

# CONSTITUTION

## **Preamble:**

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This Constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches. We do establish this constitution in a manner consistent with the principles and accepted tenants of the Southern Baptist denomination.

## **Article 1**

### **Name and Location**

The name of this non-profit organization is Valley Life Church of Columbia Falls. This non-profit organization will be further referred to in the Bylaws as Valley Life. The mailing address of the registered office of the corporation is New Address, Columbia Falls, MT 59912 and its offices will reside at the same location. The Church shall have full power and authority to change the office and meeting place from one location to another.

## **Article 2**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of Valley Life Church is to guide people on the journey to follow Jesus.

## **Article 3**

### **Statement of Faith**

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God, and as the only basis for our beliefs and practice. Valley Life Church accepts “The Baptist Faith and Message 2000” as an affirmation of basic Christian beliefs, as a general statement of our faith.

## **Article 4**

### **Official Records**

Valley Life Church will maintain accurate records of this constitution, the by-laws, articles of incorporation, membership records, and policies at the church office. Valley Life Church will maintain the following records and reports:

1. Adequate and correct books and records of accounts (financial records).
2. Minutes of the proceedings of its congregational family meetings.
3. A record of its members including letters of good standing, transfer letters from fellow Southern Baptist Church, record of baptism, and their contact information.
4. Contribution statements for contributors.

## **Article 5**

### **Affiliation**

Valley Life Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation in expanding God’s kingdom, Valley Life Church voluntarily affiliates with the Montana Southern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) for the alignment of doctrine and cooperation in missions.

## **Article 6**

### **Nonprofit Status and Dissolution**

The property of Valley Life Church is irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes, and no part of the net income or assets of this organization shall ever inure the benefits of a pastor, officers or members of this church, or to the benefit of any private individual.

Upon the winding up or dissolution of this church, after paying or adequately providing for any debts or obligations of the corporation, the remaining assets shall be given equally among the two mission agencies of the SBC: The International Mission Board (IMB) and The North American Mission Board (NAMB).

# BY-LAWS

## Preamble:

### Article 1: Church Membership

#### Section 1: General

Membership in Valley Life Church shall consist of all persons who have met the requirements for membership, been affirmed by the congregation and are listed on the membership roll.

#### Section 2: Qualifications of Membership

Any person may offer himself/herself as a candidate for membership in Valley Life Church. Candidates for membership may initiate a request to join through one of following means:

1. By profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and for scriptural baptism by immersion
2. By promise of Letter from another Southern Baptist Church
3. By statement of faith – which includes a conversion experience and baptism by immersion following conversion.

All candidates for membership shall be reviewed by a pastor of Valley Life Church. To become a member, candidates must:

1. Offer strong testimony of a conversion experience to Christ (John 3:3-7, John 1:12- 13, 1 Peter 1:18-25)
2. Have been biblically baptized by immersion in water after conversion (Matthew 28:19, Colossians 2:12, Mark 1:10).
3. Complete the Membership Class of Valley Life Church
4. Sign the Covenant and Statement of Beliefs agreement with Valley Life Church.

#### Section 3: Duties of Membership

The points below summarize the minimum levels of commitment expected by Valley Life Church:

1. We will strive to live a consistent Christian life as a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. (Romans 6:4, 8:14, 13:13-14, Ephesians 4:17-32, 5:1-2, 15, and 1 John 1:6-7)
2. We will have a willing heart to serve and be involved in church ministries consistent with the giftedness of each individual. (James 1:22, Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Peter 4:10-11)
3. We will contribute regularly to the financial support of this church with tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:10, and 2 Corinthians 9:7).
4. We willingly submit to the Constitution and By-laws of Valley Life Church.
5. We acknowledge that membership at Valley Life Church is a privilege. We will actively participate in the life of the church. If a member becomes inactive, the church family will make effort to contact them, check on their welfare, express our concern over his/her absence, and encourage them to return.

