds shall be nonrefundable.

8.2.2. The church may not be sponsored by the state or political organizations.

### 8.3. Expenses.

8.3.1. Church funds shall be spent on: employee salaries, payments for properties, reimbursement of expenses incurred while engaging in activities provided for in these bylaws, construction, acquisition of necessary property, missionary, charitable, and other goals that do not conflict with these bylaws.

8.3.2. Special church funds shall be created in order to regulate and make financial expenditures purposeful.

8.3.3. Special church funds shall be established or eliminated by the church board depending on the needs and activities of the church.

8.3.4. The church board shall put together an annual budget which shall be approved by the membership meeting by a simple majority in an open vote.

8.3.5. Monetary assets of the church shall only be spent to achieve goals set forth in these bylaws and may not be distributed among members.

8.4. Special-Purpose Gifts. All donors, sponsors, and testators reserve the right to make special purpose donations to various church funds.

8.5. Church Property. Church property may include buildings, structures, articles intended for religious use, facilities intended for manufacturing, social, charitable, educational, and cultural use, monetary resources, and other property that is necessary to carry out church activities within the framework of these bylaws.

8.6. Property in Other Countries. The church may own property in other countries.

8.7. Hiring Help. Whenever necessary, the church may hire workers through a labor agreement (contract). Only members of the church may be hired as staff.

8.8. Paid Positions. The church may hire ministers as well as administrative and stewardship workers. Terms of employment and monthly salary amount shall be suggested by the church board and confirmed by the membership meeting via a secret ballot vote requiring a 2/3 majority of those present.

- 8.9. Salary Changes. All salary changes shall be considered by the church board and confirmed by the membership meeting via a secret ballot vote requiring a 2/3 majority of those present.
- 8.10. Financial Reporting. After a review by the church board, the treasurer shall regularly (at least twice a year) inform the church about financial activities of the church and the state of its finances.
9. Branch Churches and Daughter Churches.
  - 9.1. When the spiritual need arises, and when recommended by the church board, the church may decide to open or close a branch or a daughter church. The church shall also consider and confirm leadership positions, form of governance, initial composition of the church board (in case of a daughter church), membership, budget, and other spiritual and organizational matters. Confirmation must occur at a membership meeting in an open vote via 2/3 of the votes of those present.
  - 9.2. The leader of branch or daughter church shall answer to the pastor of the mother church and its church board.
  - 9.3. Branch churches or daughter churches shall be governed by the present bylaws of the mother church until the status of an independent church is obtained.
10. Amendments to the Bylaws.
  - 10.1. When the need arises, the church board shall initiate the process of amending the present bylaws. To achieve this goal, the church board shall create a commission and appoint its chairman. The commission shall consider and process recommended amendments to the bylaws and inform the church board thereof.
  - 10.2. The decision to amend the present bylaws shall be made by the membership meeting via a secret ballot by 2/3 of the votes of those present, and must be recorded in a lawful manner.
11. Dissolution.
  - 11.1. Decision Concerning Church Dissolution. The activity of the church may be terminated by decision of the membership meeting via a secret ballot by 2/3 of the votes of those present.
  - 11.2. Dissolution Commission. The membership meeting shall establish a dissolution commission and confirm its composition in an open vote by 2/3 of the votes of those present. The dissolution commission shall assume complete authority in governing the church's affairs.
  - 11.3. Property Distribution. Per decision of the dissolution commission, rented church property shall be returned to its former owners. Monetary assets and property that belonged to the church and that are left over after the creditors' demands are satisfied are to be transferred to an associated church or to the association the church used to belong to. Church property and monetary assets may not be divided among members of the church or other parties.