

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH OF PLEASANTON

Bylaws – September 27, 2009

Valley Community Church
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Bylaws

Article I

Name and Premise

Valley Community Church of Pleasanton (VCC) is organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, and shall be autonomous and self-governing in accordance with its Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws.

VCC shall be a non-denominational church, seeking to emphasize the spiritual unity of all true believers in Jesus Christ. It desires the fellowship of all evangelical churches and Christian groups, and will cooperate with them to promote the cause of Christ.

VCC believes the Bible to be Holy Scripture and that it is the authority for the faith and practice of those who follow Christ and contains the necessary guidance for the organization and operation of an assembly of Christians.

Article II

Purpose

The purpose of this Church is:

- A. To lead people to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; that they may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).
- B. To encourage individual Christians toward attaining "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).
- C. To increase Christian faithfulness "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).
- D. To serve the community as Christ's love flows through us (Jeremiah 29:4-9).
- E. To encourage, train, send and support with our prayers and substance committed disciples to serve as ambassadors of Christ in his ministry at home and abroad (Matthew 28:19-20).

Article III

Statement of Faith

In order to identify VCC as Biblical in theology, evangelical in spirit, and as part of the larger Body of Christ, we set forth this statement of guiding beliefs:

- A.** We believe that there is one God,¹ eternally existent² in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit³.
 1. Deuteronomy 6:4 2. Psalm 90:2 3. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14
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- B.** We believe the Bible to be the only inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God, our supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.⁴
 4. 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Psalm 119:89, 105
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- C.** We believe in both the deity and the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ,⁵ in His virgin birth,⁶ in His sinless life,⁷ in His miracles,⁸ in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood,⁹ in His bodily resurrection,¹⁰ in His ascension to the right hand of the Father,¹¹ in His present intercessory work,¹² and in His personal future return in power and glory.¹³
 5. John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-11 6. Matthew 1:18-25 7. Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5; Luke 23:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21 8. John 11:47; 20:30-31; Acts 4:5-16; 24:18-19; Romans 15:17-19; Hebrews 2:4 9. Romans 3:23-25; 4:25; Hebrews 9:11-15, 22b; Leviticus 17:11 10. Luke 24:1-12, 33-48; John 20:24-29; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Revelation 1:17-18 11. Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9; Hebrews 4:14; 9:24 12. Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:24-25 13. John 14:3; Acts 1:10-11; Revelation 1:7-8; 19:11-16
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- D.** We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit¹⁴ by whose indwelling¹⁵ the Christian is able to live a godly life.¹⁶
 14. John 14:26; 16:8, 13-14; Romans 8:26-27 15. John 14:17; 1 John 4:13 16. John 14:16; Galatians 5:16-25
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- E.** We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice¹⁷ and are, therefore, estranged from God¹⁸ and under condemnation.¹⁹ We believe that those who repent of their sins²⁰ and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord²¹ and Savior²² are regenerated by the Holy Spirit,²³ and that such regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential for the salvation of lost and sinful people.²⁴
 17. Psalm 14:1-3; 51:5; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23; 5:12; John 3:19 18. Genesis 3:8-9; Isaiah 1:4; Luke 19:10 19. Luke 3:7; John 5:45; Romans 1:18; 5:16; 9:28; Colossians 3:6 20. Matthew 3:2; Psalm 51:17 21. John 14:1, 6 22. Romans 10:9 23. Titus 3:5-6; 1 Corinthians 2:12 24. Acts 7:51; Galatians 5:4-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30
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- F.** We believe in the broad composition of the Church²⁵—which is presently the Body and shall be the Bride of Christ—a spiritual organism²⁶ comprised of all believers throughout time,²⁷ irrespective of race, gender, nationality, or social status,²⁸ who share a spiritual unity of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁹
 25. Isaiah 65:1; Matthew 25:34; John 10:16; 17:20-23; Ephesians 1:9-11 26. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27, 31-32; Revelation 19:6-9 27. Hebrews 11:39-40; 12:1; Romans 8:29 28. Acts 2:6-11; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 3:11 29. Ephesians 4:4-6
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- G.** We believe in the resurrection³⁰ of both the saved and the lost,³¹ those who are saved to the resurrection of life, and those who are lost to the resurrection of damnation.³²
 30. John 14:19b; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, 15:51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-12 31. Acts 24:15 32. Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:46; John 5:25-29

H. These tenets of our faith identify us with the historic Apostle's Creed:

We believe in God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead and buried;
the third day He rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy church universal,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

Amen.

