

The River Community Church

CONSTITUTION  
AND BY-LAWS

**The River Community Church**

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## CONSTITUTION

### I HISTORICAL NOTES

On June 26, 1949, a group of 19 individuals met for a potluck dinner and organizational meeting at the home of Carroll and Phyllis Wood. The original congregation began meeting in a rented room in the Iowa City Community Building, located on the northeast corner of the intersection of College and Gilbert streets.

Property for the first church building was purchased in October, 1951 with the help of the Baptist General Conference. In July, 1953, a 30' x 60' building was begun with volunteer labor

at 1839 B Street. God's perfect timing allowed use of one room of the new building's basement by early winter of 1953, the same winter that the Community Building burned down. The church was dedicated to the Lord in September, 1956. An educational wing was added to the B Street building in 1963.

By 1973 Bethany had outgrown its facilities. Property was purchased at 3001 Muscatine Avenue (at Dover Street) and a new building was begun. The next year (1974) saw the Bethany congregation move into the new partially finished facility, with much work remaining to be done. Carpeting and permanent pews were installed in 1980. Continued improvements have made the present facility a more effective place for the building of God's kingdom.

Average Sunday morning worship attendance for 1999/00 was 142. Attendance has been up and down over the past 15 years with a peaks of 221 (1983) and 203 (1994).

The Pastors who have served at Bethany have been:

Leonard Thompson, Pastor	January 1950 - December 1952
Leonard Goranson, Pastor	January 1953 - August 1957
Garland Hudson, Pastor	November 1957 - November 1961
Frank Doten, Pastor	April 1962 - September 1968
Robert Anderson, Pastor	January 1969 - August 1974
E. Robert Petersen, Pastor	August 1974 - September 1989
Mario Padilla, Youth Pastor	September 1978 - March 1987
Stan Rendahl, Interim Pastor	October 1989 - March 1990
Jon Meredith, Youth Pastor	August 1992 - May, 1999
Gail Mitchell Associate Pastor	May 1988 – June 2013
Jarol Duerksen, Pastor	April 1990 - February, 2000
Eric Hahn, Youth Pastor	November 1999 – March 2007
Steve Good, Youth Pastor	July 2007 – December 2014
Craig Holmes, Pastor	August 2001 – June 2007
Dave Conrads, Teaching Pastor	July 2007- June 2013
Gail Mitchell, Executive Pastor	July 2007 – March 2014
Tyler Mollenkamp, Student and Family Ministry	March 2015 – November 2018
Joshua Tilley, Lead Pastor	March 2014 - Present

On January 29, 2002 the name of the church was changed from Bethany Baptist Church to The River Community Church, and this Operations Manual was approved.

## II AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

1. **THE WORD OF GOD.** We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct (II Timothy 3:16-17; Psalms 19:7; II Peter 1:21).
2. **THE TRINITY.** We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption (Isaiah 45:21-22; Jeremiah 10:10; Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-14; John 14:16; Matthew 3:17).

3. **GOD THE FATHER.** We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each person, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ (John 4:24; I John 1:5; 4:8; Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 6:3; John 17:3, Genesis 17:1; Romans 8:32; I John 4:10; Isaiah 55:6; Hebrews 7:25).
4. **JESUS CHRIST.** We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth (John 1:14-18; Matthew 1:18; Galatians 4:4; I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Acts 1:10-11).
5. **THE HOLY SPIRIT.** We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher, and guide. We believe that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers for the building up of the body of Christ. (John 16:8-11; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7; 13-15, I Corinthians 12:7).
6. **REGENERATION.** We believe that all men are sinners by nature and by choice, and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Romans 3:23, 6:23; John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Ephesians 1:13-14).
7. **THE CHURCH.** We believe in the universal church, a spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work, and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19-22; Acts 2:41-42; 14:27).

8. **CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.** We believe that Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ (Romans 5, 6, 7 & 8; Galatians 5:16-25).
9. **THE ORDINANCES.** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:13-17; John 3:26; 4:1-2; Matthew 28:19-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26).
10. **RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.** We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by ecclesiastical or political authority; and that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other (John 1:12-13; Acts 4:18, 5:29, 6:3-6, 13:2-4, 15:2, 22-31).
11. **THE LAST THINGS.** We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal joy of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked (I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Acts 1:10-11; Revelation 20; I Corinthians 15).
12. **CHURCH COOPERATION.** We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether it is the Conference or a district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary independent basis (Acts 15).

Adopted by the Baptist General Conference 1951, amended 1987, reaffirmed 1990, and amended 1998, added 2001 by BGC

### III OUR COVENANT

As individuals who, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and by the witness of others, have received Jesus Christ as Savior, confessed Him as Lord, and been baptized, we now corporately covenant (promise) to be a church that honors God in our ministry to each other and those without Christ. Instructed by God's Word and led by the Holy Spirit, we commit to the following:

**Personal Purity:** Our connection with the Lord is the source of everything we have to give to others, and Jesus made it clear: "Apart from Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). A yielded heart is a powerful tool in God's hands. We are convinced that our own personal purity and spiritual maturity are the greatest gifts we can bring to each other; therefore, we will diligently seek God and submit to His Spirit daily.