#### Section 4: Privileges of Membership

In assuming responsibility of maintaining biblical order in the local church, we the membership reserve the following prerogatives:

1. To have a membership according to the By-laws & discipline according to Biblical guidelines.
2. To approve of the annual budget
3. To participate in Ministries
4. To participate in Family Meetings
5. Call of the lead pastor
6. Call of all Pastoral Staff

7. To be eligible for church leadership and service under the authority of the Pastoral Team within the life of Valley Life Church
8. The acquisition or selling of property
9. Use of church facilities (see church policy)
10. The merger or dissolution of Valley Life Church

### **Section 5: Termination of Membership**

Members shall be removed from Valley Life Church roll for the following reasons:

1. Death
2. Transfer of membership to another Baptist church
3. Affiliation with a church of another denomination
4. By personal request of the member
5. Dismissal by the congregation/or officers according to the following conditions:
  1. The member's life and conduct are not in accordance with the Covenant and Beliefs in such a way that the member hinders the ministry influence of Valley Life Church in the community.
  2. Procedures for dismissal of a member shall be according to Matthew 18:15- 22 or Titus 3:10-11. (See following section)
6. Because of the covenant relationship we desire among our membership, a member who does not have any contact with Valley Life Church for a period consisting of 6 or more months, without making known to the church pastoral team their intention to be away for an extended period, shall be removed from membership at any scheduled family meeting after attempts of restoration.
7. The purpose of church discipline or dismissal is the ultimate restoration of the member to fellowship in the body.

### **Section 6: Restoration of Membership**

Members dismissed from Valley Life Church may be restored by unanimous agreement of the Pastoral Team and then brought before the membership at a Family Meeting according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.

### **Section 7: Voting Limitations**

Each member that is at least 15 years old is entitled to one vote. Voting by proxy is prohibited. Members may be able to utilize technology to cast their vote at a family meeting.

## **Article 2: Church Leadership**

### **Section 1: General**

The Church is both a spiritual body and a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of Montana. The Church is subject to the authority of Scripture in all matters and subject to the rules of duly constituted public authority (Romans 13:1-7). The Church organization is to provide the mechanism for the orderly activity of the Church body. All Church Leadership must be members of the Church. The New Testament supports Congregational polity, but not congregational leadership of the Church. Therefore, we hold to congregational involvement in the affairs of the Church, under God called, God appointed leaders who direct the congregation. Representation and Congregational polity will be observed through Ministry Teams combined with clear open Church communication. The leadership of this Church shall be as follows.

#### **A. Lead Pastor**

The qualifications for Lead Pastor shall be consistent with those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. His training, skills, and experiences are needed in this area of leadership. By virtue of his calling and elected office, the Lead Pastor is the spiritual leader of the Church. He shall serve for an indefinite period of time and may terminate his position with the Church by a notice of thirty days, or the Church may terminate his position by the same notice. The Lead Pastor is a key contributor to the vision and spiritual direction of Valley Life Church. He shall provide leadership and oversight to our stated purpose of making disciples. He shall conduct services, give oversight to

the administration of the ordinances of the church, minister to the spiritual needs of the members, provide supervision of the pastoral team and perform other duties that pertain to that office. He shall have primary responsibility of the pulpit ministry of the church.

The Lead Pastor is responsible for leading the Church to function as a New Testament Church. He will work with Pastoral Team, Ministry Teams, Deacons and the Church staff to:

- a. Lead the Church through expository preaching and relevant application.
- b. Lead the Church to become fully devoted followers of Christ who desire to carry out our vision of guiding people on the journey to follow Jesus.
- c. Help guide the church in making decisions that are filtered through our core values.
- d. Proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
- e. Testify to the Spirit-filled life (*Galatians 5:16-24*)
- f. Preside at family meetings of the Church.