Article IV

Ordinances and Practices

- A. Baptism:** We believe that after a person receives Christ, he or she will desire to be baptized as a public testimony of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:1-8).
- B. The Lord's Supper:** We believe that the Lord's Supper has been commanded by our Savior to be done in remembrance of his atoning suffering and death on our behalf. (Luke 22:19-20) Participation is open to all believers who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).
- C. Marriage:** We believe that marriage has been ordained by God. This church defines "marriage" as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in the Bible. A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of "marriage" found in these Bylaws. We believe that God intends sexual relations and intimacy to be exercised solely within the marriage of one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-24; Romans 1:18-32; Ephesians 5:31-32; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).

Article V

Membership

- A. Applicants for membership in this local Church must "confess with their lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in their hearts that God has raised Him from the dead" (Romans 10:9) and shall agree with VCC's Statement of Faith, its Ordinances and Practices, and its Bylaws—looking to the Bible as the authoritative basis for Christian living (John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- B. Individuals interested in membership are referred to Appendix III—CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.
- C. Members serving in a leadership capacity shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with VCC's Statement of Faith and its Ordinances and Practices, both on and off VCC premises.
- D. Members may be removed from membership for the following reasons: death, transfer to another church, or resignation for personal reasons by supplying written dated notice to VCC's Elders. Resignation shall neither preclude nor preempt the exercise and implementation of church discipline for members as outlined in Article V. paragraph F, below.
- E. There shall be a current list of active members maintained by the Corporation Secretary. A member who has been absent from VCC for a period of six months, not manifesting interest by attendance or financial support, may be classified as inactive or dropped from membership by the Elders. An attempt should be made by the Elders to restore the person to fellowship before dropping the person from membership. An inactive membership list shall be maintained to include those who consider VCC as their church home, but who would otherwise be dropped from active membership.
- F. As part of VCC's religious function and purpose as stated in these Bylaws, the Bible gives it the responsibility to exercise discipline so that unity within the body may be strengthened and each member nurtured in discipleship. Members of VCC and all other professing Christians who regularly attend VCC are subject to church discipline. For sins of a private, interpersonal nature, Jesus instructs that correction take place in a likewise private, "person-to-person" manner. Only as a last resort should such matters require public admonishment (Matthew 18:15-18). For sins of a more public nature (which reflect on or affect the church community at large), Paul teaches the necessity of corporate action by the whole church (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). The purpose of church discipline is twofold, and redemptive in both aspects: 1) so that the individual may recognize his or her rebellion against God and by true repentance receive God's grace; and 2) so that the name of Christ will not be dishonored, nor the church's witness hindered, by the presence of one in continual rebellion against the Gospel. The procedure for church discipline will be conducted in accordance with the instruction of our Lord:
 - 1. In interpersonal disputes between members, the offended member shall first seek reconciliation with his neighbor privately (Matthew 18:15).
 - 2. Should this effort fail, the offended member shall then seek reconciliation through the mediation of church Elders (Matthew 18:16).

3. And should all such private appeals prove fruitless—or the sin be such as to directly affect the church community as a whole—the following steps may be taken (Matthew 18:17; see also 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Corinthians 5:13; and 2 Thessalonians 3:14):
 - a. **Members:** Discipline shall be up to and including removal from church membership at the sole discretion of the Elders. The progression from private appeal, to leadership mediation, to corporate rebuke shall be honored and never violated. It is imperative that discipline always be carried out in a spirit of gentleness and love (Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11), thereby encouraging reconciliation rather than estrangement, and bringing honor to our Lord's name.
 - b. **Non-Members:** For all other professing Christians and others who regularly attend VCC but who are not members, and whose demeanor is offending, and such private appeals with the above steps in accordance with the instructions of our Lord prove fruitless, the person(s) may be asked privately not to return to VCC.

