



THE VINE
CHURCH

Constitution
And Bylaws

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CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

The Vine Church

Adopted September 15, 2024

PREAMBLE

The Vine Church endeavors to be a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as described, established, and mandated by the Holy Scriptures. This constitution and bylaws are to provide general guidance to The Vine Church on governance and operation based on biblical references. Ultimately, the Bible is the sole authority of faith and practice. When a conflict or ambiguity exists regarding this constitution and bylaws, deference is to be given to the biblical reference. We, the members of The Vine Church, do adopt and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION

The Vine Church may voluntarily seek fellowship and affiliation with other doctrinally sound churches and organizations. This association is to provide help and encouragement while working together as the Lord directs through His Word. This is a voluntary association that in no way involves the surrender of this church's freedom or dependence upon God. All affiliations of The Vine Church are to be limited to churches and organizations that are biblically sound in doctrine and practice.

ARTICLE I

Name

This body shall be known as The Vine Church of Mount Pleasant, Texas.

ARTICLE II

Purpose

The Vine Church is organized exclusively for religious purposes, as dictated solely by Holy Scripture, the Bible. Our commission, issued by Jesus Christ, is summarized as follows: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"¹

ARTICLE III

Statement of Faith²

Section 1. Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men 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. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.³ [The Vine Church is in full agreement with *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*.⁴]

Section 2. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

¹ Matthew 28:18-20. All Scripture quotations are from the *English Standard Version Bible*.

² The Vine Church affirms the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*, as seen in the text that follows.

³ Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

⁴ See Addendum 1 for a full copy of *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*.

1. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.⁵

2. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.⁶

3. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.⁷

⁵ Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

⁶ Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

⁷ Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

Section 3. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherits a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.⁸

Section 4. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

1. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.
2. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.
3. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.
4. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.⁹

Section 5. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.¹⁰

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Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

⁹ Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

¹⁰ Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45, 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Section 6. 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 the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.¹¹

Section 7. Baptism and The Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church fellowship and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.¹²

Section 8. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.¹³

Section 8. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come, and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.¹⁴

Section 9. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.¹⁵

¹¹ Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

¹² Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:37-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

¹³ Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

¹⁴ Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

¹⁵ Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10;

Section 10. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness, undergirded by a Christian lifestyle and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.¹⁶

Section 11. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.¹⁷

Section 12. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.¹⁸

Section 13. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.¹⁹

Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

¹⁶ Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 9; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

¹⁸ Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

¹⁹ Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

Section 14. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. To promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.²⁰

Section 15. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.²¹

Section 16. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.²²

Section 17. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

²⁰ Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

²¹ Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

²² Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.²³

Section 18. Membership

The Scriptures teach that saved persons ought to be members of a church. Becoming a Christian is an individual response of faith but growing as a Christian is enhanced by fellowship with other Christians, with a church being the primary fellowship.

Although church membership only includes the redeemed in Christ, The Vine Church welcomes all persons to attend the various activities of the church.

²³ Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

ARTICLE IV
Church Membership

Section 1. Purpose of the Fellowship

The congregation of Christian believers who have applied for church fellowship and have been duly accepted shall constitute a spiritual body, united for the spiritual purposes set forth in ARTICLE III (Statement of Faith) and these Bylaws.

Section 2. Active Fellowship

Active fellowship in The Vine Church shall be open to all persons who confess Christ as their Lord and Savior and who have been baptized by immersion, and have attended three of the previous eight regularly scheduled church gatherings.

Section 3. Requests for Fellowship

All requests for fellowship shall be submitted to the Pastor(s). Upon making such a request, the person shall be given a copy of the Statement of Faith contained in ARTICLE III, and a copy of these Bylaws. A Pastor or a Deacon shall meet with the candidate following receipt of the request. Each candidate shall assent to the Statement of Faith, subscribe to the Bylaws, and attend a new member class. A candidate who has been approved through this process shall then be placed before the congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service where a Pastor will request affirmation from the congregation.

Section 4. Denial of Fellowship

If, upon review of a request for fellowship or after meeting with a candidate, the Pastor(s) determine that the candidate does not confess Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior, or that there is a lack of evidence of a godly lifestyle, fellowship shall be denied. The decision made by the Pastor(s) shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any court regarding that decision.

Section 5. Admission of Candidates

Candidates admitted to the fellowship shall, if possible, present themselves at a meeting designated by the Pastor(s) at which time such candidates shall publicly affirm their fellowship commitment and be publicly acknowledged.

