

# Village Church Bylaws (2016)

Village Evangelical Free Church, Maple Plain, MN \* [www.villagechurch.com](http://www.villagechurch.com)

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## Article 1. The Vision

The Vision of the Church is based on Matthew 28:18-20:

In All our going, we All reach and teach, so All peoples may know Christ.

## Article 2. Membership

### Section 2.01. Membership Covenant: How Members Live Together

**We Commit to Building Community:** We commit together to strive for the peace, unity, and purity of this Church; to affirm, through our words and actions, its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and disciplines; to support the Church through our regular attendance and service; to contribute cheerfully, regularly, and generously to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel to all peoples. (Colossians 3:15, 2 Timothy 2:22-23, Hebrews 10:24-25, Romans 8:1-17, 1 Peter 3:8-9, 2 Corinthians 8-9).

**We Commit to Honoring Leadership:** We shall respect and esteem the leaders of the Church, pray for them regularly, and serve together with them in carrying out the mission of this Church. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17)

**We Commit to Loving One Another:** We engage, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, in community and with mutual accountability, to walk in a manner worthy of our calling in Christ Jesus. We further engage to speak the truth in love; to give and receive admonition with meekness and affection; to remember each other in prayer and to aid each other in case of sickness and distress; to cultivate sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense and always ready for reconciliation; and, mindful of the Scriptures, to seek it without delay; and to encourage one another by the love and the truth of Christ. (Colossians 3:12-17, 1 Peter 3:8-9; 4:9, Romans 14:19, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:25)

**We Commit to Glorifying God through our Witness in the World:** We also engage, with God's help, to maintain family and private devotions; to teach the Bible to our children; to seek the salvation of our family and acquaintances; to live a life worthy of our calling in Christ Jesus and to forsake the ways of sin; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our promises, and exemplary in our conduct; to combine zeal and knowledge in our efforts to advance the cause of our Savior; to make Christ first in all things. (Psalm 119:9-11, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Ephesians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 1 Peter 4:1-6, Romans 14:1-4;15:1-7)

## Section 2.02. Membership Commitments: What Members Do Together

Membership, distinct from Church participation, means a like-minded commitment to:

- We pray often for one another: pastors, Elders, staff and other Members.
- We study God's Word and pray, intending to grow into the image of Christ by God's Spirit.
- We serve God and the Church with our Spiritual gifts.
- We participate in Discipleship Groups (Growth Group and/or Ministry Team).
- We participate in community worship.
- We participate in congregational meetings.
- We give God his tithes and our offerings: participating in God's work in the Church, missions, and the needs of the poor.
- We seek opportunities to share our hope and Christ with others.
- We resolve our differences according to the teaching of God's Word.

## Section 2.03. The Rights & Privileges of Membership

All Members of this Church shall have equal rights. Members have no rights to the property of the Church, and upon termination of their membership or dissolution of this Church, they shall have no interest in the assets of the Church.

## Section 2.04. Membership Process

New Members shall agree to accept the Constitution, By-Laws, and fellowship commitments of the Church and may be received by following this process:

- Applicants must be at least 18 years of age.
- Application shall be made to the Pastor(s) or to any Elder.
- Membership classes for all prospective Members shall be conducted when necessary by the Pastor(s) or other delegated persons appointed by the Elders, covering the history, doctrines, and practices of our Church and denomination.
- Applicants shall give their personal testimony to at least two Elders, or one Elder and one Discipleship Group pastor at least two weeks prior to being welcomed into membership.
- Following consideration by the Elders, candidate names shall be presented to all Members of the congregation at least two weeks prior to being welcomed into membership. If any Member has a reason for objecting to the receiving of any applicant into the Church, they shall immediately make known their objection to the Elders. Their objection should be in writing. These objections shall be considered by the Elders and a response shall be made to the objecting party.
- If no objections are received during the two-week period after the names are posted, the applicant shall be received and welcomed into full membership at a designated worship service.