Article VI

Government

Valley Community Church believes that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His body (Colossians 1:18). Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual leadership and the administrative government of VCC is vested in Elders to oversee and shepherd VCC (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17).

A. Elders:

Role:

1. The Elders shall be the executive board of the membership in its relations with VCC staff, members, committees, and organizations of VCC.
2. Elders shall have supervision over all church operations and programs.
3. Elders are responsible "to keep watch over" the growth of each member, "as men who will have to give account" (Hebrews 13:17).
4. The Elders shall be engaged in a discipleship ministry.
5. Elders shall assign specific duties to Deacons, committees, and all other personnel engaged.
6. Elders shall be responsible for hiring staff as described in Article VIII.
7. Elders shall also be willing to accept the responsibilities stated in Appendix I—CHURCH LEADERSHIP.

Composition:

8. By virtue of the office, a Senior Pastor shall be deemed an Elder of VCC. Other pastors may be emplaced on the Board of Elders upon approval of the membership of VCC.
9. Pastors shall meet all requirements of being an Elder.
10. The number of Elders shall be three or more, with the number of staff Elders being exceeded by at least one lay Elder so that there is always a majority of lay Elders.
11. The approval process and term limits of an Elder shall follow the procedure found in Appendix I—CHURCH LEADERSHIP.

Operation:

12. The Elders shall nominate for approval by VCC's membership a Chairman (who is also President of the Corporation), Vice-Chairman (Vice President of the Corporation), Secretary of the Corporation and other such leaders as it designates.
13. An Elders meeting normally shall be held at least monthly at a time determined by the Elders.
14. All decisions by the Elders shall have resulted from a consensus of the Elders. In cases involving the disciplining and/or removal of an Elder, the disciplined Elder shall not participate.
15. An Elder who is not faithful to the qualifications may be removed from office by the other Elders, after extended, prayerful efforts have been made to restore the man to fellowship.

B. Officers of the Corporation:

General Responsibilities:

1. The Officers of VCC shall be recommended by the Elders and elected by the membership annually. The President and Vice President may not serve more than five consecutive one-year terms.
2. Officers of the Corporation must be lay Elders except for the offices of Secretary and Financial Secretary.
3. The Officers of the Corporation must include, but are not limited to: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Financial Secretary. Officers of the Corporation may have analogous functions as leaders among the Elders.
4. Officers of the Corporation shall have the power to transact business, with powers to act, except that they shall not encumber VCC with a loan, or the transfer, sale, or purchase of real estate except by authorization of the membership, at a congregational meeting called in accordance with these Bylaws.

5. The Board of Elders, except as in the Bylaws otherwise provided, may authorize any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized by the Board of Elders, no officer, agent, or employee shall have any power or authority to bind the Corporation by any contract or agreement, to pledge its credit, or to render it liable for any purpose to any amount.
6. The President of the Corporation shall preside at church business meetings.
7. The Vice President shall serve in the absence of the President and in other capacities determined by the President and approved by the Elders.
8. The Secretary shall record proceedings and decisions of Elders meetings and church meetings.
9. The Secretary shall also keep accurate account of the membership.
10. The Financial Secretary will be selected to assist the Officers and the Elders and shall be responsible for all receipts and disbursements in accord with the annual budget and special decisions of the Elders and VCC. The Officers of VCC may appoint a Treasurer(s) to assist the Financial Secretary. The Financial Secretary shall keep a record(s) of accounts showing receipts and disbursements. In addition, the accounts shall be closed at the end of each fiscal year and a report presented at the annual business meeting of the membership.
11. Any Officer of the Corporation may be recalled or removed from the office by the Elders with the approval of the membership.