Section 6. Responsibility of those in the Fellowship

Those within the fellowship shall seek to exercise their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of all the church body and shall submit to the loving and authoritative oversight of the Pastor(s). In recognition and submission to the Word of God, those within the fellowship commit to fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. faithfully and regularly gather with the members The Vine Church when they assemble²⁴
2. respect, honor, and submit to the spiritual leadership of The Vine Church²⁵
3. give financially to support the ministry of The Vine Church²⁶
4. serve for the benefit of other members of The Vine Church²⁷
5. walk in unity and love with other members of The Vine Church²⁸
6. reconcile with other members of The Vine Church when conflicts arise²⁹
7. live in accountability through the process of church discipline at The Vine Church³⁰

Section 7. Voting Privileges

Fellowship in this church shall not vest in any member any proprietary right in the Corporation but shall only entitle the member to vote at a meeting of the church members. In such cases, voting privileges are restricted to church members who are in good standing and have attended three of the previous eight regularly scheduled church gatherings, who are not under any disciplinary action, and who have passed their sixteenth (16) birthday. fellowship is not transferable to another individual.

²⁴ Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:5

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, 1 Corinthians 9:1-16, Galatians 6:6-10, 1 Timothy 5:17-18

²⁷ Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:7-16, Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 4:10, Hebrews 10:24

²⁸ Psalm 133:1, Romans 12:10, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 10:23-24, Ephesians 4:1-6, Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Peter 4:8

²⁹ Matthew 5:21-26, Romans 12:14-21, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:15

³⁰ Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Galatians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, 1 Timothy 5:19-21, James 5:19-20

Section 8. Discipline of Members

PURPOSE: The purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining the purity of the church³¹, protecting believers by deterring sin³², and promoting the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to biblical standards of doctrine and conduct³³.

PROCESS: All other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with The Vine Church who err in biblical doctrine or conduct [including but not limited to moral and/or doctrinal failure], shall be subject to discipline according to Matthew 18:15-18. Such a person hereafter will be referred to as an “erring person.” Before such discipline reaches its final conclusion:

1. It shall be the duty of any Christian who has knowledge of the erring person’s unbiblical beliefs or misconduct to warn and to correct the erring person in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring person does not heed this warning, then,
2. The warning person shall go again to the erring person, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring person has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. The first and second warnings may occur with no specified time interval. If the erring person still refuses to heed this warning, then;
3. It shall be brought to the attention of the Pastor(s). It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion, whether the erring person breaks fellowship with The Vine Church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from fellowship to avoid the discipline process. The Pastor(s) will appropriately investigate any allegation brought by one Christian against another. If these allegations are warranted, two or more of the Pastor(s) or appointed persons will contact the erring person and seek his or her repentance. If the Pastor(s) determines, after thorough investigation in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19—that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent and be restored, then the Pastor(s) shall inform the church at a regularly scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring person demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a regularly scheduled worship service. If, however, the erring person does not repent, the Pastor(s) will remove the erring person from fellowship and notify the church in accordance with Matthew 18. Even at this point, the Church will pray for the restoration of the erring person.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Pastor(s) in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the third stage of church discipline (i.e., the informing of the church and congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring person to repentance) or to the fourth stage of church discipline (i.e., the dismissal from the fellowship and/or fellowship of the church) when one or more of the following have occurred:

1. Where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public, i.e., openly and to the offense of the whole Church,³⁴
2. Where the disciplined party has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine deemed false and erroneous by the Pastor(s) then chosen to disregard the direction and reproof of the Pastor(s);³⁵ or
3. Where the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from factious and divisive conduct and has chosen to disregard that warning.³⁶

Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the Pastor(s) any person may be notified that he or she is not to be present upon church premises for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others on church premises. Such required absence may, but need not, be concurrent with church discipline of that person.

Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the Pastor(s) should a person become an offense to the church and its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, or nonsupport of the church through non-attendance of the worship service, fellowship may be terminated, but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring the person to repentance.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 5:6

³² 1 Timothy 5:20

³³ Galatians 6:1

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

³⁵ Romans 16:17-18

³⁶ Titus 3:10-11

Section 9. Termination of fellowship

An individual's fellowship with The Vine Church shall be terminated and the person's name removed from the fellowship roll at the death of the member, transfer of fellowship to another church, at the written request of a member, or as a result of discipline (Article IV, Section 8). A record of the dates of fellowship shall be kept.