## Section 2.05          Membership Resignation

Out of care for one another, members, Discipleship Groups, and Discipleship Group pastors should seek out those who are disengaged from us. Elders also should contact disengaged members to understand how to serve and reengage them.

Members who wish to resign their membership may provide written notice to the Elders.

## Section 2.06          Church Discipline

### 2.06.1                  Fellowship Commitments

Village Church commits to maintain fellowship together as one body in unity under the headship of Jesus Christ and commit to resolve conflict and disagreement using a model such as the Peacemakers (Ken Sande) model of reconciliation based on the biblical principles of Matthew 18 and Psalm 131.

### 2.06.2                  Church Discipline

Church discipline must follow the teaching of Matthew 18, and example of 1 Corinthians 5, and 2 Corinthians 2. The goal is always to restore. Members agree not to withdraw from membership during a disciplinary process because that would circumvent the process.

## Article 3.          Pastoral Staff (Vocational)

### Section 3.01          Distinctions between vocational Pastors (lead pastor and associate pastors), Elders, and Discipleship Group Pastors

The lead pastor (vocational Elder), is distinct from Elders and Discipleship Group Pastors, in that the work is his vocation and he is paid for his work. The lead pastor of the Church, like the Elders and Discipleship Group Pastors, are alike in that they shepherd God's flock that is under their care. However, Elders, including the vocational Elder, are responsible for the whole Church, while Discipleship Group Pastors have a span of care and responsibility for only their group.

### Section 3.02          Duties of the Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor, in response to God's call, shall lead the Church body to be disciple-makers who are people of prayer and the Word, and the Church leaders to be shepherds under the authority of Christ. This means he is to be a man of prayer and the Word and the key person in the preaching ministry of the Church. He is to be a model, a discipler, and an equipper of leaders, so that they may be models, disciplers, and equippers of the whole Church, so that it will

accomplish its mission of reaching the community and spreading a passion for the supremacy of Christ, that all might have hope and know joy.

It is expected that he shall proclaim the Gospel and perform all of the scriptural duties of the office of pastor as directed by the Elders. He is, because of his office, an Elder and also a voting Member of all boards and committees.

The Lead Pastor is ultimately accountable to the congregation; however, in the performance of his job duties he shall report to the Elders.

### Section 3.03           Qualifications of the Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor shall be a man who meets the spiritual qualifications for Elders set out in God's Word (listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5), including:

- shepherd God's flock by exercising oversight without domineering;
- not be a recent convert;
- have the ability to teach and be teachable;
- be the "husband of one wife", managing his family well;
- be deserving of respect from believers and nonbelievers alike;
- not be quick-tempered or overbearing;
- be moderate in lifestyle;
- not be unduly influenced by money or desirous of financial gain;
- be hospitable;
- serve willingly, not under compulsion; and
- be an example to the flock.

The Lead Pastor shall agree with and support, without reservation, the doctrinal affirmations of this Church as stated in the Church Constitution. The Lead Pastor shall support the Constitution and Bylaws. The Elders may set additional age, experience, and educational qualifications deemed wise prior to hiring any Lead Pastor.

### Section 3.04           Lead Pastor Search Committee

A Search Committee consisting of at least two Elders and at least two Members of the Church who are not Elders shall be nominated by the Elders and approved by the Membership. Each person on the search committee must receive a majority of votes cast to be confirmed.

It shall be the duty of this committee to take necessary steps to locate a man, called by God to serve this Church, to fill the office of Lead Pastor. In addition to spiritual qualifications, the committee shall investigate the merits of each individual under consideration in regard to personal character, education, ministerial record, and personal gifts in determining fitness for the position. The committee shall report its unanimous recommendation to the Elders who will decide, based on the findings of the search committee, if that candidate will be recommended to the Church for consideration.

Only one candidate shall be recommended at a time; the Church shall vote on each candidate before another is recommended.

### Section 3.05 Calling of Interim Pastor

An Interim Pastor may be presented to the congregation by the Elders without appointing a search committee. An Interim Pastor is called for a period of time, specified at the time he is presented. An Interim Pastor may not be considered as a candidate for the role of Lead Pastor during his tenure as Interim Pastor. An Interim Pastor must meet all the qualifications of a Lead Pastor.

