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Constitution and Bylaws

ADOPTED JANUARY 18, 2009
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Constitution for
New Life Community Church of Central Vermont, Inc.
Northfield, Vermont

Article One

Church Name

The name of this church shall be New Life Community Church.

Article Two

Our Purpose and Mission

Our Purpose:

New Life Community Church exists to help all people celebrate, cultivate, and spread New Life in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Our Mission:

Celebrate New Life

We will lead Christians to bring glory to God and Jesus Christ our Savior through corporate and individual worship as directed by His Holy Spirit. (Hebrews 10:25, Acts 2:40-47, Psalm 100, 1 Corinthians 10:31)

Cultivate New Life

We will teach the truth and application of God's Word to help all believers in Christ mature in their faith. We will make it a practice to pray together, serve together, and grow together for the building up of Christ's body which is the church. We will hold each other accountable and help each member live out their faith in Christ daily. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, Ephesians 4-6; Romans 12)

Spread New Life

We will proclaim the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ by being "on mission" in our community, state, and throughout the world. We will demonstrate Christian love for each other by serving each other and our community. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; John 20:21, Joshua 24:15, Acts 2:40-47)

Article Three

Our Statement of Faith

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, and inspired Word of God and shall be our only authority and guide in the matters of faith and practice. As an expression of our beliefs, we subscribe to the principles of faith as outlined in the "Baptist Faith and Message 2000", as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000, summarized below:

God

There is one and only one living and true God. God is the creator of the universe. He reigns with providential care over His creation. God is all powerful and all knowing. He has eternally existed in three personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God. (Genesis 1:1,26, 27; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; I Peter 1:2)

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the only, eternal Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Born of a virgin, Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on the cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory, and is coming again soon as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to redeem His bride, the church. (Matthew 1:22,23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5, 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14,15; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Romans 1:3,4; Acts 1:9-11; I Timothy 6:14,15; Titus 2:13)

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son. He is present in the world to make mankind aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides Christians with the power for living, enables understanding of Biblical truth, and guides them in doing what is right. He provides every Christian with spiritual gifts for service at the moment of salvation. We seek to live under His control daily. (2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13, 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18)

The Bible

The Holy Bible was written by men who were divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. (Psalm 12:6, 119:105, 160; Proverbs 30:5; II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:19-21)

Mankind

People are the supreme object of God's creation, created in the image of God. Although every person has potential for good, all of us are marred by our own attitude and acts of disobedience against God, called "sin". This separates people from God and causes spiritual death along with many other problems in life. (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6, 51: 1-8; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12; Isaiah 59:1-2)

Salvation

Salvation is by grace through faith. It is God's free gift to us, but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement; or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith. (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1)

Our Eternal Security

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. Once born again, you cannot lose your salvation. Salvation is sustained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. (John 10:29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25, 10:10, 14; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

Eternity

Heaven is a literal place where those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ will live forever in God's presence. Heaven is described in the Bible as a place where God will wipe away every tear and there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain. Hell is also a literal place where those who do not come to the Father through Jesus Christ will experience eternal separation from God. Hell is described in the Bible as a place of physical and spiritual torment where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (John 3:16; John 14:7; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:17-18; Revelation 20:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and Deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Matthew 16:18; I Corinthians 12:12-14; Hebrews 10:25; Colossians 1:18)

The Christian Home

We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing from the Lord. We believe that God has given parents the responsibility to educate and disciple their children in the truth and application of God's Word. Children are to honor and obey their parents. We believe that the church must work to support healthy families, to compliment the parents' efforts, and facilitate Godly living within the home. (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Joshua 24:15)

About Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Jesus instructed His disciples to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the Church two visible symbols (called "ordinances") as reminders. These two ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper. While we respect all acts of spiritual obedience, the Bible teaches that Baptism is to be done by immersion, following salvation, as an act of obedience and identification with Jesus Christ as Lord. The Lord's Supper is an ongoing symbol remembering our Lord's death, burial, resurrection and promised return. Each individual must decide their own participation in these ordinances. Regardless, we do not regard anyone's participation in these practices as a means of salvation. (Matthew 28:18-20, 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32; Colossians 2:12)