Article VII

Congregational Meetings and Voting Procedures

- A. **Annual Meetings.** At least annually, there shall be congregational meetings to receive financial reports and to conduct other needed business.
- B. **Notification.** Due notice shall be given to the membership of any meetings where voting will take place. Due notice shall consist of no less than announcement of the meeting(s) and their stated purpose at VCC's regular worship gatherings, in VCC's bulletin, and public posting in a conspicuous place at VCC for at least two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.
 1. In the event of a vote for Deacon or Elder or staff member, prior notice of the meeting shall also include the names of such persons along with pertinent information about them.
 2. For Bylaw changes submitted for a vote of the membership, prior-notice of the meeting shall also include the exact wording of the proposed amended Bylaws.
 3. Information-only meetings where the item will not be voted on need not be accompanied by advanced information distribution.

C. Binding vote. In its congregational aspect, the membership of VCC votes on the following:

- assuming financial encumbrances (financial obligations in excess of one year),
- acquisition of real property,
- “approving” “authorizing,” and “electing” certain people,
- amending the Bylaws themselves.

Such changes shall take effect upon a duly authorized vote of the membership. Active members who have attained the age of 18 are eligible to vote. Said votes of the membership shall be deemed legitimate and binding when the following criteria are met:

1. Due Notification has been rendered.
2. Quorum. Votes cast (either in person or through official absentee ballot) by a minimum of thirty percent of the active and eligible membership of VCC shall constitute a quorum.
3. Percentage. Approval of Bylaws revisions, financial encumbrances, and pastors, ministers, Elders and Deacons submitted to the membership for vote requires at least two-thirds of the votes cast. All other business transactions require only a simple majority vote for passage.

Article VIII

Salaried Staff

- A.** The Elders shall oversee the hiring of all staff. The services of pastors and ministers, those staff with a major shepherding function, shall also require approval of the membership. Recognizing that members of the pastoral team will develop in their talents over time, or that they may come to us with talents beyond those needed in their positions at hire, or as church ministry needs change, approval of the membership will not be required for role changes involving existing staff with a major shepherding function – except for the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor, or Worship Director positions, for which approval of the membership shall still be required to fill their vacancy or promote existing staff into these three positions.
- B.** The Elders may create ad hoc search committees as needed to identify and recommend qualified candidates for staff positions requiring the approval of the membership. Such search committees shall be composed of a majority of lay members of VCC, with at least one standing Elder. Search Committees shall:
- recommend to the Elders the job responsibilities for the staff position,
 - review candidate resumes,
 - interview and select those candidate(s) they wish to recommend for further review by the Elders.

The Elders shall by a series of consensus decisions, set up the search committee, approve the job description, approve any search firm(s) employed, and select the final candidate for recommendation to the membership for a vote, and such other actions as they deem necessary.

- C. Pastors shall meet all requirements of an Elder.
- D. Prior to hire, candidates for employment shall undergo a thorough background assessment. The duties and salary of all personnel engaged shall be specified at the time of call
- E. When an individual accepts the position of pastoring Elder, he and his wife become members of VCC with full voting privileges.
- F. Provision for retirement and medical programs shall be made available to all full-time staff.
- G. The termination of paid staff shall be the responsibility of the Elders.
- H. The salaries, benefits, vacations, and areas of responsibility for all paid staff shall be determined by the Elders.
- I. General Requirements: Because of VCC's Christian purposes as set forth in its Articles of Incorporation and in these Bylaws, and because VCC believes that each employee of the church has ministerial functions, VCC shall employ only individuals who: (a) profess a personal belief in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and (b) are actively participating in a local Christian body. Employees of VCC, as part of their duties as employees, shall: (a) be ready, willing, and able to participate in Christian services held or sponsored by VCC; and (b) refrain from behavior during working and nonworking hours that detracts from the Christian conformity with biblical standards as determined by VCC including the Statement of Faith and its Ordinances and Practices. All employees shall affirm their agreement with VCC's Statement of Faith and its Ordinances and Practices.

Article IX

Auxiliaries

All organizations that identify themselves as part of VCC shall be classified as auxiliaries of VCC and shall be subject to the Bylaws of VCC. An auxiliary organization shall exist in cooperation with the Elders or the Deacons. The officers of all auxiliary organizations shall be members of VCC and elected by their respective organizations. The membership requirement may be waived by the Elders in cases of juvenile officers of children and youth organizations when the election or appointment of such juvenile officers is expressly approved by the adult sponsor of such an organization.