### Section 3.06 Calling of a Lead Pastor

The call of a Lead Pastor shall come before the Church at a regular or specially called business meeting. The date, time, location of the meeting, and information about the candidate, will be delivered to all Members at least two weeks prior to the Special Meeting. Ratification by seventy-five percent (75%) of the Members voting shall be necessary to extend a call to anyone under consideration. The vote shall be by written ballot. When the call has been approved by Membership, a formal offer will be sent to the candidate. The candidate's written acceptance shall establish the pastoral relationship.

### Section 3.07 Termination of a Lead Pastor

A vote to consider termination of Lead Pastor can be called by a majority of the Elders or by the petition of at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the Membership.

In this event, the notice of a Special Business Meeting and its purpose shall be mailed to the Church Membership and published to the Church on two successive Sundays in publications of the Church and in public meetings. The vote shall be by written ballot. Providing that a quorum has been met, a vote of a majority of the Members voting shall be necessary to remove the Lead Pastor or any Church Officer.

If it is the case that the Lead Pastor is supported in such a vote, all Church Officers who cannot support the ministry of the Lead Pastor shall resign from their office.

If it is the case that the Lead Pastor is not supported in such a vote, the Lead Pastor shall be terminated with a minimum of one week's severance pay for every year served. Severance pay is not required in the event that termination is for cause, which includes: felony conviction, moral turpitude (conduct that is considered contrary to biblical standards of justice, honesty, or morals), or gross failure to performed assigned duties.

### Section 3.08 Other Vocational Pastoral Staff

When seeking to fill a pastoral position other than Lead Pastor, the Elders will fill all positions authorized and funded by the Membership of the Church. The Elders will present any hire to the Church for a confirmation. The qualifications are the same as for an Elder with the exception

that the age qualification is reduced to eighteen years of age. The duties are determined by the Elders. All pastoral staff report to the Lead Pastor (or to a person designated by the Elders) and may be terminated by the Elders.

All other employees, not identified by these Bylaws, shall be employed at the discretion of the Elders within the approved budget of the Church.

### **Section 3.09 Elected Office**

No vocational pastoral staff may hold an elected office.

### **Section 3.10 Membership**

All vocational pastoral staff are Members of the Church by their position and so they must also meet all membership requirements.

## **Article 4. Pastoral Staff (non-Vocational)**

### **Section 4.01 Elders**

#### **Section 4.01.1 Composition of the Elders**

- Lead Pastor of this Church; and
- Vice-Chairman of the Church. This person is elected as Vice-Chairman by this Church and serves as Chairman of the Elders in his first year and Chairman of the Church in his second year; and
- Chairman of the Church. This position is not separately elected, but is filled by the Vice-Chairman of the Church in his second year of service; and
- A minimum of three men, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Church, shall be elected as Elders by this Church.

#### **Section 4.01.2 Elder Terms of Office**

All elected Elders serve terms of two (2) years. Elected Elders may serve a maximum of three (3) consecutive terms after which a one year sabbatical from eldership is required. The election as Vice-Chairman, and so also serving as Chairman, is counted as one (1) term.

In order to provide continuity of ministry, the Nominating Committee shall seek to maintain overlapping terms for the Elders whenever possible.

#### **Section 4.01.3 Elder Qualifications**

Elders shall be men who meet the Biblical qualifications for Elders as set out for the Lead Pastor in Section 3.03.

Elders shall be twenty-five years of age or older who have been active Members of the Church for at least one year and are judged by the Church to be spiritually mature and able to lead the various ministries of the Church.

No Elder shall hold any other elected office concurrently. Members of the same family may not serve concurrently as Elders. All Elders, as does the Lead Pastor, serve as voting Members of all boards and committees.

#### Section 4.01.4 Elder Organization and Duties

The Elders are responsible for leadership of the Church. The first and primary duty of the Elders shall be to shepherd the Church through prayer and the Word (Acts 6, 2 Timothy, 1 Peter 5).