ARTICLE V

Meetings

Section 1. Annual Meeting

There shall be an annual family meeting of The Vine Church in the final quarter of the fiscal year.

Section 2. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Church may be called at any time by the Pastor(s).

Section 3. Notice of Meetings

Notice of Special Meetings of the church shall be given by announcement in at least one regularly scheduled gathering of the church prior to the meeting.

Section 4. Presiding Official

A Pastor shall provide the moderation of all such meetings.

Section 5. Quorum

At all meetings of the church, the active members within the fellowship present shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 6. Voting

Voting privileges are restricted to those within the fellowship who are in good standing, who are not under any disciplinary action, have attended three of the previous eight regularly scheduled church gatherings and who have passed their eighteenth (18) birthday. See Article IV, Section 8.

Section 8. Matters to be Considered

The Pastor(s) shall secure the affirmation of voting eligible persons of The Vine Church regarding:

1. the selection, rebuke, or dismissal of Deacons and Pastors
2. the selection of vocational pastoral staff members
3. affirmation or amendments of the annual budget
4. amending the Bylaws
5. matters of church discipline
6. other matters in which the Pastor(s) feel led to seek the members' advice and counsel

ARTICLE VI
Pastor/Elder/Overseer

Section 1. Overview

The administrative and pastoral structure for a local church, as seen in the Holy Scriptures, is to utilize a plurality of scripturally qualified Pastors/Elders/Overseers, who lovingly shepherd the people of God by exercising wise and authoritative oversight, persisting in sound biblical instruction, and providing an example to imitate. In accordance with Scripture, The Vine Church requires biblically qualified men to serve as Pastors/Elders/Overseers. These men must meet specific moral and spiritual qualifications before they serve³⁷. They must be publicly installed into office³⁸. They must be motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do their work³⁹. After review, examination, and appointment, such men shall constitute the Council of Pastors. To effectively perform their duties, the Council of Pastors need the prayers, support⁴⁰ and assent of the members of the church⁴¹. The Vine Church is called upon to honor their Pastors⁴² and to protect them against false accusations⁴³.

Section 2. Qualifications

Each member of the Council of Pastors must be an active member of this church and possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. As such, a Pastor:

1. must be above reproach⁴⁴
2. must be man of one woman⁴⁵
3. must be sober-minded⁴⁶
4. must be self-controlled⁴⁷
5. must be hospitable⁴⁸
6. must be a lover of good⁴⁹
7. must be upright⁵⁰
8. must be holy⁵¹
9. must be disciplined⁵²
10. must not be a drunkard⁵³ [not controlled by substances]
11. must not be violent but gentle/not quick tempered⁵⁴

³⁷ 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9

³⁸ 1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 14:23

³⁹ Acts 20:28

⁴⁰ 1 Timothy 5:17-18

⁴¹ Hebrews 13:17

⁴² 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

⁴³ 1 Timothy 5:19

⁴⁴ 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6

⁴⁵ 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6

⁴⁶ 1 Timothy 3:2

⁴⁷ 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8

⁴⁸ 1 Timothy 3:2,

⁴⁹ Titus 1:8

⁵⁰ Titus 1:8

⁵¹ Titus 1:8

⁵² Titus 1:8

⁵³ 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7

⁵⁴ 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7

12. must not be quarrelsome⁵⁵
13. must not be a lover of money/greedy for gain⁵⁶
14. must not be recent convert⁵⁷
15. must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive⁵⁸
16. his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination⁵⁹
17. must be well thought of by outsiders⁶⁰
18. must be able to teach and holds to trustworthy Word as taught⁶¹ (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9)

Section 3. Responsibilities

In carrying out their responsibilities, the Pastors shall:

1. teach the whole counsel of God through the regular preaching and teaching of Scripture⁶²
2. provide leadership to the people of God⁶³ in practical matters,⁶⁴ in matters of doctrine,⁶⁵ and in matters of discipline and character⁶⁶
3. lovingly care for and shepherd the people of God⁶⁷
4. protect the people of God⁶⁸
5. examine prospective members and acquaint them with the Statement of Faith and expectations of fellowship⁶⁹
6. oversee the process of church discipline
7. examine prospective candidates for office⁷⁰
8. oversee the work of the Deacons, appointed church agents, teams, and ministry positions⁷¹
9. conduct worship services
10. oversee the ordinances of the New Covenant (baptism and The Lord's Supper)

