

# SOUTH VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH BY-LAWS

AMENDED OCTOBER 26, 2019

## ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

### SECTION 1, QUALIFICATIONS

Any person, eighteen (18) years of age or older, who confesses faith in, and has received the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the assurance of salvation, and whose character, conduct, and reputation is in accord with his/her confession, who subscribes to the Statement of Faith, who accepts the Bylaws of this organization, and who is willing to support South Valley Community Church (“the Church”) in attendance (both Sunday worship and small group Bible study), prayers, financially, and the exercise of spiritual gifts, may apply to become a member of the Church.

### SECTION 2, MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURE

- A. Each person that would like to become a member should complete the Membership Commitment (Appendix A) and meet with leadership to discuss.
- B. Each new member shall be publicly welcomed into membership at a subsequent regular Sunday service of the Church.
- C. For a Pastor, his calling shall constitute both his and his wife's acceptance as members.
- D. A membership list shall be kept by the Church Secretary

### SECTION 3, LIFESTYLE

- A. As a part of the body of Christ, members are urged to develop habits that are beneficial for spiritual growth. Examples of such habits would be involvement in a small group Bible study, regular attendance at church services, daily reading of the Bible, private and family devotions, sharing of Christ with others, and use of their spiritual gifts and talents in service and ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ and sharing of the message of Christ to the world. Parents are urged to teach and nurture the spiritual life of their children. (, Philippians 2:1-11, I Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:11, Ephesians 6:4, Mark 8:34-35, Mark 10:42-45, I Peter 4:10-11).(Also referenced in Appendix B is the SVCC Position on Human Sexuality)
- B. Members are encouraged to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in illness and times of discouragement, and to be gentle in speech and slow to anger.

## SECTION 4, ABSENCE

Any member, absent more than three months, from whom no communication has been received, will automatically be dropped from the membership by the Church Secretary upon approval of the Leadership.

## SECTION 5, WITHDRAWAL

Any member who wishes to withdraw from membership in the Church shall so inform the Leadership

## SECTION 6, DISCIPLINE

Any person who becomes a member of the church is voluntarily agreeing to submit to the discipline procedures outlined in the Scriptures (Matthew 18:15-17, James 5:19-20).

## SECTION 7, AFFILIATION

- A. CHANGE OF AFFILIATION. The Church may change affiliation and/or unite with another church, if, after approval by the Leadership, there is a three-quarter majority vote of all active membership.
- B. Any member who has withdrawn or who has been excluded from the Church shall lose all rights of the Church.
- C. The private property of the individual members of the Church shall be exempt from corporate debt.

# **ARTICLE II: ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH**

## SECTION 1, COMMUNION

The Lord's Supper shall be practiced regularly as established by the Leadership. It shall be open to all believers who profess saving faith in Jesus Christ and who are walking in fellowship with Him. (I Corinthians 11:27-30, I John 1:9).

## SECTION 2, BAPTISM

Baptism by immersion is a prerequisite for membership in this Church. Applicants who establish that they have participated in believer's baptism by immersion through another Christian ministry shall be considered to have satisfied this condition. Alternatives due to physical disability will be provided by the Leadership.

# ARTICLE III: LEADERSHIP

## SECTION 1, LEADERSHIP

- A. The Leadership shall consist of the elected Elders and Pastors.
- B. The spiritual leadership of the Church, under the headship of Christ, shall be provided by the Leadership. The Leadership shall consist of three to fifteen lay Elder selected by the members of the Church. The number shall be determined by the need and availability of qualified men. The Senior Pastor shall be a permanent member of the Leadership.
- C. Leadership shall be selected in accordance with the qualifications described in Appendix C(I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9)and vetted by the Senior Pastor and Leadership. The candidates shall be introduced to the membership a minimum of 30 days prior to vote.
- D. The Leadership shall collectively be responsible for overseeing and shepherding the people of the Church. These are both accomplished as the Leadership model Christian living and servant leadership (I Peter 5:1-4) and teach, exhort, and correct according to Scripture (Titus 1:9). Their aims are the spiritual welfare of each individual (Hebrews 13:17) and the growth towards Christ-likeness of the body of believers (Ephesians 4:12-16). Some specific examples of these responsibilities within this Church are:
  - 1. Provide discernment and direction regarding the goals, priorities, and vision for the body of believers.
  - 2. Evaluate and approve proposed ministries.
  - 3. Approve leaders recommended by the Pastoral Staff for new and ongoing ministries.
  - 4. Provide an Elder liaison to each member of the Pastoral Staff for the purposes of support and enhanced communication.
  - 5. Further the development of future Leadership and develop a slate of Elder candidates as necessary.
  - 6. Interview and hire paid staff, and approve salaries for all paid staff.
  - 7. Provide assistance to the Pastor(s) at Church worship services when needed to serve communion and lead services in the absence of the Pastor(s). Perform such other spiritual offices as the Word of God teaches.