The Elders shall also work together to make God's mission and vision for The Church clear, structuring the ministry so we obey God together in his work. This includes establishing goals, policies, and objectives for the Church's ministry.

The Elders shall also oversee the implementation of all ministry of the Church. This includes the following vital functions of the Church: worship, education, community building, discipleship and evangelism, finances and facilities. As needed they may appoint others to serve as ministers to give leadership in these areas.

It is the responsibility of the Elders to maintain written records of Church business meetings and minutes from all Elder meetings. They shall also keep Church Membership records up-to-date.

The Chairman shall preside at the meetings of the Elders, the Nominating Committee, and all business meetings of the Church. The joint signatures of the Chairman and the Treasurer shall be required to bind the Church in any legal or financial contract.

#### Section 4.01.5 Termination of an Elder

Termination of an Elder shall follow the same procedure as that for the Lead Pastor (Section 2.05). If it is the case that the Elder is supported in such a vote, all Church Officers who cannot support the ministry of the Elder shall resign from their office.

#### Section 4.02 Discipleship Group Pastors

Members elect Elders; Elders appoint Discipleship Groups pastors from among the Membership. Discipleship Group pastors, who do the work of shepherding the flock, are essential to the pursuit of this Church's Purpose and Vision. It is the job of the Elders to prepare the Discipleship Groups pastors for the work of the ministry (whole Church scope), and for the Discipleship Groups pastors to do this for their group (group scope), so that the body of Christ may be built up and Christ glorified. (Eph. 4:11-12).

Discipleship Group Pastors include Ministry Team Pastors and Growth Group Pastors. The focus of the former is service and of the latter is study of the Word. Both shepherd their groups to maturity in Christ by the Word, in community, and by service.

Discipleship Group pastors can be men or women, though only men should have authority over men. However, when men could not be found who are qualified and willing, just as is the case in Scripture, women may be appointed with authority over men under the authority of the Elders. All Discipleship Group Pastors are spiritually mature, in keeping with the qualifications for Elders given in God's Word (3.02). They are appointed by and responsible to the Elders, and are guided in their work by our Discipleship Group Philosophy & Theology document. All Discipleship Group pastors are appointed by the Elders and serve under their authority. They have no terms.

Distinct from Growth Group Pastors, Ministry Team Pastors, who are called Deacons as in Acts, serve so that the Elders are free to focus on prayer, Word, and direction for the Church. (Acts 6) Ministry Team leaders (Deacons) may include Family Discipleship Ministry, Discipleship Group Discipleship, World Discipleship, Building and Grounds and others as needed.

## Article 5. Other Officers

### Section 5.01 Officers

A Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be elected by this Church. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary may not be from the same family.

### Section 5.02 Terms

The terms of the Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be for two years. There is no term limit for either officer.

### Section 5.03 Qualifications

Members twenty-five years of age or older, who are judged by the Church to be spiritually mature and have demonstrated integrity, and who possess the necessary business skills and acumen for the positions. The spiritual qualifications for these positions are no less than those for deacons in Acts 6.

No person shall hold more than one elected office concurrently.

### Section 5.04 Duties

The Treasurer is responsible for disbursement of all funds and periodic reporting to the Elders. This officer together with the Church Chairman shall supervise the formulation of an annual budget by the Elders. The joint signatures of the Treasurer and the Chairman shall be required to bind the Church in any legal or financial contract.

The Financial Secretary is responsible for confidential receipt of all funds given by Members and friends of the Church; posting of these funds; for weekly deposit of these funds; for weekly and periodic reports to the Elders and Treasurer; and for annual reporting to all givers. The Elders must appoint Members to assist in the weekly counting and posting of funds; the counting may be done by no less than two persons. No one other than the Financial Secretary, and those Members appointed to assist with posting, shall have access to these records. Others may be given short-term access as deemed necessary by the Elders, but this must be reported to the Congregation.