⁵⁵ 1 Timothy 3:3

⁵⁶ 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7

⁵⁷ 1 Timothy 3:6

⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 3:4-5

⁵⁹ Titus 1:6

⁶⁰ 1 Timothy 3:7

⁶¹ 1 Timothy 5:19

⁶² 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Titus 1:9, Acts 20:26-27

⁶³ Acts 20:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Hebrews 13:17

⁶⁴ Acts 6:1-6, 11:29-30

⁶⁵ Acts 15, 16:4, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:2, Titus 1:9-16, 2:15

⁶⁶ Hebrews 13:17

⁶⁷ Acts 20:35, Hebrews 13:17, James 5:14-15

⁶⁸ Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2-3

⁶⁹ Acts 20:28

⁷⁰ Acts 6:1-6, 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:22

⁷¹ Acts 6:1-6

11. equip the fellowship of the church for the work of the ministry⁷²
12. correct error⁷³
13. oversee, coordinate, and promote the ministries of the church
14. mobilize the church for both local and world evangelism and missions
15. establish policies, positions, and practices for The Vine Church that are consistent with Scripture
16. act as Trustees of the church as representatives of The Vine Church in legal matters (see Article VI, Section 4, 4)

Section 4. Authority

The Council of Pastors shall have the following authorities in addition to the other authorities and responsibilities enumerated in these Bylaws:

1. PERSONNEL: Exercise oversight in all personnel matters including, but not limited to: hiring, terms of service, compensation, and termination of non-pastoral staff. The Pastor(s) shall make all final decisions.
2. FINANCE: Exercise oversight in all financial matters including, but not limited to: disbursement of funds, acquisition, management, and the sale of properties, and generally to conduct, manage, and control the activities and affairs of the church.
3. POLICY AND PRACTICE: Establish and exercise oversight of the policies and practices of this church which are consistent with Scripture.
4. TRUSTEES: Pastor(s) shall represent The Vine Church in all its legal matters.

Section 5. Number

As God calls men to serve in the office of Pastor/Elder/Overseer, they shall be considered, examined, and utilized in service. The number of Pastors/Elders/Overseers is not determined; it is a matter of the revealed will of God. The Bible indicates a plurality of leadership⁷⁴, which implies multiple Pastors/Elders/Overseers. This number includes both compensated and non-compensated Pastors/Elders/Overseers.

Section 6. Nomination, Selection, and Tenure of Office

Recommendations to fill the office of Pastor/Elder/Overseer shall be requested from the church by the Pastor(s) as needed. The Pastor(s) may also make nominations and lead them through a thorough time of examination. A potential Pastor will be examined by the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers in order to discover his calling and qualifications. The appointment of a man to serve as a Pastor is a solemn and serious matter (1 Timothy 5:21-22). Therefore, the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers shall earnestly, without any haste, bias, or partiality, seek God's will with regard to the appointment of a potential Pastor to the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers. After such a time of examination, the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers shall approve or disapprove each nominee and seek the input of the congregation for a period of no less than 10 days. Any objections from the congregation must be submitted to the Pastor(s) in writing for further investigation. A candidate who has been approved through this process shall then be placed before the congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service where the Pastor(s) will request affirmation from the congregation. The installment (ordination) of a Pastor shall be public and in the presence of the congregation. Provided a Pastor is meeting all biblical requirements for service in that capacity, there are no required, or defined limits on a Pastor's term of office unless otherwise determined by the Pastor(s).

⁷² Ephesians 4:11-16

⁷³ 1 Timothy 5:20, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Titus 1:13, 2:15

⁷⁴ Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:4,13-21, 20:17,28, 21:18, Philippians 1:1, Ephesians 4:11 1 Timothy 3:1-2, 4:14, 5:15,19, Titus 1:5,7 James 5:14

Section 7. Removal of Pastor(s)

Any Pastor may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the Pastor(s) if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified (according to pertinent Scripture, including 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9), after thorough corroborating investigation by the Pastor(s) (or a duly appointed Committee of the Council) in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19. When a Pastor is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from shepherding, and if he refuses to repent from that sin, the removal shall be accompanied by a public rebuke, and notice shall be made before the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service as prescribed in 1 Timothy 5:20.