- E. Elders shall be elected by a two thirds majority vote of members present at scheduled business meeting. Provisions shall be made for an Elder's sabbatical as determined by Leadership.
- F. An Elder may be removed from office:
  - 1. By his own decision.
  - 2. By a unanimous vote of the remainder of the Leadership.

## SECTION 2, CHURCH CHAIRMAN

The Church Chairman shall be an Elder, shall be elected by the Leadership, shall preside at all business meetings, and shall have such additional responsibilities as may be delegated by the Leadership. If the Church Chairman is not available to preside at a business meeting, the Leadership shall appoint another Elder to serve as Chairman of the meeting. The Church Chairman shall serve as Chairman of the Leadership. He shall be an ex officio member of all Church ministries.

## SECTION 3, PASTORAL STAFF

- A. The Pastoral Staff shall include the Senior Pastor and all Associate Pastors.
- B. Each member of the Pastoral Staff must be of blameless Christian character according to the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 which are summarized under Biblical Qualifications for Leadership, Appendix C. Each member of the Pastoral Staff must have a shepherd's heart according to I Peter 5: 1-3, Ephesians 4:12-13, I Thessalonians 5:14, II Thessalonians 3:9, I Timothy 1:3,18, 4:6, 4:12-16, 5:2-3, and II Timothy 2:15, 4:2,5. Each member of the Pastoral Staff must adhere to the Bylaws and Membership Covenant.
- C. The Senior Pastor shall be called for an indeterminate period by at three-quarters majority vote of the members voting at a scheduled business meeting of the Church.
- D. Duties:
  - 1. The Senior Pastor shall be a member of the Leadership and shall be accountable to the Leadership.
  - 2. The Senior Pastor shall be primarily responsible:
    - a. To preach the Word of God and administer the ordinances of the Church.
    - b. To oversee and supervise the Pastoral Staff, adjunct staff, and operational staff.

- c. To develop and communicate vision.
  3. The Senior Pastor shall determine the responsibilities and duties of Associate Pastors. The Associate Pastors are directly accountable to the Senior Pastor unless otherwise specified by the Leadership.
  4. The Pastoral Staff shall coordinate and integrate ministries, including such things as initiating ministry planning, solving common problems, and coordinating volunteer leaders and workers. The Pastoral Staff shall be responsible for identifying and developing Ministry Leaders. All Ministry Leaders shall be accountable to one of the Pastoral Staff.
- E. Any Pastor may be removed from office:
1. By his own decision,
  2. By a unanimous vote of the Leadership. The Senior Pastor, though a member of the Leadership, may not vote regarding his own removal from office.

#### SECTION 4, MINISTRY LEADERS

- A. The term "Ministry Leader" lay leaders. Ministry Leaders shall be recommended by a member of the Pastoral Staff and approved by the Leadership. Persons currently serving in such positions are expected to work with their Pastoral Staff representative to identify and train future leadership for their respective ministries. Additional such positions may be recommended by the Pastoral Staff as needed.
- B. Temporary task forces and committees may be appointed by the Leadership as needed. These task forces and committees will be accountable to the Leadership, and will disband when their mission is accomplished

#### SECTION 5, ADJUNCT AND OPERATIONAL STAFF

- A. The term "Adjunct Staff" shall refer to persons specifically appointed or hired by the Leadership, after the prospective Adjunct Staff person(s) has been approved by the Leadership, to assist the Senior Pastor and the other Pastoral Staff in the administration of Church operations, programs, or ministries. Examples of Adjunct Staff might be Business Administrator or Director of Women's Ministries. Adjunct Staff may be voluntary, unpaid members of the Church, or may be hired. The hiring of Adjunct Staff shall be allowed if budgeted money has been made available for this specific purpose. Adjunct Staff are accountable to the Senior Pastor.