The Christian Life

The Christian life should be a life of sanctification and holiness. Such a life cannot be lived out through a person's own effort but is a gift from God, and is a by-product of the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the responsibility and privilege of every Christian to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to seek and to make growing disciples. (Leviticus 26:30; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 3:15; Galatians 5:16; Romans 6:22; Galatians 3:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 1 Peter 1:13-16)

Our Christian Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Therefore, we are under obligation to serve Him with our time, talents, and material possessions. We should recognize all that is entrusted to us is to be used for the glory of God and for helping others. We should contribute cheerfully, regularly, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the cause of Christ. (Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; Luke 12:16-21, 42-48; Acts 2:44-47, 5:1-11; Romans 12:1,2; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2, 6:19,20, 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:10-19; Hebrews 13:15-16)

The church recognizes that there are many issues not covered by the above statement of faith. As much as is reasonably possible, each person shall seek to allow others the freedom to seek God's will on matters not specifically addressed in our statement of faith.

Article Four **Affiliations**

The New Life Community Church is an autonomous church that guides itself in its own affairs. But believing that we can accomplish more in cooperation with the larger body of Christ than we can on our own, we have willingly and gladly chosen to affiliate with the Green Mountain Baptist Association, the Baptist Convention of New England, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Article Five
Church Covenant

As a member of New Life Community Church, having made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and been scripturally baptized, I do covenant before God as I am enabled by His Holy Spirit to:

- Live my life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area.
- Accept the Word of God as my authority for faith and everyday living, and seek to meditate on and apply its truths daily.
- Follow and be equipped for service by the church leadership as they are led by the Holy Spirit and the teachings of the Word of God.
- Maintain the unity of the church by acting in love toward other members, discovering my spiritual gifts and finding my place of service within this local body, and allowing myself to be held accountable to the standards of God’s Word by this local body.
- Participate in the great commission by being involved in missions to my community, my state, my country, and to the ends of the earth.
- Willingly give of my time, talents, and treasure, in obedience to God’s Word, to support the ministries and missionary outreach of this church.
- Unite as soon as possible, should I leave this local body, with some other church where I can carry out the spirit of this covenant and principles of God’s Word.

Article Six
Conducting of Church Affairs

The conduct of the affairs of New Life Community Church not addressed in our Articles of Incorporation or this Constitution will be outlined in the Bylaws. These Bylaws will define the church’s organizational structure, the rights of members, and the procedures by which these rights may be exercised.

Article Seven
Amendments to this Constitution

This Constitution or any of its provisions may be altered, amended, or repealed at any regularly scheduled or specially called business meeting of the church provided that:

1. The changes are affirmed and presented by the Elders to the church in writing at least 30 days in advance of the scheduled business meeting for this purpose.
2. The changes are affirmed by a two-thirds vote in which a quorum of voting members is present.

Bylaws for
New Life Community Church of Central Vermont, Inc.
Northfield, Vermont

Article One
Membership

SECTION 1. General.

Membership in New Life Community Church shall consist of all persons who have met all the qualifications for membership and are listed on the membership roll.

SECTION 2. Qualifications for Membership.

1. A personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
2. Baptism by immersion as a testimony of salvation will be required of each candidate who has not previously been baptized, with the following exceptions:
 - a. Candidates with a physical disability that would not allow them to be safely baptized by immersion may be baptized by some other method approved by the Elders.
 - b. Candidates who have been previously baptized by a method other than immersion (e.g. sprinkling, pouring, etc.) are not required to be baptized by immersion provided they affirm before the Elders that their previous baptism was a believer's baptism voluntarily entered into as a testimony of salvation.
3. Completion of the church's membership process. This requirement may be modified on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Elders.
4. A signed and publicly affirmed commitment to abide by the membership covenant.

SECTION 3. Procedure.

1. Anyone desiring to be a member of our church will complete a membership class where they will learn what to expect from the church, and what the church will expect from them.
2. Those holding membership in another church shall request a letter of transfer. Those who are temporary residents in our town (i.e. college students) who wish to maintain their home church membership while being shepherded by our church during their time away may be accepted under "watchcare" membership.
3. After completing the membership class, and having met the above qualifications for membership, the candidate for membership will be presented to the church at a regularly scheduled worship service or business meeting to publicly affirm acceptance of the membership covenant and to be welcomed into membership.

SECTION 4. Responsibilities of Membership.

The responsibilities of membership are described in the membership covenant.