**Authentic Relationships:** It does no good to keep one part of our body healthy if we continually mistreat another. The unhealthy part can jeopardize the well being (and even the very life) of the strong parts. Our relational world is a lot like our physical body – we cannot afford to neglect any part of it and think it will have no adverse effect on other parts of our lives. We take Paul's admonition seriously: "So far as it is up to you, be at peace with all men" (Rom.12:18). We will pursue honorable and loving relationships with each other and all people. We will seek reconciliation in strained relationships.

**Loyalty to Our Mission:** We commit to obey the Great Commandment and the Great Commission:

Great Commandment – "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."  
(Matthew 22:37-40)

Great Commission – "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."  
(Matthew 28:19-20)

As members of this body we will contribute our time, talents, and treasures, in response to God's leadership, so that His plans and purposes for this church can go forward.

**Serving Others:** When Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He not only wanted to show His love toward them – He pointed out a profound implication of His actions. He asked, "Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:12-15). We will seek to serve more than to be served.

If or when we move from this body, we will as soon as possible unite with another local church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## **IV GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **What we Value**

As God expands His kingdom, our collaboration must be guided by biblical views of authenticity, justice, and humility.

#### **Scripture:**

The Word of God is the foundation for what we believe and how we act.

#### **Authenticity:**

We strive to be real, honest, and live by our convictions.

#### **Justice:**

We aspire to pursue both justice and equality.

#### **Humility:**

We seek to grow in knowledge and wisdom because we all have a lot to learn.

### **Mission: Why we exist**

River Community Church exists to benefit our neighbors and our community. We desire to focus our efforts on promoting a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the well-being of people and the health of our community. We are for you.

### **Vision: Where we are going**

The River Community Church aspires to be a congregation of at least 225 by the year 2030, which ministers to people by preaching and teaching God's Word, helping the needy, and actively supports the planting of new churches.

### **Strategy: How we'll get there**

#### **GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

We GATHER in community to praise Jesus and encourage one another in order to grow.

#### **GROW THROUGH GOD'S WORD**

We GROW in faith and maturity as we study the Bible (God's Word) and embrace our God-given gifts in order to go.

#### **GO OUT TO MAKE DISCIPLES**

We GO to share the Gospel, help our community, and invite people to gather with us so they can experience God's love.

## **V ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION (Constitution)**

Adopted July 29, 1964 (Revised February 8, 1976; July 12, 1978; July 11, 1988; April 8, 1992; July 20, 1999, and January 29, 2002)

### ARTICLE I

This association is incorporated as a corporation not for pecuniary profit, under and by virtue of Chapter 504 of the 1962 Code of the State of Iowa and Acts of the General Assembly amendatory thereto.

### ARTICLE II

The name of this corporation shall be The River Community Church (formerly doing business as Bethany Baptist Church), and its principal place of business shall be at Iowa City, Johnson County, Iowa.

### ARTICLE III

The purpose of this corporation is to establish, provide for, and maintain a place for religious worship at Iowa City, Iowa, for persons affiliated with The River Community Church, and for such purposes, to acquire, manage, and control such property as may be necessary, required, or desirable for the use and benefit of such organization; further to provide for the salvation of souls and the edification of Christians through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the teaching of God's Word, the Bible, and the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, in the Iowa City area, in the United States, and in a world-wide ministry through missionary representatives.

### ARTICLE IV

The corporation may acquire, own, hold, and sell and convey real estate and personal property, establish trusts for the purposes of this corporation, and accept and receive grants, gifts and donations and funds and property in conformity with the laws of the State of Iowa, and not in conflict with these Amended and Substituted Articles of Incorporation. It may adopt policies and procedures, and authorize the adoption of policies and procedures by the Board of Elders hereinafter provided for, and do any and all things proper and necessary to effectuate the purposes of the corporation.

### ARTICLE V

The corporate life of this corporation shall be in perpetuity, unless sooner dissolved by 3/4 vote of 3/4 of the active members of corporation present, or by Act of the General Assembly of the State of Iowa, or by operation of law.

### ARTICLE VI

The business of the corporation (see Article IV) shall be managed by the church and its duly elected board.

### ARTICLE VII

The corporate officers of the River Community Church shall consist of the following:

- President: who shall be the Chairman of the Elder Team.
- Secretary: who shall be appointed by the Elder Team.
- Treasurer: who shall be appointed by the Elder Team.

Term of Service: The corporate officers shall serve at the will of the Elder Team and be affirmed by vote of the congregation at the annual meeting in conjunction with the budget. Every three (3) years, he/she has the option of taking a year for a sabbatical.

Bonding: The church shall provide for bonding of the three church officers.

Qualifications: To be a corporate officer in this church, a person must be an active member. The President shall meet the qualifications of an Elder as defined in the By-Laws. (See BY-LAWS, B. CHURCH LEADERSHIP, 1. ELDER TEAM, B. Qualifications)

The Secretary and Treasurer shall meet the requirements stated in qualifications for Deacon/Deaconess. (See BY-LAWS, B. CHURCH LEADERSHIP, 2. DEACON/DEACONESS, B. Qualifications)

Duties:

The President shall provide general supervision, direction and control of the business, activities and officers of this corporation.

The Secretary shall foster communication and ensure proper management and utilization of important organizational records.