## **B. Pastoral Team**

The church has a body of Pastors who teach and shepherd the flock. In accordance with Hebrews 13:17, they keep watch over the congregation as men who must give an account to God.

According to the same text, the congregation is to submit to their authority so that their work will be a joy and not a burden. The Pastors must meet the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7, and they exercise authority over the church only to the degree that they teach and lead according to the scriptures and according to this church's Covenants and Statement of Faith.

This church will employ such ministerial staff members as the church will need. A job description will be written with the assistance of the Standing Ministry Teams and Lead Pastor when the need for staff members is determined. Decisions regarding employment lie with the Lead Pastor and Standing Ministry Teams. Ministerial staff members other than the Lead Pastor will be recommended to the Standing Ministry Teams by the Lead Pastor for approval. The Standing Ministry Teams will then recommend the Pastoral Candidate to the congregation for approval by three-quarters majority vote. The outgoing staff if dismissed by the church for any reason other than a moral failure or financial impropriety will be given a severance decided upon by the Standing Ministry Teams.

### **Duties of Pastoral Team:**

- a. The primary work of the pastors shall be to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, so as to keep the vision of the church alive in the Body.
  1. They are responsible for governing the Church under the delegated authority of Christ and the Church, teaching the Word and with the Deacons, tending the flock of God.
  2. They are to lead and shepherd the church in decision-making matters. This means at times they will gather the congregation for prayer, discussion, seeking of God's will, information, proposals and/or vote. Church votes will be taken on such matters as outlined in these bylaws: annual budgets, buying or selling of property, calling of the lead pastor, the borrowing of money and other things as deemed necessary by the Pastoral Team.
  3. At other times the pastors will make decisions solely on the administration of their responsibilities.
- b. The Pastoral Team will strive to equip the saints for the work of ministry (disciple believers towards spiritual maturity).
- c. The Pastoral Team along with Deacons will serve to deal with discipline of church members as outlined in these by-laws.

### **Section 2: Standing Ministry Teams:**

Two Standing Ministry Teams are entrusted with authority for oversight and decisions regarding administration and finances and to give counsel and wisdom in the ministries of Valley Life Church as specified in this document. The Standing Ministry Teams will function as representatives available and accountable to the

church membership. The Standing Ministry Teams will be selected from the membership of the church as led by the Holy Spirit, the existing Stewardship and Mission Team, and the Lead Pastor; and are to be approved by the congregation by three-quarters majority vote.

### **Qualifications**

In the year of selection, Standing Ministry Team members must be members of Valley Life Church for the preceding two years and at least twenty-one years of age. A member of these Teams must be a regenerate believer who is faithful in tithing, demonstrates a lifestyle beyond reproach, practices spiritual disciplines, and testifies to the Spirit-filled life as described in Galatians 5:16-24.

### **Number and Term of Service**

There will be a minimum of 3 active Team members for each team including one permanent member who will be the Lead Pastor. The number of team members may increase upon recommendation of the Standing Team. Team members will serve on a rotating term of 3 years. The Team members will assume office on January 1 of the year following affirmation by the church. Membership on these Teams may be extended in one-year increments at the discretion of the Lead Pastor, to be affirmed by the church by majority vote.

### **Relationships**

These Teams will assist the Lead Pastor with administrative support and provide financial accountability within the church. These Teams will assist the Pastor with counsel, wisdom, planning, and support in the ministries of the church. The Lead Pastor will have the responsibility of administering the day-to-day operations of the church through the church staff. This will be done in accordance with the Bible, Constitution, and church policy. These Teams will serve as a sounding board for the Senior Pastor, pray with him, and encourage him in being God's man, exhorting and admonishing him as needed.

### **Responsibilities**

The Stewardship Team will oversee the administrative and policy functions of the church. They will be available representatives for the congregation. They will conduct quarterly financial meetings to review all financial dealings of the church. They will maintain a document containing all church policies they have approved which will be kept on file in the church office and made available to all members of the church. Pastoral staff may participate in Team meetings at the request of the Lead Pastor.