- B. The hiring of Operational Staff (e.g., janitors, secretaries, security, etc.) shall be done by the Pastoral Staff after the prospective Operational Staff person has been approved by the Leadership, if budgeted money has been made available for this purpose.

## SECTION 6, OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

- A. OFFICERS. The officers of the church shall be the Church Chairman, the Treasurer, and the Secretary. The Treasurer and the Secretary shall be appointed as officers by the Trustees.

### Duties:

1. The duties of the Church Chairman are described in Article 3, Section 2 of these Bylaws.
  2. The Treasurer shall oversee receipt and disbursement of funds of the Church in accordance with the annual budget and these Bylaws. The Treasurer shall at the beginning of each fiscal year supply a plan of internal financial accountability to the Leadership for approval. This plan must establish procedures for all tithes, offerings, and love gifts to be received and tallied in the presence of another Church member or a member of the Church staff. The Treasurer shall oversee the preparation of a proposed annual budget and, after approval by the Leadership, present the proposed budget at the business meeting prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year. The Treasurer shall ensure the maintenance of accurate records of the Church's financial affairs, and shall report on its financial standing at regular business meetings. The Treasurer shall supply all records during audits, shall supply all reports required by government authorities, and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Leadership.
  3. The Secretary shall keep accurate records of actions taken at all business meetings of the Church. The Secretary shall preserve, in a safe place, all records of the Church, shall maintain accurate rolls of the Leadership, officers, and membership of the Church (showing date of each approval, election, and removal). The Secretary shall complete any periodic reports required by state or federal agencies, and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Leadership.
- B. TRUSTEES. The Trustees of the Church shall be the Leadership. This section shall constitute sufficient authority for their designation as such
  - C. Officers and Trustees shall perform the duties prescribed by these Bylaws or by the laws of the State of Utah governing non-profit corporations.

## SECTION 7, ELIGIBILITY

All Leadership and Officers, and Ministry Leaders must be members of the Church. All positions of leadership and authority over adult ministries within the Church shall be literally subject to the scriptural guidance of I Timothy 2:12. The gender role distinctions established by this passage shall apply to Leaders of Adult Ministries, Adjunct Staff, and all teaching positions for adult classes.

## ARTICLE IV: MEETINGS

### SECTION 1, BUSINESS MEETINGS

Business meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor, the Chairman, or by two-thirds majority vote of the Leadership.

### SECTION 2, NOTICE

- A. Notice of the time of a business meeting shall be given by bulletin announcement at the regular Sunday services of the Church a minimum of thirty days prior to the date of the meeting.
- B. None of the following actions may be taken or approved at any business meeting of the Church unless the notice of the meeting includes a statement of the nature of the proposed action:
  - 1. The calling of the Senior Pastor.
  - 2. Election or removal of an Elder.
  - 3. Borrowing of money by the Church.
  - 4. Authorizing any single expenditure of \$25,000 or more, with the exception of any emergency measures. In an emergency situation, the Leadership may take necessary action to alleviate the emergency, and then call a special meeting to inform the members.
  - 5. Amendment of these Bylaws.

### SECTION 3, VOTING

- A. All members of the Church have the right to vote at any business meeting or by absentee ballot. All matters shall require at least fifty 50% participation of members for the matter to be approved, except when otherwise specified in these Bylaws.
- B. The following actions shall require a vote of the members:

1. The calling of the Senior Pastor.
2. The election of an Elder.
3. Borrowing of money by the Church.
4. Approval of the annual budget, amendment of the budget, or the expenditure of funds of \$25,000 or more.
5. Amendment of these Bylaws.

## **ARTICLE V: FINANCE**

### **SECTION 1, ANNUAL BUDGET**

At a scheduled business meeting prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year, the members shall adopt a budget for the next fiscal year, and this section shall constitute sufficient notice of that action. Approval of the budget shall constitute authority for the expenditure of funds in the amounts and for the purposes stated in the budget. The fiscal year shall begin January 1.

### **SECTION 2, QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Financial procedures and records shall be reviewed and evaluated at least once every three years by a certified public accounting firm designated by the Leadership. The Leadership will determine the scope of the review. At a minimum, this review will include an evaluation of the Church's internal financial controls.