Section 8. Leadership Meetings

Meetings of the Council of Pastors, shall be held frequently, with the time and place announced beforehand. The Council shall establish written policies and procedures for conducting their activities. All meetings shall have written, or otherwise recorded minutes of the matters considered. Without recorded minutes, a meeting is not official or binding. These minutes shall become a part of the permanent records of the Council of Pastors. Regular meetings of the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers, are open to any member who is in good standing. The Pastors may at any time designate a portion of any or all regular meetings as “Pastors only.” In the event the Council of Pastors is composed of an even number of Pastors, the Senior Pastor’s vote counts as two votes.

Section 9. Action Without Meeting

Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Pastors may be taken without meeting if all members of the Council shall individually or collectively consent in writing (including digital messaging, i.e., emails, text messages) to a duly prepared resolution to such action. Such consent or consents shall have the same effect of an affirmative vote of the Council and shall be documented by attaching the signed resolution with the minutes of proceedings of the Council.

Section 10. Decisions

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration by the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers. The Council will strive for unity in all decisions, having a spirit of humility, with each Pastor regarding one another before himself.

Section 11. Compensation

Pastors are not compensated for their service on the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers. A Pastor may be compensated for his pastoral service to the church, such a decision being made by the Church. Any person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from The Vine Church shall not be able to determine the nature or amount of said compensation.

ARTICLE VII **Deacons**

Section 1. Overview

Deacons are the servant-ministers of the church. Their purpose is to relieve the Pastor of the multitude of practical duties of caring for the flock. Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the congregation’s physical welfare. Deacons have the honor of modeling God’s compassion, kindness, mercy, and love for the local church and the lost world.⁷⁵

As the church compassionately cares for people’s needs, the world sees a visible display of Christ’s love, which will draw some people to the Savior. Deacons are to be an example of commitment, unity, and harmony in their service. Men in this office are to strive for faithfulness, remembering that, “. . .those who serve well as Deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:13). Deacon’s function under the oversight of the Pastors.

⁷⁵ Acts 6.1-6

Section 2. Qualifications

In accordance with Scripture, The Vine Church require biblically qualified people to serve as Deacons. Each Deacon must be an active member who is in good standing in this church, and possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. As such, a Deacon:

1. must be dignified⁷⁶
2. must not be double-tongued⁷⁷
3. must not be addicted to much wine⁷⁸
4. must not be greedy for dishonest gain⁷⁹
5. must hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience⁸⁰
6. must be tested⁸¹
7. must be blameless⁸²
8. must be a man of one woman⁸³
9. must manage his children and household well⁸⁴ (1 Timothy 3:12)
10. his wife must be dignified⁸⁵ (1 Timothy 3:11)
11. his wife must not be slanderous⁸⁶ (1 Timothy 3:11)
12. his wife must be sober-minded⁸⁷ (1 Timothy 3:11)
13. his wife must be faithful in all things⁸⁸ (1 Timothy 3:11)

Section 3. Responsibilities

In carrying out their responsibilities, the Deacons shall:

1. effectively and carefully administer the church's charitable activities
2. collect benevolence funds for the distribution of relief and mercy
3. help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the homeless, the shut-in, and the disabled
4. comfort, protect, encourage people
5. serve church members by meeting physical needs in Christ-like love and compassion, paying careful and specific attention to widows and widowers, the needy, and the aged.
6. fulfill other such responsibilities as determined by the Pastor(s).

⁷⁶ 1 Timothy 3:8

⁷⁷ 1 Timothy 3:8

⁷⁸ 1 Timothy 3:8

⁷⁹ 1 Timothy 3:8

⁸⁰ 1 Timothy 3:9

⁸¹ 1 Timothy 3:10

⁸² 1 Timothy 3:10

⁸³ 1 Timothy 3:12

⁸⁴ 1 Timothy 3:11

⁸⁵ 1 Timothy 3:11

⁸⁶ 1 Timothy 3:11

⁸⁷ 1 Timothy 3:11

⁸⁸ 1 Timothy 3:11

Section 4. Number

As God calls men to serve in the office of Deacon, they shall be considered, examined, and utilized in service. The number of Deacons is not determined; it is a matter of the revealed will of God.

