

## Living Water Community Church

### CONSTITUTION

#### PREAMBLE

In order that this local body may be governed in an orderly manner, and for the purpose of clearly defining the principles of our faith, and in order to preserve the individual liberties of each member and the autonomy of the body in relation to other like bodies, we declare and establish this Constitution and the accompanying Bylaws. This Constitution, the accompanying Bylaws and membership covenant do not supersede the Bible as the final rule for faith and practice. The Bible always has final authority over any and all items which are found to be in conflict with the Bible.

#### Definitions

**The church:** The local church is an assembly of professed believers in Jesus Christ who are voluntarily joined together in one locality for the purposes of worship, study of the Word of God, observance of the ordinances, Christian fellowship, equipping for Christian service and fulfilling the Great Commission (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, Ephesians 4:11-13, Matthew 16:18, 28:19-20, and the Baptist Faith and Message).

**Believer:** A person who has personally placed his faith solely in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sin and the assurance of his eternal home in heaven (John 1:12, Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-9, Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9,13).

**Membership:** A group of believers who have completed the membership class and all requirements and who have been affirmed by a vote of the existing members. The process for membership is set forth in this constitution article IV.

### ARTICLE I – NAME, ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS, GOVERNMENT & AFFILIATION

#### SECTION 1 – NAME & ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS

This congregation shall be known as Living Water Community Church (referred to herein as “the Church”), organized as a domestic non-profit corporation, independent local church, in compliance with the laws of the State of Maine.

#### SECTION 2 – GOVERNMENT & AFFILIATION

The government of the Church is vested in the body of believers who compose it, under the authority of the Bible. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but voluntarily cooperates with the Southern Baptist Convention for the purpose of reaching others with the gospel. While maintaining local autonomy, the Church also voluntarily maintains a cooperative relationship with the Maine Baptist Association (MeBA) and the Baptist Convention of New England (BCNE).

### ARTICLE II – PURPOSE & CHARACTER

#### SECTION 1 – PURPOSE

Our purpose as both individual believers and as a church body is:

- To Know Him - This is accomplished primarily through a dynamic relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, reflected in the giving of all glory, honor and praise only to God. (Jer. 9.23-4, Ps. 27.4-8, Ps. 100, Jn. 4.24, I Cor. 10.31)

- To Grow in Him – This is accomplished primarily through discipleship, both personal and corporate. This body shall be committed to the teaching of the whole counsel of God to its members. (Eph. 3.14-19, Col. 1.28-29, 2 Tim. 2.2, 2 Tim. 4.2-4)

- To Show Him – This is accomplished primarily through evangelism and maintaining a godly lifestyle. Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who do not know Him as Savior is a mandate given to all believers. (Mt. 5.16, Mt. 28.19-20, Acts 1.8, 2 Cor. 5.20)

## SECTION 2 – CHARACTER

A. This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for religious, educational, and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law). This includes but is not limited to, for such purposes, the establishing, and maintaining of religious workshops. The building, maintaining and operating of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, day-care centers, camps, nursing homes, and cemeteries, and any other ministries that the church may be led of God to establish.

B. The Church shall also be free to ordain and license men to the Gospel ministry, evangelize the unsaved by the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, educate believers in a manner consistent with the Bible, and undertake and maintain missionary activities in the United States and any foreign countries. The Church will also engage in any other ministry that it may decide to pursue in obedience to the will of God. It exists as an autonomous body making its own decisions according to its own practice within this constitution and the accompanying bylaws.

## ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF FAITH

### SECTION 1 – STATEMENT OF FAITH

We affirm that the 66 books of the Old and New Testament are the Scriptures and the sole authoritative source of written revelation from God. The statement of faith contained in the 18 articles known as “The Baptist Faith and Message” adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000 represents a summary of the major doctrines of the Christian faith as held by Living Water Community Church. Reference is hereby made to “The Baptist Faith and Message” adopted on June 14, 2000 for further details and Scriptural support.

## ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

## SECTION 1 – MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

### A. PASTORAL FLEXIBILITY

The pastor or person in charge of extending the membership invitation may delay presenting an applicant seeking membership for church approval in order to more fully explain the meaning of church membership to the person.

### B. MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Membership shall be extended to all prospective members as affirmed by a simple majority vote of the membership after a personal meeting with an Elder. The prospective member:

- 1) Who has had and whose life evidences a genuine experience of regeneration through a genuine profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; who renounces sin, and exhibits this in his/her lifestyle. (John 3:16; 3:18; 8:29-31)
- 2) Who agrees in principle to the current Baptist Faith and Message. (“The Baptist Faith and Message” adopted June 14, 2000 pamphlet shall be given to all prospective members)
- 3) Who fully subscribes to and enters into the Living Water Community Church Membership Covenant contained herein.
- 4) Who fulfills the completion of the membership class.