### **SECTION 3, PURCHASE OR DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY**

The Trustees shall have authority to purchase real and personal property for the Church and to sell, mortgage, lease or otherwise convey or dispose of any real or personal property of the Church. Any such transaction involving property with an aggregate fair market value in excess of \$25,000 will require prior approval by two-thirds majority vote of the members.

## **ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended or altered by a two-thirds majority vote of the members voting at any scheduled business meeting of the Church, provided that notice has been given as required in these Bylaws.



# South Valley Community Church Bylaws

## APPENDIX A

### South Valley Community Church Commitment of Membership

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a member of South Valley Community Church. With God's help, I will do my best to...

1. Live out my changed life in Christ where ever I go (Personal Salvation), and follow up on my changed life with Believer's Baptism.
2. Support this church with my prayers, realizing this is communication with God.
3. Support this church with my finances, realizing once I give my Tithe, God will start blessing me financially.
4. Support this church by getting involved in a ministry.

I also understand the importance of my life becoming more like Jesus and so will commit to the following:

1. I will spend time in heart-felt prayer.
2. I will spend time studying the Bible.
3. I will ask for God's Spirit to change me from old habits.
4. I will pray for needs and people in my church.

Since South Valley is a Community, I will do my best to:

1. Not gossip
2. Greet visitors and encourage them in their walk.
3. Make friends and spend time with them.
4. Lift the people of SVCC up in prayer and help where ever I can.

I understand that I may have "blind areas" in my life which hold me back and therefore, will accept correction from leadership that is done...

1. Lovingly.
2. Without attack upon my character.
3. In a manner that will help me grow in my walk.
4. With a commitment to help me and not hurt me.

I understand that South Valley's leadership may have "blind areas" in how they handle ministering to others and there is an open door for my voice to be heard as long as I approach them,

1. Lovingly
2. Without attack upon their character
3. In a manner that will help them grow in their walk
4. With my commitment to help them and not hurt them

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## What We Believe

South Valley is a non-denominational, Bible-teaching church. Our Belief Statement has been “tailored” after the Cornerstone Church in Gilbert, AZ. It is a combination of having a Personal Relationship with Christ as well as a Community Relationship with each other as a Body of Believers. Therefore, our basic beliefs on the Bible, God, Jesus, and the Church are as follows:

### 1. God Wrote a Book

The Bible is God’s Word to all people, written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because of its divine inspiration, the Bible is Truth without any mixture of error and is completely relevant to our daily lives.

### 2. God Is Unique

The Trinity: God Exists as 1 and yet 3. There is one living and true God, existing eternally in three persons: the Father, the son—Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Although each member of the Trinity serves different functions, they carry out those functions in perfect harmony while being equal in power and authority.

### 3. Jesus is Our Key

Who Is Jesus? Jesus Christ is completely human and at the same time completely God. He is the only way to bring people who are enemies of God back into a right relationship with God. He lived a perfect life demonstrating to mankind how to live, so that He could be a substitution for us in satisfying God’s demands for perfection. He defeated death in His resurrection so that we could have and experience true life.

### 4. Salvation Determines Our Eternity

What is Salvation? The blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross, provides the only way of salvation through the forgiveness of sin. Salvation only occurs when people place their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus as the substitute and sufficient payment for their sin. Salvation is a gift of God’s grace and it cannot be earned through our own efforts.

### 5. The Church Is A Community

The church is a local community of believers unified through their faith in Jesus Christ. It is committed to the teachings of Christ, to obeying all of His commands, and it seeks to bring the good news of Jesus to the world. The Church works together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ.

# South Valley Community Church Bylaws

## APPENDIX B

### **SVCC POSITION ON HUMAN SEXUALITY**

The sexual ethics of American culture have never been more confused and contorted. Divorce is rampant, sex before marriage is almost universally accepted as a reality, cohabitation before or instead of marriage has become normal, new technologies have made pornography immediately accessible, the once inconceivable notion of same-sex marriage is now recognized by law, and gender has become fluid. The need for a clear voice from our church on all these matters is critical—both for the health of our church community and to serve as a faithful witness to the world.

The following Statement sets forth a Christian vision of human sexuality as a good gift from our God.