Section 5. Nomination, Selection, and Tenure of Office

Recommendations to fill the office of Deacon shall be requested from the church by the Pastor(s) as needed. The Pastor(s) may also select nominees and lead them through a thorough time of examination. A potential Deacon will be examined by the Pastor(s) (or a duly appointed Vision Team, per Article VI, Section 14) in order to discover his calling and qualifications. The appointment of a man to serve as a Deacon is a solemn and serious matter (1 Timothy 5:21-22). Therefore, the Pastor(s) shall earnestly, without any haste, bias, or partiality, seek God's will regarding the appointment of a potential Deacon. After such a time of examination, the Pastor(s) shall approve or disapprove each nominee and seek the input of the congregation for a period of no less than 10 days. Any objections from the congregation must be submitted to the Pastor(s) in writing for further investigation. A candidate who has been approved through this process shall then be placed before the congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service where the Pastor(s) will request affirmation from the congregation. The installment (ordination) of a Deacon shall be public and in the presence of the congregation. Provided a Deacon is meeting all biblical requirements for service in that capacity, there are no required, or defined limits on a Deacon's term of office unless otherwise determined by the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers or appointed vision team.

Section 6. Removal of Deacons

Any Deacon may be removed from office at any regular or special meetings of the Pastor(s) if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified (according to pertinent Scripture, including 1 Timothy 3:8-13), after thorough corroborating investigation by the Pastor(s) (or a duly appointed Vision Team, per Article VI, Section 14 of these Bylaws) in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19.

Section 7. Meetings

Meetings of the Deacons shall be held frequently, with the time and place announced beforehand. The Deacons shall establish written policies and procedures for conducting their activities and submit those policy and procedural requests to the Pastor(s) for adoption. Regular meetings of the Deacons are open to any member who is in good standing, per Article IV of these Bylaws. The Pastor(s) or Deacons may at any time designate a portion of any or all Deacons meetings as "Pastor and Deacons only."

ARTICLE VIII

Vision and Ministry Teams

Section 1. Vision Team Overview

The Church may appoint, from among its members, a team with a specified task called a Vision Team. Any such team is accountable to the entire Church and shall report its progress and insight to the Church. Prospective members of the Vision Team will be nominated by the Pastors/Elders/Overseers and duly elected by the Church during a regularly scheduled meeting. The Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers shall provide oversight for the Vision Team. In the event there is not a plurality of Pastors/Elders/Overseers, the Vision Team will be appointed to constitute the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers. At least one Pastor/Elder/Overseer will be a standing member of the Vision Team.

If the active fellowship of the church is less than 100, the Vision Team shall consist of at least 3 members in good standing. If the active fellowship of the church is greater than 100, the Vision Team shall consist of at least 5 members in good standing.

The number of members on the Vision Team shall remain an odd number and serve for one year at a time. Vision Team members may serve for up to a maximum of three consecutive years before being awarded an optional six month sabbatical. At three consecutive years, if the member is reappointed for a fourth consecutive year, they may resume service at the discretion of the Pastors/Elders/Overseers or appointed Vision Team following their sabbatical.

In coordination with the Pastors, the Vision Team of The Vine Church guides the:

1. Stewardship Matters
2. Vocational Personnel Matters
3. Missions Matters
4. Long Term Planning Matters
5. Facility Matters

In the event there is no consensus among the Church to appoint the minimum members to the Vision Team, the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers will facilitate the matters of the Vision Team.

Section 2. Ministry Team Overview

The Pastor/Elders/Overseers may at any time appoint committees and/or ministry teams to accomplish its stated goals through the ministry and service of the members of The Vine Church. Teams are focused upon accomplishing a stated or determined goal, or set of goals, to fulfill the ministry and/or task to which they have been commissioned.

Teams organize and function under policies and procedures established by the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers or appointed vision team.

Teams perform the ministry best when it is engaged by a plurality of members. Teams are the basic organizing units of The Vine Church, assembled to accomplish its goals. Teams are not policy-setting entities; rather, they are the “hands and feet” of the body of Christ.⁸⁹ Policy and procedures for teams are formulated and approved by the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers or appointed vision team.