#### **Section 5.05 Termination of an elected officer**

Termination of officers covered in this Article shall follow the same procedure as that for the Lead Pastor (Section 2.05). However, in the event that the officer is supported by vote, there will be no resignation requirement of other officers.

Elected Officers may resign their position in writing to the Elders.

### **Article 6. Committees**

#### **Section 6.01 Audit Committee and Duties**

An Audit Committee consisting of at least two individuals who do not work with the financial records of the Church shall be appointed by the Elders to audit Church accounts annually and submit a written report of their findings to the Elders, who shall publish the report to the Membership. If a qualified committee cannot be found internally, then a qualified external review shall be performed. The audit shall include a review of procedures for handling receipts, deposits, and expenditures in order to insure appropriate accounting methods are followed and internal controls are sufficient. This committee must contract an external audit by a CPA familiar with not-for-profit accounting no more than every five (5) years.

#### **Section 6.02 Nominating Committee and Duties**

A Nominating Committee consists of the Elders and at least three additional Members. who shall be elected by this Church and serve for a term of two years. They are responsible to nominate annually at least one person for every vacant office of this Church and to publish these nominations to the Church at least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting.

#### **Section 6.03 Qualifications**

Persons judged by the Elders to possess spiritual character and the skills necessary for the assigned tasks.

## Article 7. Business Meetings & Order

### Section 7.01 Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of this Church shall begin on the first day of January and close on the last day of December inclusive.

### Section 7.02 Annual Meeting

The Church shall hold an Annual Meeting in the last quarter of the fiscal year. The date, time, and location of the meeting will be published to the Church in the weekly publication and in public meetings eight weeks prior to the Annual Meeting.

Prior to this meeting all ministry groups as well as Members of the pastoral staff and Elders shall present written reports to the Elders. The Elders shall see that these reports are combined into an Annual Report to be available to the Membership prior to the Annual Meeting.

### Section 7.03 Order

Biblical order, godly wisdom, and consideration for one another shall govern all business meetings. The latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall serve as a guide to the business proceedings of the Church. In any case where Robert's Rules of Order conflicts with Biblical standards or this Constitution and Bylaws, then Biblical standards, or this Constitution and Bylaws, shall take precedence.

### Section 7.04 Agenda

All business meetings shall follow an agenda. The Elders serve as the Committee on Business, preparing and posting the agenda at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Members who want to introduce new business at any business meeting can do so in two ways. First, they can submit it to the Elders for consideration prior to the business meeting and before the agenda is posted. The Elders may edit it prior to putting it on the agenda, or even decline to include it on the agenda. Alternatively, a member may propose new business at a business meeting. At the meeting in which the agenda item is introduced, it is proposed to the congregation as new business for the next meeting, and if seconded, the vote is not on the proposal, but on whether or not it is to be adopted for the agenda of the next business meeting.

The agenda for the Annual Meeting shall include adoption of a budget for the coming fiscal year and the election of Church Officers as well as those other items of agenda approved by the Elders.

### Section 7.05 Special Business Meetings

A Special Meeting of the Membership for conducting business may be called at any time by the Lead Pastor, or a majority of the Elders, or upon written petition signed by twenty-five percent (25%) of the Membership, or by majority vote at any business meeting of the Membership. The

agenda, date, time, and location of the meeting will be published to the Church in publication and in public meetings of the Church at least two weeks prior to the Special Meeting.

#### Section 7.06 Elections

Elders and Officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. The Elders shall present the ballot to the Membership. A simple majority of the ballots cast by Members voting is required for the election of any nominee. Those elected shall assume their offices at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

An election to fill any vacancies occurring during the year shall be held at a Special Meeting of the Membership. Persons so elected will complete the unexpired term. The Elders may appoint persons to serve in any office until a Special Meeting is held.

#### Section 7.07 Quorum

A quorum of at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the Membership of this Church is required for the Congregation to transact Church business.

### Article 8. Amendments

#### Section 8.01 Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended at any business meeting of the Church by a majority of votes cast when said proposed amendments have been delivered to all Members at least four (4) weeks prior to consideration.