The Treasurer shall oversee the management and reporting of an organization's finances

The President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the corporation shall execute in the name of the corporation all instruments affecting real estate and other property, including deeds and mortgages, and all releases of mortgages, liens, judgments, or other claims that are required by law to be made of record.

#### ARTICLE VIII

This corporation shall have a corporate seal in order to identify official church documents.

## BY-LAWS

### A. MEMBERSHIP

#### 1 ADMISSION

Any person may become a member of this church who trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, has been baptized by immersion, subscribes to the Church Covenant and the Affirmation of Faith, and has been interviewed by at least one Elder and approved by the Elder Team.

#### 2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

Conduct: Members shall endeavor to live in accordance with God's written Word and our Church Covenant. The members of the church should conduct themselves in a way that brings glory to God and use their gifts to minister to others, both within the church and outside the church. All members are subject to the principles and practices of biblical church discipline.

Cooperation: All members shall endeavor to preserve the unity of the church so as not to disrupt the fellowship of the church.

#### 3. MEMBER STATUS

Active Members: 1) An active member is one who fulfills his/her responsibilities, and who supports the Church by regularly attending worship services, giving financially, praying, and using his/her spiritual gifts.

2) All active members of the church, eighteen years of age or older, shall constitute the voting body of the church. 3) Only active members of the church may be corporate officers, Elders, Deacons/Deaconesses, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Recorder or serve on the Leadership Team.

Inactive Members: Any member who has not shown active interest shall be placed in either inactive status or dropped from the rolls, as determined by the Leadership Team. Neither inactive nor dropped individuals shall have the rights, privileges, or status of a member.

Reinstatement: Anyone who is not an active member but was previously an active member may apply to the Elders to be reinstated as an active member.

#### 4 TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

##### 1. Resignation

A member may terminate his/her membership by resignation.

##### 2. Removal

God has given a mandate to the leaders of His church to lovingly and firmly shepherd the members of the local church to help them to stay in step with the grace of the gospel and the Lordship of Jesus. Sometimes, this requires protecting the overall flock when one member's conduct threatens it. We do this through church discipline. Church discipline has the goal of admonishing and assisting a member to turn away

from harmful behavior and embrace God's forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. A person's membership may be terminated by the Elder Team for just cause related to Church Discipline. (See: Appendix 1: Church Discipline)

It shall be the responsibility of the Elders to ensure that an effort is being made to contact members who have not shown active interest. After the Elders have determined that a person is no longer interested in the ministry of our church, that person will be dropped from the membership rolls.

## **B. CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

### **1. ELDER TEAM**

#### **A. Definition and Responsibilities**

The Elders are spiritually mature men<sup>1</sup> who are ultimately responsible for the welfare and spiritual direction of the River Community Church. They shepherd the congregation by fulfilling the following responsibilities:

- teach the Word of God both formally and informally;
- uphold the church in prayer;
- care for people;
- visit the sick;
- keep spiritually attuned to where the Holy Spirit is leading the Church;
- direct matters of overall vision of the church;
- devote themselves to keeping the Church theologically pure and culturally relevant;
- conduct worship services, administering the ordinances of the Gospel;
- handle matters of church discipline and conflict resolution;
- plan, schedule, and provide a moderator for business meetings;
- with deacons, give input into, review, and recommend for approval the annual operating budget;
- administer the business affairs of the Church that pertain to its material assets.
- supervise the preparation of the various ministry budgets;
- annually evaluate and establish the salary of other staff members in conjunction with the review done by the Lead Pastor; and
- oversee the operation of at least one ministry directed by a deacon.

#### **B. Qualifications:**

An Elder:

- Is an active member in good standing, regularly attending the River Community Church for at least 1 year;
- Agrees with the Constitution and By-Laws of the River Community Church;
- Models an understanding of biblical servant leadership (Matthew 20:25-28); and
- Is a man of at least 25 years of age who fulfills the following biblical qualifications:

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer<sup>[a]</sup> must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,<sup>[b]</sup> sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not*

*violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*  
*1 Timothy 3:1-7(ESV)*

*This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife,<sup>[a]</sup> and his children are believers<sup>[b]</sup> and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer,<sup>[c]</sup> as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound<sup>[d]</sup> doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. Titus 1:5-9 (ESV)*

<sup>1</sup> We consider a spiritually mature man to be one who is regularly engaged with the Word of God and prayer, treats people with fairness and grace, uses his gifts to build up others, gives witness to the work of God in his life and is generous with his resources donating at least 1/10 of his income to the Church.

#### C. Team structure

The Elder Team shall strive to maintain a total of 3 to 12 members depending on the size and needs of the congregation.

The Elder Team Chair and the Assistant Chair will be voted on by the Elder Team members every 2 years and affirmed by a majority vote of the Team.

#### D. Term of service

Elders shall serve for a term of 3 years. After completion of one term, he may serve an additional 3-year term upon approval of the Elder Team and re-confirmation by the congregation at the annual meeting. After taking a one-year sabbatical, he may serve an additional 2 terms. A sabbatical will be taken after every 2 terms.

#### E. Meetings

The Elder Team shall meet at least once per quarter or regularly as it deems necessary to conduct the oversight and business of the church.