Article X

Facilities Use

- A. VCC's facilities are dedicated to the Glory of the Lord. Every use of VCC's facilities shall be consistent with VCC's Statement of Faith and its Ordinances and Practices, adopted through these Bylaws, and with the Bible, in order to preserve the character and atmosphere of the church's facility as a place of worship and as a religious center.
- B. This church will permit wedding ceremonies conducted only by pastors of this congregation, or persons approved by the Elders.
- C. In cases where VCC facilities are made available to outside groups, a written statement shall be signed by a lead representative from the group that includes language to the effect that the VCC facilities are offered for their use gratis, no rent is charged, and any charges imposed are strictly for reimbursement of direct costs.
- D. The Elders shall maintain a facilities use policy. No political use shall be allowed without the explicit approval of the Elders.

Article XI

Corporation Property

- A. The title to all real property of the Corporation shall be in the name of the Corporation, and no member or group of members shall have any individual property rights in the assets of the Corporation.
- B. In the event that the Corporation is dissolved, the properties shall be sold and all proceeds, above liabilities, shall be dispersed to mission boards which qualify as non profit organizations according to the following conditions:
 - 1. The mission boards which have received support from VCC during the past five year period shall be the mission boards to share in the final disbursement.
 - 2. The disbursement shall be calculated according to the following formula:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Cumulative total} \\ \text{given to} \\ \text{each mission board} \\ \text{over past five years} \end{array} \right\} \div \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Church's total disbursement} \\ \text{of missions giving} \\ \text{over past five years} \end{array} \right\} \times \begin{array}{l} \text{All proceeds} \\ \text{above liabilities} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \text{Mission Board's} \\ \text{disbursement} \\ \text{share} \end{array}$$

- 3. Disbursement shall be based on the money VCC had designated to a given mission board and not money designated by members.

Article XII

Amendments

- A. All proposed amendments or revisions to these Bylaws shall be presented by the Elders to the membership for approval.
- B. Publicized meetings shall be held for the purpose of analysis and discussion of any proposed amendments or revisions.
- C. Proposed Bylaws revisions and amendments shall become effective upon membership approval by at least two-thirds of quorum votes cast.
- D. Whenever an amendment or new Bylaw is adopted, it shall be copied in the book of minutes. If any Bylaw is repealed, the fact of the repeal with the date of the meeting at which the repeal was enacted or written assent was filed shall be stated in the book of minutes, and the new revised version of the Bylaws published and made available to the congregation.

Article XIII

Execution of Documents

- A. **Records.** The Corporation shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. All such books, records, and accounts shall be kept at its principal place of business in the State of California, as fixed by the Board of Elders from time to time.
- B. **Inspection of Books and Records.** Every Elder shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect all books, records, documents of every kind, and the physical properties of the Corporation, and also of its subsidiary organizations, if any.

Article XIV

Receipt, Investment, and Disbursement of Funds

- A.** The Corporation shall receive all monies or other properties transferred to it for the purposes for which the Corporation was formed (as shown by the Articles of Incorporation). However, nothing contained herein shall require the Board of Elders to accept or receive any money or property of any kind if it shall determine in its sole discretion that receipt of such money or property is contrary to the expressed purposes of the Corporation as shown by said Articles or whose source is inconsistent with the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B.** All monies or property given to VCC shall be by the freewill giving of members, others, and entities who wish to support the ministries of VCC. All such donations shall be added to the general fund to be disbursed according to the adopted annual budget or at the discretion of the Elders within the constraints given them by the membership. Offerings may not be designated for a specific purpose. The only exception is when the Elders set up a special fund, such as the building fund, or take a special offering for a specific purpose.
- C.** The Corporation shall hold, manage, and disburse any funds or properties received by it from any source in a manner that is consistent with the express purposes of the Corporation as shown by these Articles.

Article XV

Appendices

These bylaws are composed of Articles and Appendices. The Appendices shall be considered as authoritative as the Articles.