#### **A. Stewardship Team**

The Stewardship Team gives accountability with sharing the load of developing annual budgets, review monthly financial reports, approve major non-budgeted financial transactions, and develop a strategy for communicating financial ownership for VALLEY LIFE CHURCH.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- a. Faith: This team is to seek to walk by faith and not by sight. Desiring to discern God's will and for faith and obedience to follow regarding budgeting.
- b. Budgeting: Require any ministry and any staff member or other groups of the church requiring funding prepare an itemized budget request for a critical review of all proposed funding within our planning framework.
- c. Compile a total church annual budget for presentation to the church membership by the end of the calendar year.
- d. Receive and review monthly financial reports of receipts and expenses.

#### **B. Mission Team**

As we seek to engage in the mission to make disciples of all nations, the mission team is to discern and bring to the church opportunities that help us expand God's Kingdom through proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Oversight of mission partners (church plants, missionaries, etc)
- Care for mission partners and/or families
- Plan mission opportunities in Columbia Falls, nationally and globally.
- Oversee and Train mission teams sent out from Valley Life Church
- Prayer for mission engagement for Columbia Falls, the Pacific Northwest, and the world

### **Section 3. Deacons**

#### **General**

In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be the lead servants of the church. The word deacon (diakonos) denotes a helper or servant who serves. Before a man may be appointed as a deacon, he must be tested for the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The tasks of the deacon are primarily that of meeting the physical and material needs of individual believers and the congregation. Other tasks may include proclaim the Gospel to believers and unbelievers; care for church members and other persons in the community; lead the church to engage in the fellowship of worship, witness, education, and ministry; lead through serving the church to engage in its mission and core values.

#### **Qualifications**

The qualifications of the deacons shall be those set forth in the Scripture, qualifications.

are given in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. For a person to be eligible at “Valley Life Church,” he must be a male and meet biblical qualifications. The deacons of this body will be elected by the church upon the basis of qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 6, and the following requirements:

- A deacon will be a man eighteen years of age or older, a member of the church for at least one year, and must have proven himself in faithfulness to Christ and the church and must be willing to serve.
- Shall give evidence of the Spirit-filled life as described in Galatians 5.
- Shall set a high standard of mature Christian living.

There is no obligation on the church to recognize as an active deacon a brother who comes to the church from another church where he served as a deacon.

#### **Number and Term of Service**

The Deacon Ministry Team will consist of a number of active Deacons to be determined by the Deacon Ministry Team, with assistance of the Pastoral Team, as the church needs require. The Deacons will serve on a 3-4 year rotation basis.

#### **Selection**

The, selection process will be determined and performed by the Deacon Ministry Team and approved by the Lead Pastor. A list of nominees that the church nominates will be presented to the Deacons and Pastoral Staff to pray over and discuss. The names decided upon by those men will be presented to the church at a regular worship service of the church.

#### **Affirmation**

Deacons are to be affirmed by the church. All men who serve as deacons shall be recommended, trained, and examined by the Pastor(s) and any current deacons. After a training time of 3-6 months, they shall then be affirmed by the church and then be ordained to this office by the laying on of hands and prayer.

#### **Responsibilities**

Deacons will be required to enter into a covenant agreement to perform the following duties:

- Serve with the Lead Pastor and staff in performing ministry tasks;
- Care for church members and other persons in the community; through widow ministry, divorce support ministry, adoption ministry, and hospital ministry.

- With the support of the Pastors of the church, assist in the church discipline process.
- Lead the church to engage in the Core Values of Valley Life Church.

## **Section 4. Removal**

### **By Resignation**

Pastors, Standing Ministry Team Members, or Deacons may resign their office at any time if they find they are no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.