C. In addition to the above and upon compliance with appropriate conditions, membership will be granted by one of the following means:

- 1) By baptism. As a new believer in Jesus Christ, upon giving testimony of such by water baptism by immersion (unless medically unable); or:
- 2) By experience. By public testimony of faith, having previously been baptized by immersion, or:
- 3) By letter. By providing the Church with a letter of transfer from another Bible believing church of like faith and practice, or other written statement of good standing from their prior church, along with a personal testimony of salvation through Christ alone.

D. As a previous member of Living Water Community Church that has been removed from membership as outlined in Article IV, Section 4:

- 1) By restoration, upon the recommendation of the Elders and a majority affirmative vote of the congregation after confession is made publicly before the church membership. This confession is a simple admission of guilt. The person to be restored should previously have met with an Elder, with confession of the full details having been made. The person to be restored should display satisfactory evidence of repentance prior to restoration being granted. (Mt. 18.15-17)

## SECTION 2 – LIVING WATER COMMUNITY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

By affirming this covenant, I testify that I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I further affirm that I have been baptized by immersion after having

accepted Christ as my Savior. I am in agreement with the purpose of the Church as stated in Article II, Section 1 as well as the biblical doctrines as set forth in the accompanying "Baptist Faith and Message" booklet adopted June 14, 2000. I now desire to unite with Living Water Community Church as a member in good standing. As a member, I will commit myself, with God's help, to making the following principles the practice of my life:

A. To Know Him - This is accomplished primarily through a dynamic relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, reflected in the giving of all glory, honor and praise only to God. (Jer. 9.23-4, Ps. 27.4-8, Ps. 100, Jn. 4.24, I Cor. 10.31).

As a genuine believer, I will...

- i. Seek to bring all that I do under the leadership of Jesus Christ, as outlined in the Scriptures and as guided by the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 10.31)
- ii. Support the ministry of the Church with my presence, unless God hinders me (Heb. 10.25)
- iii. Recognize that all that I have in this life comes from God Himself. Thus, I will commit to giving to the Church. (Mal. 3.8-10, II Cor. 9.7-11)
- iv. Resolve to maintain the unity and purity of the Church by refusing to support gossip and other acts which detract from the purpose of the Church and undermine God's appointed leaders. (Phil. 1.27, Phil. 2.3-4, I Thes. 5.12-13, I Tim. 3.1, I Tim. 5.17, Heb. 13.17)

B. To Grow in Him – This is accomplished primarily through discipleship, both personal and corporate. This body shall be committed to the teaching of the whole counsel of God to its members. (Eph. 3.14-19, Col. 1.28-29, 2 Tim. 2.2, 2 Tim. 4.2-4).

As a genuine disciple, I will...

- i. Seek opportunities to grow in my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I will seek to grow by...
  1. Reading the Word of God regularly (Ps. 119.11, 105)
  2. Praying regularly for myself, my family, my church, my community, and my world (Jer. 33.3, Mt. 6.9-13, Jas. 4.2)
  3. Participating in and supporting growth opportunities offered through the Church (Acts. 2.46-47)
  4. Leading others in discipleship relationships as God gives me opportunity. (2 Tim. 2.2)
  5. Maintaining an accountability relationship with another believer for the purpose of regularly examining my walk with Christ. (Prov. 27.17, Gal. 6.1-2)

C. To Show Him – This is accomplished primarily through evangelism and maintaining a godly lifestyle. Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who do not know Him as Savior is a mandate given to all believers. (Mt. 5.16, Mt. 28.19-20, Acts 1.8, 2 Cor. 5.20).

As a genuine ambassador of Christ, I will...

- i. Seek to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with those people with whom God has given me opportunity. (Mt. 5.16)
- ii. Instruct my children in the knowledge of Christ (Dt. 6.4-7, Prov. 22.6)
- iii. Provide those around me with an example of godly living.

I will do this by:

- 1. abstaining from activities that may cause other believers to stumble (Rom. 14.13, I Cor. 8.9)
- 2. edifying others in word and deed (Prov. 25.11, Gal. 6.10)
- iv. Invite others to attend the worship service and other ministry opportunities of the Church as a means of allowing them to hear the gospel.
- v. Identify and utilize my gifts, talents and abilities in the service of God through the ministry of the Church (I Cor. 12.7, 11-12)

### SECTION 3 – MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES

A. The Church functions as a representative democracy under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction of the Elders, as God's appointed under-shepherds. Membership in this church does not afford those individuals with any property, contract, or civil rights based on principles of a pure democratic government. Members (the congregation) shall appoint and submit to leaders to lead them in the direction of the Lord. Christ is the primary authority within this body, with the congregation being given authority on earth. However, each member as well as the entire body is accountable to God for their actions as a church.