Article XVI

Severability

If any term or provision of these Bylaws shall be found invalid, the remaining terms and provisions of these Bylaws shall remain unimpaired and in full force and effect.

Appendix I

Church Leadership

A. Offices and Organizational structure:

Throughout the Bible, God’s faith community has adhered and functioned as such under chosen leaders termed *Elders* (Hebrew: *ziquney* / זִקְנֵי; Greek: *presbuteroi* / πρεσβυτεροι). Both Moses (Old Testament) and the apostle Paul (New Testament) appointed Elders to lead God’s people (Numbers 11:16; Acts 14:23). The New Testament speaks of Elders as *overseers* (*episkopoi* / ἐπισκοποι) of the flock of God (Acts 20:28). These include: lay Elders who rule by precept and example (1 Peter 5:3), and Pastoral Elders who rule and labor in Word and Doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17). Together, lay and Pastoral Elders shepherd Christ’s church (1 Peter 5:2), looking to the “chief Shepherd”—Christ Jesus Himself—for their wisdom, strength, and inspiration (1 Peter 5:4).

An important aspect of Elder oversight is to assure that the tangible needs of VCC’s people and its facilities are not neglected. After the manner of the early apostles, VCC’s Elders assure a functioning Board of Deacons (Greek: *diakonoι* / δῆκονοι ”servant ministers”) who tend to the church’s practical needs (Acts 6:1-7).

The organizational structure of VCC can be illustrated thus:

Christ

The Chief Shepherd

Elders

Teaching, Preaching, Worship, Fiscal oversight

Deacons

Facilities, Capital expenditures, Benevolence

B. Elders:

Valley Community Church has a functioning Board of Elders. Their basic responsibility is to "keep watch over the spiritual condition and growth of each member, as men that will have to give an account" (Hebrews 13:17). See Appendix II for a Biblical Sketch of Elders.

1. Qualifications:

The qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. As men exhibit these characteristics in their lives, they are considered as prospective Board members, during which time they are asked to "count the cost" in terms of Biblical responsibilities they would be assuming.

Every Elder shall affirm their agreement with VCC's Statement of Faith and its Ordinances and Practices, contained in these Bylaws, and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with these, both on and off VCC premises.

A prospective lay Elder must have been a member of VCC for at least a year.

2. Biblical Responsibilities:

A Biblical description of an Elder's responsibilities begins with the terms ASPIRATION and DESIRE:

"The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of an overseer (episkopoi / *ἐπισκοποι*), he desires a noble task" (1 Timothy 3:1).

It is essential to stress the importance of a correct mental attitude when seeking the position of Elder. The Greek of 1 Timothy 3:1 presents two verbs: *oregomai* (*ὀρεγομαι*) "to stretch for, to reach after, to grasp", and *epithumeo* (*ἐπιθυμew*) "to burn for, to be passionate about." Eldership is not to be regarded casually nor embarked upon by whim. It demands a clear sense of calling and earnest deliberation and sober commitment. Paul makes this very clear as he writes to the Philippians telling them how he is constantly striving or pressing forward to "grasp more firmly that calling for which Christ grasped me" (Philippians 3:12-16). The desire to reach out and obtain the "call of God in Christ Jesus"—in this case the office of Elder—must be evident in a man's life. This of course must be balanced with a full awareness of the cost (Luke 14:25-33; Romans 12:1; 1 John 2:15,16).

The Bible reveals that God will put within a man this desire which will cause him to reach out after the office of an overseer (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Corinthians 9:16; 15:10; Acts 13:2,3; Ephesians 3:7,8; Hebrews 5:4). "Let us hold true to what we have attained" (Philippians 3:16).