In it, we will affirm marriage, singleness, celibacy, sexuality, and gender as we believe God intended them, as well as address a variety of sexual attractions, behaviors, and relationships that the Bible prohibits. We will focus primarily on homosexuality and same-sex marriage. And later, in our Church Covenant, we will address what believing these things will mean for our churches and what the pastors and leaders expect of our members.

### **WE BELIEVE**

1. What we believe regarding human sexuality and marriage flows from our commitment to God and his will as expressed in the Bible. On the most important matters of human sexuality, God has not asked our opinion. Therefore, even if our motives are loving and kind, Christians do not have the option to disregard its teachings. (Dt. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-38; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; cf. Dt.32:45-47; Matt. 4:4).
2. God created human beings as male and female (Gen. 1:27). The complementary anatomical and relational nature of the human race as “male and female” reflects the created order given by God when he created human beings “in his image” (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1, 3; 1 Cor. 11:7; James. 3:9; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10). While our created differences as male and female have often been used to oppress women, we believe in the full equality of women and men as image bearers of God our Creator
3. Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for sexual behavior: monogamous marital relations between one man and one woman (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-8; Heb. 13:4) and sexual celibacy (1 Cor. 7:1, 8; Matt. 19:12). Either is a gift from God and is given as he wills for his glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in his gift to them.

## OUR DEFINITION OF A BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

Marriage is the original and foundational institution of human society, established by God as a one-flesh, covenantal union between a man and a woman from different families that is life-long (until separated by death), exclusive (monogamous and faithful), and generative in nature (designed for bearing and rearing children).

This is still true whether a couple is able or intends to have children. Procreation was one of God's original intentions for marriage but may not be a requirement in the present age. Additionally, there are circumstances under which we recognize a biblical divorce, which allows for remarriage, but that was not God's original intent either.

1. In Scripture, monogamous, heterosexual marriage bears a significance that goes beyond the regulation of sexual behavior, the bearing and raising of children, the formation of families, and the recognition of certain economic and legal rights—all of which are important. Marriage between a woman and a man is emphatically declared in Scripture to create a “one flesh” union (Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:5), which exemplifies the mystery of the union between Christ and his body, the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).

2. Although many people do choose to get married, the Bible (especially in the New Testament), celebrates singleness. Jesus, Paul, and many early Christian leaders were both single and celibate. Singleness gives greater freedom for service, is desirable, and should be celebrated and honored in the church (Matt. 19:10-12, 1 Cor. 7:1, 8, 25-30).

3. All humans have a sinful nature. This doesn't mean that everything humans do is a sin, but it does mean that sin has affected all aspects of human nature including our sexuality (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23; 5:12). Therefore, all people—straight and LGBTQ—have a broken sexuality which is manifested in different ways and in need of the healing grace of Christ.” Whether the prohibited heterosexual or same-sex attractions (SSA) and temptations men and women experience are the product of their life experiences, their biological or psychological influence, or the influence of demons or another source—no matter the origin, they are not what God intended. They are the result of the Fall (Genesis 3) and sin's corruption of creation. Therefore, while we try to understand those circumstances, these prohibited behaviors are still sin. God did not make us this way. It's what we've become as a result of sin.

4. Temptation (including sexual temptation) may not be a sin—if it is a brief and fleeting thought, almost immediately dismissed and not seriously contemplated. Even multiple temptations are not a sin. Jesus was tempted three times, and “in every way,” and did not sin (Matthew 4:1-11, Hebrews 4:15). Same-sex attractions/temptations in themselves are not sin. Leviticus 18, 20, and 1 Corinthians 6 all refer to the sexual act (not the person) as sinful. However, someone who is attracted to the same gender is not allowed to engage in it either physically (sexually), according to these passages, or mentally, according to Jesus in Matthew 5. Indeed, God does prohibit the serious contemplation of sin, and the Bible warns us against dwelling on it because it often leads to the actual act (James 1:13-15). For instance, although the

Bible does not call temptation sin, it prohibits not only adultery, but the desire for adultery (Matthew 5:27, 28). Therefore, while same-sex attraction alone is not a sin, dwelling on homosexual thoughts, engaging in lustful fantasies, and ultimately acting on same-sex behaviors are all sins. Living holy lives in spite of ongoing temptations must be the goal of all Christians.