Ministry teams consist of members who are in good standing. Ministry Team size shall be determined by the Pastors/Elders/Overseers as needed for the service for which they have been commissioned. Members may be added to or removed from a Ministry Team at the discretion of the Pastor/Elders/Overseers.

Any team may be dissolved upon a determination of the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers or appointed vision team.

ARTICLE IX **The Senior Pastor**

Section 1. Selection and Tenure of Office

The Senior Pastor⁹⁰ shall be identified and selected by the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers or appointed vision team. When a candidate has been identified by the Council, he shall proceed through the same process of affirmation through which all other Pastor candidates are affirmed. After thorough examination of the candidate, in order to discover his calling and qualifications⁹¹, the Pastors or appointed vision team, shall earnestly, without any haste, bias, or partiality, seek God’s will with regard to the appointment of this man to serve as the Senior Pastor. After such a time of examination, the Pastors or appointed vision team, shall approve or disapprove the candidate. The Council will then make their recommendation before the Church in a regularly scheduled worship service and seek the input of the congregation for a period of no less than 10 days. Any objections from the congregation must be submitted to the Pastors in writing for further investigation. A candidate who has been approved through this process shall then be placed before the congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service where the Pastors or appointed Vision Team, will request affirmation from the congregation. The installment (ordination) of this man to the office of the Senior Pastor shall be public and in the presence of the congregation. Provided this Pastor is meeting all biblical requirements for service in that capacity, there are no required, or defined limits on his term of office unless otherwise determined by the church. The Senior Pastor must give one month’s notice if he intends to resign. The time limit of his resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the Senior Pastor and the Council of Pastors by mutual agreement provide otherwise.

Section 2. Duties

The Senior Pastor is to be a scripturally qualified Pastor and must serve in that capacity (Article VI). In addition to his responsibilities as a Pastor, he shall also arrange for and conduct all public and regular services of the church⁹² and shall be responsible for general oversight and the spiritual welfare of the church.

⁸⁹ Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Corinthians 12:4-31

⁹⁰ Ephesians 4:11, 1 Corinthians 12:28

⁹¹ For Pastor Qualifications, see Article VI, Section 2

⁹² In the event that the role of Senior Pastor is vacant for a time, the Council of Pastors, or appointed sub-team, shall be responsible to arrange
for the public and regular services of the church.

The Senior Pastor must possess the requisite spiritual gifting for preaching and “labor hard in preaching and teaching,”⁹³ of “the whole counsel of God.”⁹⁴ He must devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching, keeping a close watch on himself and his teaching.⁹⁵ He must be unwaveringly committed to “preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”⁹⁶ This man must “fight the good fight of the faith” and guard the purity of the doctrine of the church in the preaching and teaching, “keeping the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,”⁹⁷ teaching only “what accords with sound doctrine,”⁹⁸ which is accomplished most faithfully through expository preaching. He must work diligently to accurately understand Scripture so that he may be pure in his teaching, keeping the command of Scripture to “present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of Truth.”⁹⁹ He must champion the inerrancy and authority of the Bible, remembering that “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”¹⁰⁰

Section 3. Removal of the Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor shall, if necessary, be subject to the same process of removal which all Pastor(s) are subject to, as described in Article VI, Section 7.

ARTICLE X **Staff**

The Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers, or Senior Pastor, will select, supervise, and evaluate all Pastoral, ministerial, and support staff members in accordance with the The Vine Church Personnel Manual. The Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers, or Senior Pastor, may at times select appointees to aid in some of these tasks (see Article VI, Section 4, 1).

ARTICLE XI **Settlement of Disputes**

In any dispute arising between church members, Pastor(s) or staff pertaining to any matter of spiritual teaching or practices, church finances, or title to property purchased with church contributions, the dispute shall be resolved by the Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers (or appointed vision team). A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each person regarding one another before himself and striving to guard “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”¹⁰¹

ARTICLE XII **Amendments**

These Bylaws may be amended, and new and additional Bylaws may be made in the following manner. The Pastor(s) will announce their recommended amendment(s) before the Church in a regularly scheduled meeting and seek the input of the congregation for a period of no less than 10 days. Any objections from the congregation must be submitted to the Pastor(s) in writing for consideration. If, after objections have been received and deliberated, the Pastor(s) has still deemed it wise to proceed and approve the amendment(s) they shall then bring the amendment(s) before the congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service where they will request affirmation from the congregation.