Below are traits of the calling to Eldership. VCC's Elders shall:

- a. Exhibit the "radical" desire to be God's man no matter what the cost (Luke 14:25-30; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 7:22,23; Philippians 1:20-21).
- b. Be willing to accept the responsibility to rule, "as men who will have to render an account [of their trust]..." (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:17,28; James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:17).
- c. Strive to live a life so that you can "be examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

- d. Exhibit compassion toward all people in general and toward the Body in particular. Serving the Body in the same way we serve the Lord: "serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears, and trials." (Acts 20:19; 2 Timothy 2:24; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:2,3; Romans 12:16).
- e. Maintain a teachable spirit.
- f. Seek to bring people to a level of maturity where Jesus is LORD (Acts 20:20, 27-32; 1 Corinthians 1:25,26,28,29; Ephesians 3:7-12).
- g. Be involved in entrusting to "faithful men that which you have heard from me [Paul] before many witnesses so that they will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). For example, as Paul taught Timothy: "Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me" (2 Timothy 3:10-11; cf. John 15:15).
- h. Strive to be involved in the lives of people in such a way as to bring about decisions for Christ, spiritual growth, and fellowship (Romans 1:16; Matthew 28:19,20; Hebrews 10:24,25).

3. Selection:

Candidates to fill vacancies or additions to the Elder Board will be considered by the Elders in one of the following ways: the man is known to the Elders; the man approaches the Elders in the spirit of 1 Timothy 3:1, which states that "if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do;" or the man is recommended to the Elders by a member of the congregation. The Elder Board will then decide on which men to approach for the purpose of their prayerful consideration of serving on the Elder Board in light of the Biblical qualifications for the office. Candidates for Elder shall be authorized to serve upon the approval of VCC's membership.

4. Term Limit:

The typical term for lay Elders shall be five years. A one-year extension may be granted if approved by the membership. As it is not optimal for lay Elders to become long-term members of the Board, a mandatory roll-off will be maintained at the conclusion of the Elder's sanctioned term (or its one-year extension), and a typical minimum bye of two years imposed before said Elder may again stand for election to another five-year Elder term.

C. Deacons:

Valley Community Church has a functioning Board of Deacons. Its basic function is to keep the supporting infrastructure for VCC operating smoothly, and to carry out the directives of the Elders in areas of service to the needs of the flock (Acts 6:2-4).

1. **Qualifications:**

The qualifications are listed in Acts 6:3; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; and 1 Peter 4:10-11. As men and women exhibit these characteristics in their lives, they are considered as prospective Deacon Board members, during which time they are asked to "count the cost" in terms of Biblical responsibilities they would be assuming.

Every Deacon shall affirm their agreement with VCC's Statement of Faith and its Ordinances and Practices, contained in these Bylaws, and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with these, both on and off VCC premises.

A Deacon must be a member of VCC.

2. **Biblical Responsibilities:**

As with Eldership, VCC views desire as basic for all service at VCC. What has been written about "desire" under Elders applies also to Deacons. The various responsibilities of this office are too numerous to attempt a complete list. However, their general spheres of responsibilities are as follows:

- a. Serving the Body through worship;
- b. Serving the physical, material, social and spiritual needs of the Body;
- c. Serving the Body by maintaining the physical plant;

3. **Selection:**

Deacons shall be selected by the Elders and presented to the membership for approval.

4. **Term Limit:**

The typical term for Deacons shall be three years. A one-year extension may be granted if approved by the membership. As it is not optimal for Deacons to become long-term members of the Board, a mandatory roll-off will be maintained at the conclusion of the Deacon's sanctioned term (or its one-year extension), and a typical minimum bye of one year imposed before said Deacon may again stand for election to another three-year Deacon term.

Appendix II

Biblical Sketch of Elders

Old Testament

Selection of Elders for Israel:

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Jethro's advice to Moses | Exodus 18:13-27 |
| 2. | Moses' appreciation | Deuteronomy 1:15-18 |
| 3. | The Seventy: sharing the Spirit, shouldering the burden | Numbers 11:16-30 |

Attributes:

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. | Able | Exodus 18:21, 25 |
| 2. | From the Congregation | Exodus 18:21 |
| 3. | Fears God | Exodus 18:21 |
| 4. | Trustworthy | Exodus 18:21 |
| 5. | Hates a Bribe | Exodus 18:21 |
| 6. | Wise | Deuteronomy 1:15 |
| 7. | Experienced | Deuteronomy 1:15 |
| 8. | Impartial Judgment | Deuteronomy 1:17 |
| 9. | Fearless of man, Reliant on God | Deuteronomy 1:17 |