SECTION 5. Voting rights of Membership.

All active resident members over the age of 18 shall have the right to vote on the following matters:

1. The annual budget of the church
2. Election of a Elders and affirmation of Deacons
3. Adjusting the annually approved church budget or spending any non-budgeted amount over \$1000
4. The merger or dissolution of the church
5. The acquisition of property and related indebtedness
6. Amendments to the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the church
7. The calling or removing of the Pastoral Elder
8. Adding to or deleting any of our denominational affiliations
9. Any matter that the Elders deem too significant to decide on their own which shall be presented to the congregation for their consideration.

Each member shall be entitled to one vote. Voting by proxy is prohibited.

SECTION 6. Termination of Membership.

Members shall be removed from the church roll for the following reasons:

1. Death.
2. Transfer of membership to another church.
3. By personal request of the member.
4. Dismissal by the Elders according to the following biblical guidelines:
 - a. The members' life and conduct is not in accordance with the Membership Covenant in such a way that the member hinders the ministry and influence of the church in the community. II Thessalonians 3:6-18.
 - b. A member who absents himself from church services for three months or more shall be contacted by the Elders to discuss their forsaking of the assembly. The goal shall be to restore this person to the fellowship of the church. If restoration is not achieved, the person's name shall be placed on an inactive roll. Those on the inactive role shall not have voting privileges nor be considered for office. The Elders may reactivate a person's membership when they feel the person has come to a place of repentance and restoration.

c. The Elders may permanently remove a member from the roll after following the proper steps in Matthew 18:15-17. According to the scriptures, the congregation must be made aware of this action and must approve of the Elder's actions in the matter. If the congregation does not approve of the Elder's actions in the matter, then the person shall remain on the inactive roll until the issue is resolved. Notice of dismissal will be in writing.

d. Members in good standing may be dismissed at their own request to join a different fellowship. Notice of dismissal will be in writing.

e. Members not in good standing may receive a letter of transfer to a different fellowship, but that letter must state that the person is not in good standing with the congregation and list the reason why they are not in good standing.

SECTION 7: Restoration of Members.

Members dismissed by the Elders shall be restored according to the spirit of II Corinthians 2:7-8, when their lifestyles are judged to be in accordance with the membership covenant.

Article Two

Membership Meetings

SECTION 1. Place.

Meetings of the members of New Life Community Church shall be held at a building on church property, or at any such place as may be designated by the Elders.

SECTION 2. Annual Meeting.

A general meeting of the members shall be held yearly at such a time as determined by the Elders. This meeting shall be the annual membership meeting. The purpose of this meeting shall be to adopt the annual budget, elect officers, and conduct other proper business.

SECTION 3. Special Meetings.

Special meetings may be called at any time by the Elders for any purpose by giving notice to the members in accordance with Article Two, Section 4 of these bylaws.

SECTION 4. Notice requirements for Membership Meetings.

Whenever members are required or permitted to take any action at a meeting, notice shall be given to members no less than two (2) weeks prior to such meeting. Notification of membership meetings shall be given in any of the following manners, which shall be deemed to be reasonable methods for calling a membership meeting:

1. Distribution of written material to the congregation in attendance at a regular worship service.
2. Announcement of the meeting in the church newsletter.

3. Oral announcement to the congregation at a regular worship service.
4. Delivery of the United States mail to each member identified on the church membership role.

SECTION 5. Quorum.

A quorum of one third of the active membership over the age of 18 is needed to conduct business. If a business meeting has a quorum when it is called to order, then all business conducted at that meeting will be valid. If a quorum is not obtained, the moderator or church clerk may call a second meeting designating a lesser number as a quorum. A majority vote of the members present shall be required to pass any motion unless otherwise indicated by this document.

Article Three **Elders, Deacons and staff**

SECTION 1. Elders.

The Pastoral Elder shall designate the number of Elders of the church. The Elders shall be elected by the membership at the annual membership meeting based on the recommendation of the Pastoral Elder, to serve for three year terms in such a way that approximately one third will rotate off each year. The qualifications for Elders are based on I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-7. The Elders shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Direct the day-to-day affairs of the church.
2. Teach the Bible in public services.
3. Provide spiritual and financial counsel to the Pastoral Elder and other pastors on staff.
4. Determine the compensation of pastors and staff.
5. Provide such spiritual counsel as needed by the congregation.
6. Serve as the signers of legal documents.
7. Conduct such other duties and activities as the senior pastor may designate from time to time.