5. The good news of the Gospel is that all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who gives us both the desire and the power to resist temptation. Therefore, saying, "I'm powerless to overcome my sin," is a lie from Satan, the deceiver (Romans 8:9-11, Eph. 4:30, 1 Tim 2:25, 26, James 4:7, 1 John 2:4, 1 John 4:13, 18).

6. Cohabitation of two unmarried people, whether by an SSA or a heterosexual couple, may not be a sin if there is sexual abstinence, but it may be unwise for these reasons:

Cohabitation increases the risk of falling into sexual sin and therefore is very unwise. Even if a couple is committed to sexual abstinence, living together significantly increases the temptation and likelihood of sexual promiscuity of all varieties. "Flee from sexual immorality." 1 Cor. 6:18

Cohabitation of men and women attracted to one another hinders a couple's witness for Christ. The Bible calls us to be holy and set apart. Even if a couple is committed to sexual abstinence, people may assume they are having sex and as a result, they will be a poor witness (1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:9). For these reasons we urge cohabitating, heterosexual couples to either choose marriage or live separately.

7. The Scriptures have much to say about sexual behavior, from the beautiful affirmations of the Song of Songs to the prohibitions found throughout the Bible (e.g., Rom. 13:13-14; 1 Cor. 5:1-2; 6:9-10, 15-18; Gal. 5:16-21; 1 Thess. 4:3-8). Jesus himself warned against all sexual immorality, which includes all sexual practices prohibited in the Old Testament Law (Mark 7:21). The Apostle Paul affirms that among believers "there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality." (This includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality as found in Eph. 5:3, 1 Timothy 1:9, 10.) References to same-sex behavior in the Bible are always expressed in negative terms. All same-sex sexual behavior, whether it is consensual or not, is specifically condemned as sin in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Gen. 19:4-11; Lev. 18:22; Lev. 20:13; Judges 19:22-25; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-11). Homosexual behavior and other prohibited sexual behaviors, along with the experience of same-sex attraction, are not God's intent for human sexuality as revealed at creation and throughout Scripture. We can assume from Scripture that it was God's intention that men be attracted to women and women to men. Additionally, there are no examples in Scripture of any other human sexual attraction of which God approves other than opposite-gendered attraction. So, even if it sounds politically incorrect, any other sexual desire, whether intentional or not, is not God's original intent for humans (Rom 1:26, 27, Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-25, Mat. 19:4-6).

8. We have this warning from God in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10: "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." God, through Paul, is not referring to those who struggle with committing various sins, repent of them, seek

forgiveness, make a serious effort to resist temptation, and call on the Holy Spirit to help them in these areas. Instead, God is warning those who have given up the struggle, who no longer call it sin, and have given themselves over to and embraced, accepted, or celebrated these behaviors. God warns that in so doing, individuals prove themselves not to be children of God, thereby disqualifying themselves from inheriting the Kingdom of God.

9. In Scripture, God has made it clear that he values and guards the moral and spiritual health of the community above that of the individual. This was true both in Israel (in the Old Testament) and in the Church (in the New Testament). Therefore, an individual's right to disobey God in order to "be happy" never trumps the declared will of God for his people (Deut. 19:20, 1 Sam. 2:25, Acts 5:9-11).

10. As followers of Jesus, we are to find our primary identity in Christ, and not in our sexuality or any other distinctions. Christians have rarely identified themselves as Baptist Christians or heterosexual Christians. We are first and foremost Christians who may be Baptists, straight, etc. Therefore, we encourage Christians who experience same-sex attractions to not use the term gay Christian. To do so can have the appearance of having a dual allegiance of identity (Eph. 2:19, Gal. 3:26-28, Phil.3:20).

11. Having read, understood, and considered the best affirming interpretations of Scripture for same-sex sexual activity, we have concluded that they do not present a more faithful or compelling Christian vision for human sexuality than the historic Christian view of not affirming same-sex activity.

12. The church is to be a new community that resembles a family of brothers and sisters united in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, displaying deep relationships of love (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Rom. 12:10; 1 Tim. 5:1-2). Celibacy and singleness—whether by heterosexuals or same-sex attracted men and women—are to be celebrated and affirmed within the church family.