Special meetings of the Elder Team may be called by any member of the Team after having consulted with the Lead Pastor and having received the agreement of at least 1 other member of the Elder Team.

## 2. DEACON/DEACONESS

### A. Definition and Responsibilities

A Deacon/Deaconess is a man/woman who is an active member in good standing, has demonstrated Godly character, identified his/her spiritual gifts, and desires to employ those gifts in leading a specific ministry of the Church. He/She leads a ministry by fulfilling the following responsibilities:

- identifies a practical need in the Church or community;

- aligns the ministry with the Church Affirmation of Faith, Vision and Core values;
- recruits appropriately gifted people to form a team to carry out the work;
- creates an action plan;
- forms a working budget;
- designs a communication strategy;
- constantly evaluates the quality of work being done by the team; and
- communicates regularly with the elder overseeing the ministry s/he directs.

#### B. Qualifications

##### A Deacon/Deaconess is:

- an active member in good standing, regularly attending the River Community Church;
- agrees with the Vision and Core Values of the River Community Church;
- models an understanding of biblical servant leadership (Matthew 20:25-28);
- a person who is willing to grow and develop as a ministry leader; and
- a man or woman of at least 18 years of age who fulfills the following biblical qualifications:

*Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Women likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

1 Timothy 3:8 – 13 (NASB)

#### C. Number of Deacons/Deaconesses

The number of Deacons/Deaconesses shall be determined by the number of specific ministries which the Elders consider necessary for the fulfillment of the church's mission.

#### D. Term of service

A Deacon/Deaconess shall serve for a term of 1 year. After completion of one term, she or he may serve additional terms upon approval of the Elder Team and re-confirmation by the members who form the specific ministry team, she or he is leading.

#### E. Meetings

Each deacon/deaconess shall meet with her/his ministry team at least once per quarter or as deemed necessary to accomplish the goals of the ministry.

### 3. LEADERSHIP TEAM

#### A. Definition and Responsibilities

The purpose of the Leadership Team is to facilitate communication and rapport between the Elders and Deacons and coordinate the operations of the church.

the Leadership Team shall:

- develop ideas for ministry;
- develop budgets;

- evaluate how the ministries are functioning; and
- make decisions about various church programs.

B. Qualifications

See respective Qualifications for Elders and Deacons

C. Team Structure

The Leadership Team shall be composed of the Elders, Deacons, Lead Pastor, pastoral staff and those hired to fill ministry positions.

D. Terms of Service

The term of service on the Leadership Team shall be the same as the term defined by his or her respective position as Elder or Deacon/Deaconess.

E. Meetings

The Leadership Team may schedule meetings on an ad hoc or “as necessary” basis. The Chairman of the Elders shall call and chair the meetings of the Leadership Team.

4. LEAD PASTOR

A. Definition and Responsibilities

Lead Pastor is the person who is paid to work full or part-time to provide nurture, oversight, and leadership to the people and ministries of the River Community Church.

He shall fulfill this role by carrying out the following responsibilities:

- demonstrate a holy lifestyle;
- preach and teach the Word of God;
- provide for the regular celebration of worship services and ceremonies;
- equip believers for service within the church and toward the community;
- be responsible for local church administration;
- be active in sharing the Gospel and teaching members to do the same;
- provide pastoral care; and
- promote cooperation with regional churches.

B. Qualifications

The Lead Pastor shall fulfill the spiritual qualifications of an Elder.

(See Elder: Qualifications)

The Lead Pastor shall fulfill the professional qualifications as defined in the job description.

(See: Lead Pastor: Job Description)

C. Term of Service

The Lead Pastor shall serve indefinitely until such time as he may resign or is his service is terminated according to the stipulations of these By-Laws.

(See: Leadership Change Process)

D. Authority

The Lead Pastor shall:

- report to the Elders;
- act as an equal voting member of the Elder Team and an ex-officio member of all church organizations;
- supervise all staff either directly or indirectly;
- in consultation with the Elder Team, have the authority to hire and dismiss an

- Associate Pastor/Minister and/or church staff and  
- shall submit to the guidance and decisions of Converge North Central.

## 5. ASSOCIATE PASTORS/MINISTERS

### A. Definition and Responsibilities

An Associate Pastor/Minister is a person who is paid to work full- or part-time in harmony with the Lead Pastor to carry out the purpose, values and strategy of the River Community Church, and align a specific ministry with its mission.

He or she shall fulfill this role by carrying out the following responsibilities:

- recruit members to form a team;
- form short- and long-term goals that reflect the vision of River Community Church;
- plan and manage activities and events relevant to the specific ministry s/he is leading;
- utilize his or her gifts to build and strengthen the specific ministry;
- teach, counsel, and guide all those placed under his/her care;
- equip and supervise the volunteers who make up the team;
- assist in church services and ceremonies when called upon;
- participate in the Leadership Team;
- collaborate with the Lead Pastor on strategic planning and goal-setting; and
- when necessary, carry out the responsibilities of Lead Pastor in his absence.

(See relevant Job Descriptions)

### B. Qualifications

Associate pastors shall fulfill the spiritual qualifications of an Elder.

(See: Elder Qualifications)

Ministers shall fulfill the spiritual qualifications of a Deacon.