ARTICLE XIII **Indemnification of Pastor(s)**

The Pastor(s) acting together as the Pastor(s) shall be indemnified and held harmless for actions consistent with the purpose and vision of The Vine Church. The Vine Church shall be primarily responsible for liability arising from such actions or inaction of the

⁹³ 1 Timothy 5:17-18; also, see 2 Timothy 4:1-5

⁹⁴ Acts 20:27

⁹⁵ 1 Timothy 4:13; also, see Acts 20:28-30 and Titus 2:7-8

⁹⁶ 2 Timothy 4:1-5

⁹⁷ 1 Timothy 6:12-16

⁹⁸ Titus 2:1

⁹⁹ 2 Timothy 2:15-17

¹⁰⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁰¹ Ephesians 4:1-3. See also 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

Council of Pastors/Elders/Overseers or appointed vision team. Reasonable expenses to litigate or otherwise resolve issues arising from the Council's performance of its duties and responsibilities shall be paid by The Vine Church. At the decision of the church this same indemnification shall extend to all individuals performing within the scope of their duties and responsibilities for the benefit of The Vine Church.

ARTICLE XIV
Dissolution

Upon dissolution of this local church, the church shall cause the assets herein to be transferred to a 501c3 non-profit organization of like mind and faith.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
THE VINE CHURCH
Adopted September 15, 2024

ADDENDUMS

ADDENDUM 1; *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*

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ADDENDUM 2; *Church Fellowship Covenant*

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The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition*. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

* The Exposition is not printed here but can be obtained by contacting: ICBI / P.O. Box 13261 / Oakland, CA 94661 / (415)-339-1064.

A SHORT STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of

grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences both to the individual and to the Church.

The Vine Church Membership Covenant

As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have testified publicly to the work of God in making me a new creation in Christ¹⁰² through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³

I have demonstrated God's gracious gift of faith and salvation through obedience to our Lord's command to be baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁴

Further, I am committed to obeying the Lord's commands to be disciplined¹⁰⁵ in the Christian faith so that I may walk in the manner which is pleasing to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁶

In accordance with being a faithful follower of Jesus, I commit myself to these resolutions as a member of The Vine Church:

RESOLVED (1): I am resolved to faithfully and regularly gather with the members of The Vine Church when they assemble.¹⁰⁷

RESOLVED (2): I am resolved to respect, honor, and submit to the spiritual leadership of The Vine Church.¹⁰⁸

RESOLVED (3): I am resolved to sacrificially and generously give financially to support the ministry of The Vine Church.¹⁰⁹

RESOLVED (4): I am resolved to serve for the benefit of other members of The Vine Church.¹¹⁰

RESOLVED (5): I am resolved to walk in unity and love with other members of The Vine Church.¹¹¹

RESOLVED (6): I am resolved to reconcile with other members of The Vine Church when conflicts arise.¹¹²

RESOLVED (7): I am resolved to live in accountability through the process of church discipline at The Vine Church.¹¹³

Further, as a member, I do affirm the STATEMENT OF FAITH which The Vine Church has enumerated in these Bylaws.

Further, as a member, I do voluntarily submit myself to honor the principles laid forth in these Bylaws of The Vine Church.

NAME

DATE

Appointee serving as WITNESS

DATE

PASTOR serving to VERIFY

PASTOR signature

DATE

¹⁰² 2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁰³ John 1:13, 3:3-8, Titus 3:5

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 28:18-19, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:1-4, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 28:20, John 14:15, Romans 6:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Peter 1:2

¹⁰⁶ Ephesians 4:1-6, Colossians 1:10, 2:6, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Philippians 1:27

¹⁰⁷ Hebrews 10:24-25

¹⁰⁸ 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:5

¹⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, 1 Corinthians 9:1-16, Galatians 6:6-10, 1 Timothy 5:17-18

¹¹⁰ Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:7-16, Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 4:10, Hebrews 10:24

¹¹¹ Psalm 133:1, Romans 12:10, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 10:23-24, Ephesians 4:1-6, Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Peter 4:8

¹¹² Matthew 5:21-26, Romans 12:14-21, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:15

¹¹³ Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Galatians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, 1 Timothy 5:19-21, James 5:19-20