13. The theology of self-denial is based on Christ's description of what it means to follow him and take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23, 24). Any teaching that elevates personal sexual expression and sense of fulfillment over clear Scriptural commands fails to account for Christ's demand that each of us joyfully suffer the consequences of self-denial and obedience. Further, Paul's and Peter's desire and plea for Christians was to suffer rather than compromise their faith (Luke 9:23, Phil. 3, 1 Peter 3:14-15, Hebrews 11:24-26). Therefore, as we interpret that for our church today, our positions on human sexuality may be very unpopular with some people, both homosexual and heterosexual men and women. It is quite likely that as individuals and as a church we may suffer for holding to them and living by them.

## **SOUTH VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH COVENANT ON HUMAN SEXUALITY.**

Our churches' Position Statement on Human Sexuality describes what we believe. This Church Covenant describes our aspirations for how we hope Christians who experience same-sex attraction or struggle with gender identity feel at our church, and how we behave toward them. The leadership of our church is committed to changing the culture within our church to be more

empathetic and understanding of those who are navigating same-sex attraction, as well as their families.

If Jesus said the second greatest commandment is “to love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31), as a whole church, we must confess we have not always done that to certain people (such as the LGBTQ community).

Jesus was criticized by the religious establishment for associating with those who were perceived as “untouchables.” The untouchables of Jesus’ day were the people whom religious Jews would never befriend (Luke 15:1-2). To imitate Jesus, we must risk what Jesus risked—our reputation. Our goal is to help our church understand these sexual issues biblically and respond gracefully in order to make Jesus’ command to love a reality in our church.

### WE BELIEVE AND PROMISE...

1. We welcome anyone who is not yet a Christian, regardless of marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity, to attend church services with us. You are welcome here! If for any reason you are not received with kindness and dignity, please contact any elder or pastor.
  2. Every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, because each of us bears the image of God. Men and women who experience same-sex attractions (SSA) or are struggling with gender identity deserve this dignity and respect no less than anyone else. We, as Christians, should demonstrate this in our thoughts, speech, and behavior. Words and humor that demean SSA/LGBTQ men and women have no place in our church or the Christian community. Such demeaning words are a sin, and church members are expected to speak out and address this sin whenever it occurs.
  3. We covenant to be a friend of any Christian who experiences SSA.
  4. We oppose any mistreatment of those who identify themselves as LGBTQ, whether they identify as Christian or non-Christian. However, we do not accept that simply holding our biblically based views on same-sex behaviors and marriage is, in and of itself, either homophobic or unloving. God simply does not give us the freedom to accept behaviors he has prohibited.
  5. We confess that even Christians who attempt to follow biblical mandates on sex and marriage are not immune to expressing our own sexuality in sinful ways, for “all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory” (Rom. 3:23). Some heterosexual Christians have committed adultery, have had sex before marriage, cohabitate, sexually abuse women and children, view pornography, divorce for unbiblical reasons, and lust. All these behaviors and attitudes are sin, and if they are known to the church leadership, will be dealt with according to our church’s Constitution and Policies.
- However, the fact that immorality exists even in our church and may go unpunished cannot be an individual Christian’s excuse for their own personal immorality. If our church fails to take consistent, timely disciplinary action, please gently remind us, and we will do our best to address it wisely (1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1).
6. Many heterosexuals, Christian or not, have a visceral revulsion to same-sex behavior that they do not have toward heterosexual immorality. There may be many reasons for that. However,

unless we ask the Holy Spirit to help us, our attitude will be a barrier to making our church a safe place for LGBTQ/SSA men and women. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us grieve all sin equally. However, changing our demeanor does not mean our beliefs have changed.

7. We believe a Christian's primary identity should be in Christ. Therefore, we prefer, that church members refer to themselves as Christians who experience a same-sex attraction or struggle with gender identity, rather than referring to themselves as a straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender Christian.

8. As open and accepting as we hope to be, we do not view a committed heterosexual relationship within marriage as the moral or spiritual equivalent of a committed same-sex relationship—married or not. Some heterosexual acts are sinful, but all same-sex sexual acts are sinful, according to Scripture, even if done in what is considered to be a marriage by the laws of this land.