(See: Deacon Qualifications)

### C. Term of Service

The Associate Pastors/Ministers shall serve indefinitely until such time as she or he may resign or her/his service is terminated according to the stipulations of these By-Laws.

(See: Leadership Change Process)

### D. Authority

Associate Pastors/Ministers shall:

- report to the Lead Pastor;
- act as chairperson of the specific ministry for which s/he is responsible;
- recruit and supervise volunteers to collaborate in the ministry for which s/he is responsible

## 6. CHURCH STAFF

Other church staff, such as Office Secretary, Administrative Assistance, Custodian or Technicians shall be recruited as deemed necessary by the Elder Team. A job description will be provided to define the specific arrangements.

## **C. LEADERSHIP CHANGE PROCEDURES**

### **1 SELECTION**

#### **a. Lead Pastor**

- i. When it is necessary to select a new Lead Pastor, the Leadership Team shall establish a Pastoral Search Team which shall include at least 2 active members not already serving on the Leadership Team. This Team shall seek out and interview candidates qualified to fill the office of Lead Pastor.
- ii. The proposed candidate shall be presented to the entire congregation and reasonable efforts shall be made to enable the members of the church to meet the candidate, to hear his testimony, preaching, and to ask questions in an open forum.
- iii. A special meeting of all the members of the church shall be convened to consider selection of the new Lead Pastor. A quorum for calling a Lead Pastor shall be sixty-two and one half (62.5) % of the active, voting members of the congregation. An affirmative vote of 80% of the active voting members present shall be necessary to approve the selection.
- iv. The Pastoral Search Team shall be responsible to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment.

#### **b. Associate Pastors/Ministers**

- i. When it is necessary to select a new Associate Pastor or Minister, the Elder Team in consultation with Deacon Team and the pastoral staff shall seek out and interview candidates qualified to fill the open position.
- ii. The candidate shall be introduced to the congregation. Reasonable efforts shall be made to enable the members of the church to meet the candidate, to hear his testimony and his vision, and to ask questions in an open forum.
- iii. The Leadership Team shall be responsible to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment.

#### **c. Elders**

Scripture gives evidence of the first leaders being appointed by the founders or principle leaders of the church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). By this example it is clear that the current existing spiritual leadership of the church should be primarily involved in the process of selecting members of the Elder Team to insure selection based on qualifications of character, conduct, spiritual vitality, and spiritual giftedness (See: BY-LAWS, B. CHURCH LEADERSHIP, 1. ELDER TEAM, B. Qualifications.)

New Elder Team members will be selected by the following process:

- i. In order to provide for future leadership, the Elder Team will establish an Elder-in-training process as an ongoing ministry of the River Community Church.
- ii. Throughout the year, church members may suggest candidates for Elder. Those individuals whose names have been submitted shall be so informed, and they shall be urged to engage in self-appraisal and personal evaluation in light of

the Scriptural qualifications and Elder Team responsibilities. Any nominee may withdraw his name for any reason.

- iii. Approaching the date of the Annual Meeting, the Elder Team will prayerfully discuss potential candidates from the men who are participating in the training process and tentatively select by unanimous vote new Elder Team members and announce them to the congregation.
- iv. If Church Members have an objection to a proposed elder, they may present that objection to the Elder Team.
- v. Church Membership will confirm the appointment of new Elder Team members by 67% majority vote at an annual or special business meeting in which a quorum of 20% of active voting members is present. (See: BY-LAWS, D. MEETINGS OF THE MEMBERS, 4. ACTIONS AND QUORUMS.)
- vi. We will strive for a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 Elder Team members at any one time.
- vii. The Lead Pastor will automatically be an Elder Team member upon his hiring. Other pastoral staff and ministry leaders may become Elder Team members by submitting to the process explained above.

d. Deacons/Deaconesses

Scripture gives evidence of the deacons being chosen by the members of the church (Acts 6:1 - 6). By this example it is implied that the congregation should be intimately involved in the process of selecting the Deacons/Deaconesses considering seriously the qualifications of character, conduct, spiritual vitality, and spiritual giftedness. (See BY-LAWS; B. CHURCH LEADERSHIP; 2. DEACON/DEACONESS; B. Qualifications)

- i. Throughout the year, the Elder Team will review the ministries of River Community Church, seeking to add or delete ministries as they deem appropriate.
- ii. Based on their evaluation, the Elder Team will welcome suggestions for potential Deacons/Deaconesses from church members. Those individuals whose names have been submitted shall be so informed, and they shall be urged to engage in self-appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the Scriptural qualifications and Deacon/Deaconess responsibilities. Any nominee may withdraw her/his name for any reason.
- iii. Approaching the date of the Annual Meeting, the Elder Team will prayerfully discuss potential candidates from the men and women who have been nominated for deacon or deaconess and announce them to the congregation. If church members have an objection to a proposed Deacon/Deaconess, they may present that objection to the Elder Team.
- iv. Church membership will confirm the appointment of new Deacons/Deaconesses by a simple majority vote at an annual or special business meeting in which a quorum of 20% of the active voting members is present. (See: BY-LAWS, D. MEETINGS OF THE MEMBERS, 4. ACTIONS AND QUORUMS.)