New Testament

Acts:

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. | Jerusalem Church | |
| | • Oversight of the church's welfare | Acts 11:30 |
| | • Discerning God's will | 15:2, 4, 6 |
| | • Fostering church unity | 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4 |
| | • Promoting world missions | 21:18-20a |

B. Gentile Churches

1. Asia Minor—"And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed" (Acts 14:23).
2. Ephesians Elders (Acts 20:17-35)
 - a. Responded to the apostolic call vs17, 18
 - b. Open to the apostolic teaching vs20
 - c. Received the "whole Counsel of God" vs27
 - d. Holy Spirit empowered guardians of:
 - i. the flock vs28
 - ii. the feeding of the church of the Lord
 - e. Protectors against false doctrine both from within and from without vs30
 - f. Commended: vs32
 - i. to God
 - ii. to the Word of His Grace
 - g. Helpers of the weak vs35
 - h. Lovers of the Apostles vs37

Apostolic Instruction concerning Elders:

A. *James*—Elders are to minister in Jesus' name, agents of forgiveness and healing: "If any among you is sick, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14; cf. vs. 15).

B. *Peter*—"Elders...be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers not because you must

but willingly,
not greedy for money
but eager to serve,
not lording it over people
but being examples.

And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

C. *John*—Speaks of himself as an elder who loves the church (2John 1:1; 3John 1:1). In the Revelation he speaks of the 24 elders who sit on thrones, wear white robes and are adorned with crowns. The 24 elders surround the throne of God in Heaven, along with the four beasts (Revelation 4:4,10; 5:6-14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4). They form a chorus and sing praises to God and to the Lamb (Revelation 4:11; 5:9f; 11:17f; 19:4f).

D. *Paul*—The aim of Paul’s apostolic charge to church leaders is “love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5).

Paul laid out to his younger pastoral protégées Timothy and Titus the essential qualities for an Elder to have:

<u>1 Timothy 3:1-7</u>	<u>Titus 1:5-9</u>
“An overseer (<i>episkopos</i> / ἑπίσκοπος) must be...”	“An overseer (<i>episkopos</i> / ἑπίσκοπος) as God’s steward must be...”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • above reproach vs2 • no womanizer • temperate • sensible • dignified • hospitable • an apt teacher • no drunkard vs3 • not violent but gentle • not quarrelsome • no lover of money • manage his own household well keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way vs4 “for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God’s church?” vs5 • not a recent convert vs6 • well thought of by outsiders vs7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blameless vs6 -7 • no womanizer • children are believers, not profligate or insubordinate • not arrogant vs7 • not quick-tempered • not a drunkard • not violent • not greedy for gain • hospitable vs8 • a lover of goodness • master of himself • upright • holy • self-controlled • must hold firm to the sure word as taught vs9 • able to give instruction in sound doctrine • able to confute those who contradict sound doctrine

Appendix III

Church Membership

The membership of Valley Community Church is composed of people who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9), who support VCC's Statement of Faith, its Ordinances and Practices, and its Bylaws covenant, and recognize the need to assemble together for edification (1 Corinthians 14:26), for exhortation and encouragement (Hebrews 10:24,25).

The leadership at VCC does not solicit membership for the sake of having large numbers on the roll. We believe that under Grace your responsibility is to live your own life "as unto the Lord" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Membership then becomes a way for you to identify with a local group of believers that is doing those things in which you believe God wants you to be involved. Membership legally identifies you with VCC for business purposes and is a sign to the leadership of VCC that you are willing to be committed to this body.

Becoming a Member

1. Contact the Pastor or any Elder and express your interest in becoming a member.
2. You will receive a copy of the Bylaws, and other information pertinent to membership, and given an opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of membership.
3. You will be asked to give your personal testimony and indicate your agreement with VCC's Statement of Faith, its Ordinances and Practices, and its Bylaws
4. Upon completion of the membership procedure and the mutual concurrence between you and the Elders, you will be presented as a member to the congregation.

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).