### **For Grievance**

Where a grievance exists against a Pastor, Standing Ministry Team Members, or Deacons due to teaching contrary to the beliefs of the church as set forth in its Constitution or to alleged conduct on their part unfitting their office, such grievance may be brought before the Pastoral Staff by any two members in good standing. If the grievance is against the Lead Pastor, then it will be brought before a council of the rest of the Pastoral Staff and Standing Ministry Team Members. If the pastors, after thorough investigation and consideration, believe the grievance to be true and substantial, then the call of the officer may be terminated at any business meeting upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Staff when supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the church present and voting with a least twenty percent (20%) of the membership of the church present at such meeting. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, will be given from the pulpit on the two successive weekends preceding the meeting. Notice will also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least two weeks before the meeting.

## **Article 3: Ministry Teams**

### **Section 1. General**

Every Christian in the local congregation without exception has been given spiritual gift(s) which they are commanded to employ for the edification of the entire congregation. The administration of such gifts by every member is necessary for the proper growth and ministry of the Church. The Ministry Teams of Valley Life Church will ensure the ongoing active ministry of the Church as the congregation exercises their spiritual gifts. Ministry team members are responsible to maintain faithful and active service in keeping with the volunteer model of ministry at the Church. Ministry Teams will be the pattern for serving, vital in casting vision, and essential in accomplishing ministry at Valley Life Church. Ministry Teams are under the authority of the LORD, the Pastoral Staff, and Standing Ministry Teams. Members will be directed to a Ministry Team through Valley Life Church New Members' Class. The expectation of Valley Life Church is that every member actively participates in the Ministry Teams.

### **Section 2. Special Ministry Teams**

#### **A. Lead Pastor Search Ministry Team**

The Lead Pastor Search Ministry Team will be nominated by the Standing Ministry Teams and presented to the church for approval by majority vote. The team shall consist of no fewer than five members, and will include at least one Deacon, at least one member from each of the Standing Ministry Teams, and at least one Pastor. The Search Team will be created as soon as a decision to leave has been announced to the Standing Ministry Teams. Candidates for the job of Lead Pastor are prohibited from being on the team.

#### **Responsibilities of the Team**

The Lead Pastor Search Ministry Team will seek a suitable Lead Pastor who will be unanimously approved by the team members. It will bring only one name at a time to be considered by the church. The team will bring periodic progress reports to the church. All information and recommendations received by the Lead Pastor Search Ministry Team are confidential. When the church calls a Lead Pastor, the Lead Pastor Search Ministry



Team will continue for six months to assist the new Lead Pastor in the transition. At the end of that time, the team will disband.

#### Expectation of the Current Lead Pastor

A Lead Pastor will be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. In order to ensure a healthy transition, it is the expectation that the exiting Lead Pastor will inform the Standing Ministry Teams of any serious consideration or decision to leave as soon as possible. The Lead Pastor is encouraged to suggest candidates to the Lead Pastor Search Ministry Team and to disciple any such candidates where possible.

#### Approval of a New Lead Pastor

The election of a new Lead Pastor will take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least two weeks' public notice has been given. At said meeting the church will consider a candidate recommended by the Lead Pastor Search Ministry Team. A candidate presented by the Pastor Search Ministry Team must be of demonstrable godly character, above reproach in public and private life, and committed to shepherding the flock of God and to teaching and guarding sound doctrine, as expressed in the Valley Life Church Covenant. Election will be by written ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those members present being necessary for a choice. The pastor thus elected will serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request, upon motion brought by the Standing Ministry Teams at a Church Family Meeting. The outgoing pastor if dismissed by the church for any reason other than a moral failure or financial impropriety will be given a severance decided upon by the Standing Ministry Teams.

#### B. Special Ministry Teams

Special Ministry Teams will be created as needed by the Pastoral Staff, Deacons, or Standing Ministry Teams. Members are appointed by the Pastoral Staff, Deacons, Standing Ministry Teams, or their designees to serve until the job of the Ministry Team is completed.