- v. We will strive for an optimum number of deacons/deaconesses according to the needs of the congregation.
- vi. The Lead Pastor, as well as other pastoral staff and those hired to fill ministry positions will automatically be a Leadership Team member upon her/his hiring. (See: B. CHURCH LEADERSHIP, 3. LEADERSHIP TEAM, C. Team Structure.

e. Church Staff

The Lead Pastor in consultation with the Elder Team will recruit additional support staff such as Church Secretary, Technicians, or Custodians as he deems necessary.

## 2 RESIGNATION

- a. The Lead Pastor may serve indefinitely. If he chooses to resign, he shall submit his resignation to the Elders with at least 90-day notice, unless the Elders shall agree otherwise. (See Lead Pastor: Job Description)
- b. All associate pastors and church staff shall submit her/his resignation to the Elders with at least a 30-day notice, unless the Elders shall agree otherwise. (See corresponding Job Description)

## 3. TERMINATION

a. Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor may be terminated for failure to adequately fulfill the requirements and duties of the office and/or a moral failure. Termination of employment of the Lead Pastor will be handled according to the guidelines of Matthew 18:15 – 20 as described in Appendix 1: Church Discipline.

i. Failure to Adequately Fulfill Requirements and/or Duties

The Elder Team will implement Steps 1 and 2 in Appendix 1: Church Discipline before any recommendation for termination occurs. If these steps fail to resolve the issue, the Elders shall contact Converge North Central offices (See contact information in Appendix 1) for guidance on the most productive way to proceed. After following Steps 1 and 2 in Appendix 1 and after contacting Converge North Central for guidance, the Elder Team may initiate a recommendation for termination. The Lead Pastor must be notified of this recommendation, and given a reasonable opportunity to speak with the Elder Team. At this point the recommendation may be withdrawn, or it may be voted on by the Elder Team in a non-secret ballot. The Lead Pastor is not eligible to vote in this process. If the recommendation fails to receive a majority vote, it is dropped. If the recommendation receives a majority vote, the Elders must then take the matter to the Church. At a special meeting called for the purpose of termination, church members must vote on the termination recommendation. A 67% majority vote of members present will be required to remove the Lead Pastor. The vote will be by written, secret ballot. A quorum for the aforesaid meeting shall consist of at least 50% of active, voting church members.

If the recommendation for termination does not succeed for any reason, the

issue will be dropped, and all Elders who voted to remove the Lead Pastor shall immediately relinquish their office. In addition such Elders shall not be eligible for any office or staff position in the church for a period of 2 years thereafter.

ii. Moral Failure

In the occurrence of a moral failure, the Elder Team may impose a leave of absence for the Lead Pastor after contacting Converge North Central for guidance on how to handle the situation. The Elders shall provide a written statement of the charges against the Lead Pastor and provide a reasonable opportunity for him to speak with the Elders in his own defense. Following that, the Elders may, by a majority vote, put the Lead Pastor on leave of absence while the situation is investigated for a period of two (2) weeks. The Lead Pastor is not eligible to vote in this process.

During this 2-week period, the Elders shall gather the relevant evidence available that either confirms or contradicts the accusation(s) made against the Lead Pastor. The Elders shall reach their conclusion based on the preponderance of the evidence and inform the Lead Pastor of their decision. The Elder Team has authority to terminate the Lead Pastor with an 67% non-secret vote.

If the Lead Pastor feels the accusation of moral failure is in fact actually a grievance about failure to adequately fulfill requirements or duties, he may promptly appeal to Converge North Central (CNC), who will assist in helping to categorize the accusation as a.) a grievance or b.) a moral failure. If it is confirmed by CNC to be a moral failure, the process continues as specified in the previous paragraph.

If it is concluded by CNC to be a failure to adequately fulfill requirements and/or duties, and in a non-secret ballot, with the Lead Pastor not being eligible to vote, a majority of Elders agree to proceed, the Elders will present their case to the congregation and the vote to terminate will follow the process as stipulated in Section i above: i. Failure to Adequately Fulfill Requirements and/or Duties.

b. Associate Pastor(s)/Minister(s) and other Staff

An Associate Pastor or Minister or Staff member may be terminated for failure to adequately fulfill the requirements and duties of the office and/or a moral failure. Termination of employment of an Associate Pastor or Minister will be handled according to the guidelines of Matthew 18:15–20 as described in Appendix 1: Church Discipline. The Lead Pastor, with the support of the elder board, will make this decision and deliver the news.

**D. MEETINGS OF THE MEMBERS**

1. ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

An annual meeting of the members shall take place each year during the month of August, on the date set by the Elder Team. The meeting shall be chaired by the chairman of the Elder or Leadership Team. All matters shall be decided by open ballot unless

otherwise indicated by the Elder Team.

The agenda of the annual meeting shall include, but not be limited to:

- a.) Review of financial and membership reports and the program results for the past year.
- b.) Adoption of the annual budget for the new fiscal year. If severe, extenuating circumstances beyond our control (natural disaster, pandemic) prevent assembly as a congregation for the annual business meeting on the date announced, the previous year's budget shall remain in effect until such time as we are able to gather a quorum and meet again.
- c.) Presentation of Leadership Team for the new year.