B. Determinations of the internal affairs of the Church are exclusively local church matters and shall be determined exclusively by the Church's own rules and procedures. The membership of the Church has specific areas requiring the exercising of a vote, and other areas that permit votes. Members are free to address issues according to the procedures contained herein and in the accompanying Bylaws.

C. Anyone who wishes to serve as a team leader of any ministry of the Church must be a member in good standing of the Church for a minimum of 3 months, with exception as deemed necessary by the Pastor, based on the needs of the ministry.

D. Any member under the discipline process of the church as outlined in Article IV, Section 5 forfeits his/her voting rights as a member and gives up any leadership positions previously held.

E. While a person may be a member of the Church before the age of eighteen, one must be eighteen years of age before they become a voting member of the Church.

### SECTION 4 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Members not under the discipline process may request that letters of transfer be sent to another church. Under no condition will a letter of good standing be issued to any

member who is currently under the discipline process. The membership of any individual member shall be automatically terminated if:

A. The member in question has not attended a regular worship service of the church in the preceding twelve months, or made specific contact with the church for the purpose of affirming membership in accordance with the church covenant.

1) Upon good cause being shown to the Elders, this provision for termination may be waived in the case of any individual member at the discretion of the Elders (such would be the case of one who cannot attend due to physical impairment or who resides elsewhere for part of the year).

B. The member in question becomes a member of another church.

1) If any member unites in membership with another church, as evidenced by the Church receiving a letter requesting a transfer of membership, that person's membership at the Church shall be terminated.

C. A member may resign by oral or written communication at any time and a written statement of good standing will be issued upon request.

## SECTION 5 – CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. The Discipline Process of the Church is based on the scriptural principles found in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. The reasons for discipline include, but are not limited to, unresolved conflict between members (Mt. 18:15-17), disorderly and undisciplined conduct (2 Thess. 3:6-11), division or divisive behavior in the body (Romans 16:17, Titus 3:9-11), persistent sin issues (1 Cor. 5:1-13), false teaching (2 Tim. 2:14-18, 2 Tim. 4:3-5, 1 Tim 1:18-20, Rev. 2:14).

B. The purposes of discipline are reconciliation, restoration, holiness of individuals, purity of Christ's church, and the prevention of conflict and of God's judgment. When necessary, the pastor and deacons shall appoint a disciplinary team with the responsibility of addressing individual deviations from the statement of faith and/or the Church Membership Covenant.

C. If the Senior Pastor or Elder(s) is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the disciplinary team. He will be disciplined according to the guidelines of Mt. 18:15-17, with the specific guidelines applicable to the pastor found in 1 Tim. 5:19-20 also being applied.

D. Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. The disciplinary process of Mt. 18:15-17 is as follows:

1) When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he or she is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother or sister. Before that, they should first examine themselves. When he or she goes, they should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration.

2) If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, most likely an Elder, is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This second step should also be preceded by self-examination, and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration.

3) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections D,1 and D,2 have been taken, the disciplinary team shall hear the matter. If the offending member repents before the discipline team, the member is restored and the matter is closed. If the matter is not resolved during the hearing before the discipline team, the team shall recommend to the members of the church that the unrepentant person be removed from membership per the process outlined in subsection 4 below.

4) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections D,1, D,2 & D,3 have been taken, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the fellowship of the church. A meeting must be announced and the offending member must be informed at least two weeks in advance. The offending member may choose to be present at such meeting, however, no statement in his or her defense may be made as he has already exhausted all biblical opportunities to discuss the matter. The only statement that can be made before the membership is one of repentance as exhibited by a change in previous sinful lifestyle, at which time the offending party will be immediately restored to membership in good standing.

5) No matter may be heard by the discipline team or the church unless the steps outlined in subsections D,1 and D,2 have been taken.

E. If an unrepentant offending party is removed from the church fellowship, all contact with him from that point forward must be for the sake of restoration (except family members) in accordance with Matthew 18:17 and 1 Corinthians 5:11.

F. Furthermore, as above-mentioned, the member currently undergoing the discipline process forfeits his or her right to vote in any church vote. His or her letter of transfer will be withheld from other churches.

## ARTICLE V – CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

### SECTION 1 – AMENDMENT PROCESS

This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths (75%) affirmative vote of the members present and eligible to vote at a properly called business meeting, provided the amendment proposal shall have been offered at a properly called business meeting at least 30 days prior to the day of the vote. Amendments to Article III, Section 1 “Statement of Faith” or Article IV, Section 2 “Living Water Community Church Membership Covenant” will require a ninety percent (90%) affirmative vote of the members present and eligible to vote at a properly called business meeting, provided the amendment proposal shall have been offered at a properly called business meeting at least 30 days prior to the day of the vote.

## ARTICLE VI

Anything not covered in this constitution can be addressed at a properly called business meeting.