#### **Article 4: Family Meetings**

The spiritual Church shall meet in regular worship services each Sunday at such times and places as may be determined by the Lead Pastor. Additionally, the Church may meet at such other dates and times as may be deemed appropriate by the Lead Pastor for the purpose of worship, edification, and proclamation.

The corporate Church shall meet in regularly scheduled or duly called Family Meetings. These gatherings will focus on vision, sharing of accomplishments, ministry needs and updates. Family Meetings shall be held in the times, in the manner, and for the purposes set forth below:

1. An annual Family Meeting of the Church shall be held prior to the beginning of the calendar year. The primary purpose of this conference is to receive and adopt the annual Church budget.
2. Regular Family Meetings: Regular gatherings of members will be held 3-4 times a year.
  1. At Family Meetings, the following will report:
    1. Lead Pastor/Pastoral Team
    2. Stewardship Team
    3. Standing Teams as necessary (mission, trustees)
    4. Ministry teams (as necessary)
  2. Each meeting will allow for member questions from the floor and close with a prayer time.
3. The Church may change the dates of the annual or other scheduled family meetings by notifying the members at least 10 days in advance through mailing of a notice, through announcement in a Church communication platform, or through announcement during a regular scheduled worship service.
4. A special family meeting of the Church may be called at any time by the Lead Pastor or in the absence of the Pastor by the Pastoral Team or Standing Ministry Teams.

#### Quorum

Any number of members will constitute a quorum at any ordinary meeting of the church. At meetings dealing with particular matters stipulated in these bylaws, the quorums prescribed will apply.

## Parliamentary Rules

The Lead Pastor will serve as Moderator of Church Family Meetings. In the absence of the Lead Pastor or another member of the staff, a member of one of the Standing Ministry Teams will preside. If a majority of the Standing Ministry Teams and Church Staff deem it advisable that the Lead Pastor not moderate the meeting, then a member of the Pastoral Staff or Standing Ministry as voted upon by the majority of the two will serve as moderator. Parliamentary rules of procedure will be at the discretion of the persons leading the meeting, but if there is any objection then Robert's Rules of Order, Revised will be utilized.

## Agenda

Agenda items for Church Family Meetings must be sponsored by a member of the Pastoral Staff or at least two Standing Ministry Team members and presented to either a Standing Ministry Team or the Lead Pastor in writing at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the Church Family Meeting.

## Recording Secretary

The Recording Secretary will keep a record of all the actions and minutes of the Church Family Meetings of the Church. The Recording Secretary will be selected by the Standing Ministry Teams. All church records are church property and should be filed in the church office. The church record of minutes will be open to all members of the church.

## Moderator

The Lead Pastor shall serve as Moderator of Church Family Meetings. In the absence of the Lead Pastor another member of the staff or someone selected from the Pastoral or Stewardship Team shall preside.

## **Article 5: Ordinances**

### **Section 1: General**

The two ordinances of the Church are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both are visual aids of our salvation. The first, baptism by immersion, is a one-time occurrence visually demonstrating our death and burial and resurrection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a picture and act of obedience; it does not constitute or bring regeneration. Second, the Lord's Supper, is observed on a continuing basis in response to Jesus' command (I Cor. 11:25- 26). The exhortation is given that we are to observe this breaking of the bread and drinking of the cup until He comes.

### **Section 2: Baptism**

A person, who has received Jesus Christ as Lord through personal faith and repentance, shall be a candidate for baptism to obey the commands of scripture. Baptism will be by immersion in water, after salvation, as an act of worship, and as approved by the pastoral team.

### **Section 3: The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of remembrance open to all Christians who have been regenerated by grace through faith.

## **Article 6: Amendments**

A copy of this Constitution and Bylaws will be kept by the church office. This Constitution and Bylaws will be considered and adopted and will take immediate effect if and when three-fourths (75%) of the members present at a Family Meeting vote in favor of the change.