## 2. SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

Special meetings of the active members may be called by the Elders. Members are encouraged to express their desire for a special meeting to any of the Elders. The agenda for a special meeting shall be set forth in the notice of said meeting. Motions and amendments concerning stated agenda items may be made and voted on. Motions concerning new business items may be made; however no vote may be taken at this meeting on such motions.

The Elder Team shall select one member to serve as chairman for the special business meeting.

## 3. NOTICES

Notice of the annual business meeting and special business meetings shall be communicated not less than ten or more than thirty days prior to the date of the meeting. It shall be provided in at least one of the two following manners: a) by written notice in the church bulletin on the two weekends immediately preceding the date of the meeting; or b) by written notice through any of the various social media options available (email, text or Facebook message) to each active member. The notice shall include the date, time and place of the scheduled meeting and a brief description of the agenda.

Proposed annual budgets will be provided to members and made available upon request within the same time frame mentioned above for notices.

## 4. ACTIONS AND QUORUMS

All actions approved at the annual business meeting or special business meetings will be binding provided they are acted upon by a quorum of active voting members. A quorum will consist of twenty-five percent (25%) of the active voting members except for the approval of the selection of a new pastor, in which case a quorum will consist of sixty-two and one-half percent (62.5%) of the active voting members. (See BY-LAWS, Section C: LEADERSHIP CHANGE PROCEDURES, paragraph 1: Selection, a: Lead Pastor, page 15).

Because of special circumstances some members might be unable to attend church services and should not be counted in determining a quorum. The decision on who shall be counted will be made by the Elders. A majority of the votes of the active voting members present at any meeting at which a quorum is present will be necessary for the adoption of any proposal unless a greater proportion is required by law or by these By-Laws. Absentee ballots shall not be allowed, unless severe, extenuating circumstances beyond our control (natural disaster, pandemic) prevent assembly as a congregation.

## 5. FAMILY MATTERS MEETINGS

Family Matters meetings may be called by the Leadership Team as circumstances dictate, striving for a meeting at least once a quarter. The agenda shall include, but not be limited to, notice of upcoming church events and activities. Family Matters meetings are open congregational forums for purposes of information and fellowship. No action may be taken which requires voting. Meetings shall be scheduled and moderated by the Leadership Team, or their appointed representative.

## 6. CHURCH RECORDER

The church recorder, appointed by the Elder Team, shall record the proceedings of all business meetings and Family Matters meetings. These proceedings shall be kept on file in the church office.

# E. FINANCIAL POLICIES

## 1. FISCAL YEAR

The River Community Church's fiscal year shall begin on August 1 and end on July 31.

## 2. BUDGETS

All ministry teams will recommend their operating budget to the Elder Team, which will present a budget for approval by the Church.

## 3. FINANCIAL SECRETARY

The Elder Team will appoint a Financial Secretary who will be responsible for recording all Church income and for depositing all income in such banks, trust companies, credit unions or other depositories as the Elder Team may select. All contributions will be confidential, and records will be maintained according to calendar year in order to verify each contribution in case of a personal audit. Letters of verification for monetary gifts will be provided as required by law. The Financial Secretary, upon request, will also provide letters of verification for goods donated to the church. The Financial Secretary will provide a monthly report of income (which shall not disclose confidential information) to the Elder Team, which shall also be made available to the Congregation. The Financial Secretary will also provide the audit committee with a record of all deposits made during the fiscal year. Term of office will be at the will of the Elder Team. An Assistant Financial Secretary may be appointed pending approval of the Elder Team

## 4. TREASURER

The Treasurer, appointed by the Elder Team, will be responsible for payment of all obligations of the Church in a timely manner. In addition, the Treasurer will maintain documentation of all payments made and provide the Elders with a monthly report of expenditures, as well as a summary of all existing financial account balances. The Treasurer's monthly report will also be made available to the Congregation. The Treasurer will provide the audit committee with a record of all debits posted to The River

Community Church accounts during the fiscal year, with documentation concerning the designated purpose of the expenditures. Term of office will be at the will of the Elder Team. An Assistant Treasurer may be appointed pending approval of the Elder Team.

#### 5. AUDITING COMMITTEE

The duties of the Auditing Committee, which shall consist of two members appointed by the Leadership Team, shall be to audit the financial records of the church. They shall submit a report to the Elder Team.

#### 6. LOANS

The Elder Team will authorize the Treasurer to secure loans when necessary. The Elder Team may not borrow funds in excess of two percent (2%) of the current operating budget without the approval of the Congregation.

#### 7. LIMITATIONS

Unless clearly set forth in the current operating budget, no Church member may ~~not~~ sell, purchase, mortgage, lease, pledge or exchange property or purchase any items or services which are in excess of two percent (2%) of the current operating budget without the approval of the Congregation. (Note: this prohibition does not apply to the designated giving projects.)

### **F. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

#### 1. BOOKS AND RECORDS

The Church, in its offices, shall keep:

- a.) Accurate and complete books of non-confidential financial records.
- b.) Minutes of the proceedings of its Leadership Team.
- c.) The Job Descriptions book.
- d.) The membership lists
- e.) Minutes of all congregational meetings and decisions
- f.) Record of all official policies, including the Constitution and By-Laws

#### 2. DISPOSITION OF CHURCH PROPERTY

- a.) Division: In case of organic division of the Church membership, the Church property shall belong to those members who abide by these policies and procedures. In case of disagreement on this issue, ownership shall be decided by the Converge North Central Board of Overseers.
- b.) Dissolution: Should conditions arise when, for any reasons, the Church ceases to function, the Church property shall be transferred to Converge North Central.
- c.) Consolidation: Should conditions arise where a consolidation with another church is advisable, the Leadership Team shall be authorized by the church to negotiate the terms of such a consolidation with final approval by the membership.