Matters that the Elders deem too significant to decide on their own shall be presented to the congregation for their consideration.

SECTION 2. Deacons.

The Pastoral Elder shall from time to time, designate the number of Deacons for the church, after consultation with the other of Elders. Deacons shall be affirmed by the members at the annual membership meeting, based upon the recommendation of the Elders. Deacons will serve for a term of two years, and will function as servants of the church according to Acts 6. The biblical qualifications for Deacons are based on I Timothy 3:8-13. Their specific tasks will be to:

1. Minister to the congregation's physical, spiritual and emotional needs; with particular attention to assisting the poor and the widowed.
2. Assist in leading the ministries of the church and the ordinances of Baptism and Communion.
3. Be peacemakers, promoting unity and encouraging harmony among members.
4. Be encouragers to the pastor, Elders, and staff.

SECTION 3. The Pastoral Elder.

The Pastoral Elder of the church shall be called by members of the church at a membership meeting. When the church is in need of a Pastoral Elder, a Pastoral Elder Search Committee shall be elected. This committee shall consist of the Elders and two members elected by the congregation. The Pastoral Elder Search Committee may work with several candidates at a time, but only one candidate shall be presented to the congregation for consideration. A final decision must be made by the congregation on that one candidate before another candidate can be considered. A vote of two-thirds of the members present is required to constitute a call. No second ballot shall be taken.

The services of a Pastoral Elder may be terminated at any time, either by the Pastoral Elder or the other Elders if they determine sufficient grounds for removal, based on biblical precepts. A two-thirds majority vote of the church membership present at a meeting called for that purpose is required for removal of a Pastoral Elder. Notice of this meeting shall be mailed to the active membership two weeks in advance. The Pastoral Elder desiring termination shall give notice of sixty days of such termination unless a shorter notice is mutually agreed upon by the Elders.

As need arises, other ministerial and support staff of the church shall be chosen by the Elders. Each shall serve under the direct supervision and authority of the Elders, subject to the rights, if any, of an officer under any contract of employment. Subject to the rights, if any, of an officer under any contract of employment, all other ministerial and/or support staff may be removed, without disclosure of cause, at any regular or special meeting of the Elders. A vacancy of any staff position, because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification or any other cause shall be filled only in the manner prescribed in these bylaws for regular appointments to that staff position. Such vacancies shall be filled as they occur.

Article Four Officers

1. During the fourth quarter of the calendar year, the Elders shall present to the congregation a full slate of willing nominees for all offices for the coming year. Nominations from the floor will always be in order for all offices except that of Elder or Deacon.
2. All church officers shall be elected for a one-year term except the Elders and Deacons. In case of the decease, resignation, or removal of one of the church officers before the term expires, another person will be appointed by the Elders to finish the term.
3. The membership shall elect the following officers:

- a. A Pastoral Elder, Elders, and Deacons as described in Article Three of these Bylaws.
- b. Moderator – shall preside at all business meetings of the church.
- c. Clerk – shall keep complete minutes of all church meetings and maintain an accurate membership roll. All records will belong to the church.
- d. Treasurer – shall keep accurate records of receipts and disbursements of all funds; make deposits of all monies or other valuables in the church's name in reputable institutions that the church shall designate; make all disbursements according to the annual budget or special direction of the congregation; and make a monthly printed report available to the Elders and congregation. All records will belong to the church. An Assistant Treasurer may be elected if needed.
- e. Other officers or team leaders as needed.

Article Five
Miscellaneous

1. Our church shall support the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention as our primary method of supporting worldwide missions.
2. Our church shall support the Green Mountain Baptist Association as our primary method of supporting local missions.

Article Six
Amendments

It is the responsibility of the Elders to review the constitution and bylaws, proposing any revisions or adjustments as necessary to maintain their effectiveness, and to bring these proposed changes to the church at any regularly scheduled or specially called business meeting. New bylaws may be adopted or these bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed at any regularly scheduled or specially called business meeting of the church provided that:

1. The changes are affirmed and presented by the Elders to the church in writing at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled business meeting for this purpose.
2. The changes are affirmed by a two-thirds vote in which a quorum of voting members is present.