9. We are committed to making our church a safe place for transgender and gender non-conforming men and women to hear and experience the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. We do not believe a person needs to fully resolve their gender confusion in order to become a Christian. Their struggle may continue throughout their life, even as they grow in their faith. However, we do believe it is sinful to approve of transgenderism (the pursuit of being a different gender than your God-given biological sex), as it is inconsistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption. We believe that the grace of God in Christ enables a person to forsake transgender self-conceptions and to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

10. Any church member or visitor who struggles with same-sex attraction (or any other area of temptation) is encouraged to contact any Christ-centered and mature spiritual leader, mentor, or pastor in our church. You will be treated respectfully and confidentially. We will offer you biblical counseling or refer you to a counselor/mentor. (Please note that this offer is made to those who struggle with any area of sin.)

11. In our church there may be an individual married to someone of the opposite sex and who is also experiencing same-sex attraction. These are often called mixed-orientation marriages. We consider those marriages to be biblical, and we'll encourage the heterosexual spouse to stay married. Additionally, we encourage the person navigating this SSA tension to contact a Christ-centered and mature counselor, spiritual leader, mentor, or pastor in our church to receive help with what can be a difficult journey.

12. It is commonly believed that if Christians with SSA would only have enough faith, this attraction could be "prayed away." While we know that God, through prayer, and by the use of sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE), has reduced the SSA or increased the heterosexual attraction of some Christians, the best evidence leads to the conclusion that, just as not every heterosexual Christian who prays for physical or emotional healing is cured, neither do all SSA Christians experience a partial or complete change in orientation through SOCE and/or prayer.



13. For the sake of unity, church members who teach or lead others, and who express views contrary to those in our Position Statement on Human Sexuality will likely be asked to step down from those positions.

14. The primary principle at stake in the same-sex marriage controversy or about the Bible's prohibition on all sex outside of marriage, heterosexual or homosexual, is not about sex or marriage. It is about the trustworthiness of the Bible and the authority of God to govern our lives through it. If Christians dismiss the verses prohibiting sexual behavior outside of marriage, then what else about which God has said, "you shall not," is no longer true or authoritative today? Our church takes seriously Jesus' reply to Satan, "It is written..." (Matt. 4:4, 1 Tim. 4:1-5, 2 Tim 3:16, 17) Therefore, our Position on Human Sexuality represents our summary of what our church believes the Bible teaches about sexuality.

## South Valley Community Church Bylaws

### APPENDIX C

**Elder qualifications are summarized in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.**

**ABOVE REPROACH.** An Elder must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free of patterns of sin.

**HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE.** An Elder, if married, must be faithful to his wife.

**TEMPERATE.** An Elder must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.

**PRUDENT.** An Elder must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.

**RESPECTABLE.** An Elder must demonstrate a well-ordered life and honorable behavior.

**HOSPITABLE.** An Elder must enjoy having guests in his home and be unselfish with his personal resources.

**ABLE TO TEACH.** An Elder must be able to communicate truth and sound doctrine.

**NOT ADDICTED TO WINE.** (or similar temptations of indulgence). An Elder must be free from addictions and willing to limit his liberty for the sake of others.

**NOT PUGNACIOUS OR QUICK TEMPERED.** An Elder must be gentle, patient, and able to exercise self-control in difficult situations.

**UNCONTENTIOUS.** An Elder must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.

**FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY.** An Elder must not be stingy, greedy, or preoccupied with amassing material things.

**MANAGE OWN HOUSEHOLD WELL.** An Elder must have a well ordered household, and if married, a healthy family life. An elder's children must be believers who are not wild or rebellious.

**NOT A NEW CONVERT.** An Elder must not be a new believer. He must have been a Christian for long enough to demonstrate the reality of his conversion and depth of his spirituality.

**GOOD REPUTATION WITH OUTSIDERS.** An Elder must be well respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.

**NOT SELF-WILLED.** An Elder must desire to serve, but must serve without self-interest and must not abuse authority.

**LOVING WHAT IS GOOD.** An Elder must desire the will of God in every decision.

**JUST.** An Elder must desire to be fair and impartial. His judgments must be based on scriptural principle.

**DEVOUT.** An Elder must be a devoted follower of Christ, seeking to be conformed to Christ's image. He must be committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and to guarding his own walk.

**HOLDING FAST TO THE WORD.** An Elder must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.