#### 3. AFFILIATIONS

National: This Church shall be affiliated with Converge (formerly the Baptist General Conference).

State: This Church shall be affiliated with Converge North Central.

Local: The Church shall be affiliated with Converge Iowa City.

#### 4. AMENDMENTS

Substantive changes to the Articles of Incorporation, Affirmation of Faith, Church Covenant, the Constitution and By-Laws may only be altered, amended or repealed, and new items adopted, by an approval vote of 67% of the active, voting members present at any church business meeting. A quorum shall consist of 20% of the active voting members. The process for making these changes shall be as follows:

a.) Proposal: Amendments shall be introduced at any regular Elder or Leadership Team meeting. Upon recommendation by the Elder Team, amendments shall be acted upon at a church business meeting.

b.) Notification: Notification of the proposed amendment shall be communicated not less than ten or more than thirty days prior to the date of the meeting. It shall be provided in at least one of the two following manners: a) by written notice in the church bulletin on the two weekends immediately preceding the date of the meeting; or b) by written notice through any of the various social media options available (email, text or Facebook message) to each active member. The notice shall include the date, time and place of the scheduled meeting and a brief description of the amendment(s).

The text of the proposed amendment(s) will be provided to members and made available upon request within the same time frame mentioned above for notices.

c.) Intent of Amendment: All amendments must be consistent with the attitudes and spirit of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Bible.

d.) The Elder Team shall have authority to make corrections in orthography as deemed necessary.

## Appendix 1: Church Discipline

As previously stated, at the River Community Church we believe church discipline is necessary when a member exhibits behaviors and/or attitudes that ignore or discount the teachings of Jesus. When any member persists in a position of deciding for themselves what is right or wrong instead of submitting to the teachings of Jesus, he or she causes harm to themselves and others. Fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who love and care about them have the opportunity to intervene with respect, fairness, and love for the purpose of admonishing and assisting them to turn away from such hurtful behaviors/attitudes. The ultimate objective is always to reconcile and restore his or her relationship with Jesus and His Church.

Behavior requiring discipline that may eventually result in exclusion from membership, leadership, and other participation at River Community Church include (but are not necessarily limited to):

1. *Sins of human character that obscure the holiness of God.* Examples would be unrepentant sexual sin, unlawful business practices, using alcohol or drugs in a way that would bring unwarranted harm upon the body, or gross misconduct contrary to the Church Covenant (see CONSTITUTION, Section III) ( 1 Corinthians 5:11);
2. *Sins of divisiveness that threaten the unity of the church.* Examples would be gossiping about church attendees, staff, and leadership, slandering others, deception or lying, not keeping confidential issues secret for the reason of hurting others, activity that is determined to be divisive to the Church Covenant, Core Values, or Vision (See CONSTITUTION, III Our Covenant and IV Guiding Principles), or promoting a certain teaching with the goal of recruiting followers in opposition of church leadership (Romans 16:17); and
3. *Sins that violate the truth of God by promoting false doctrine.* Examples would be intentionally and/or maliciously promoting teaching contrary to the River Community Church Statement of Faith (see CONSTITUTION, II. AFFIRMATION OF FAITH) (2 Peter 2:1-3).

The guidelines we shall follow to achieve the above end are laid forth in Matthew 18:15 – 20:  
<sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

The first step in church discipline is a private conversation with the person who is exhibiting behavior/attitude contrary to the teachings of Jesus to admonish and assist him or her to turn away from such behaviors/attitudes.

If the first step of private conversation fails to influence the person to turn away from the harmful behavior and/or attitude, a second conversation with one or two Elders present to serve as witnesses and to further exhort the member to ~~make a~~ change in his/her behavior/attitude.

If the intervention on the part of one or two Elders fails to bring about a change of heart, the Elder Team shall contact Converge North Central (See information below) for guidance on how to proceed in the most productive manner. Upon consultation with CNC, the Elder Team shall

discuss the matter, formulate a response, and, in the interest of openness and transparency, provide basic information regarding the discipline to the congregation so that they may be aware of the matter, its effect on the Church, and the decisions of the Elders.

If there is continued resistance and rejection of the proposed discipline, the Elders may sever the membership of the person or persons who are obstructing the progress toward reconciliation.

Converge North Central

2 Pine Tree Drive, Suite 510

Arden Hills, MN. 55112

651-633-0560      Email: [clenz@convergenorthcentral.org](mailto:clenz@convergenorthcentral.org)

(or check website for most current email: <https://converge.org/north-central>)

In the case of allegations of abuse on the part of any pastor, volunteer, member or attendee of the congregation, we will follow the protocols outlined in the Converge Policy Statement on Sexual Misconduct for Local Churches of the Baptist General Conference. (See document on file in church office.)

<sup>2</sup> *New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: Foundation Publications, for the Lockman Foundation, 1971. Print.