

# By-Laws<sup>1</sup>

Of

## Steel Valley Church of Youngstown, Ohio

Steel Valley Church of Youngstown, Ohio (Steel Valley Church) is organized under the headship of Jesus and the authority of Scripture through the leading of the Council of Elders, service of Deacons & Deaconesses, and ministry of the Members.

### Section 1: Council of Elders

#### 1.1. Council of Elders Summary:

- 1.1.1. Elders labor to oversee the overall mission of the church carried out by working *in* (Organizational Responsibilities) and *over* (Spiritual Heads) the entire church.
- 1.1.2. A Council of Elders, consisting of not less than two qualified men, shall lead this church.
- 1.1.3. If the minimum number of Elders cannot be met from within the church body, the remaining Elder shall select a Proxy Elder from an outside church in order to meet the requirement for a Council of Elders.
  - 1.1.3.1.1. The Proxy Elder must evidence the Elder qualifications as listed below and be fully committed to upholding the constitution and bylaws of Steel Valley Church.
- 1.1.4. If the minimum number of Elders cannot be met from within the church body, and there are no remaining Elders, the Deacon's will temporarily fulfill the duties of appointing an Interim Elder according to Section 1.11.
- 1.1.5. The Council of Elders shall meet at least monthly at a time and place agreed upon by the Council.

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 Bylaw Revision - Adopted by Membership Vote on April 11, 2021

## **1.2. Elders Authority:**

- 1.2.1. The Council of Elders have final say in any and all matters concerning the church. Anything voted on by the Elders requires a quorum of at least two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of the council present. A majority vote is required to pass all affairs except the following which require a unanimous vote:
  - 1.2.1.1. Selection and Removal of Elders
  - 1.2.1.2. Amending the Constitution & By-Laws
  - 1.2.1.3. Allowing outside ordained ministers to perform marriage ceremonies
- 1.2.2. The matters in the list below (see Section 1.2.2.1-1.2.2.8), must be passed by a majority vote through The Council of Elders, and the Council must additionally acquire member vote (see Section 3.5):
  - 1.2.2.1. Elder selection & Removal
  - 1.2.2.2. Interim Lead Elder selection & removal
  - 1.2.2.3. Deacon/Deaconess Selection & Removal
  - 1.2.2.4. Receiving and Dismissing Church Members
  - 1.2.2.5. Selling or purchasing land or buildings
  - 1.2.2.6. Approving debt for the church in excess of one twelfth ( $\frac{1}{12}$ ) of the annual operating budget
  - 1.2.2.7. Changing the fiscal budget
  - 1.2.2.8. Changing the constitution of Steel Valley Church
- 1.2.3. Only the Lead Elder may call for a vote at a Council meeting. The only exception is in the matter of forced removal of the Lead Elder, in which case any Elder may call for a vote.

## **1.3. Elders Qualifications:**

- 1.3.1. Both the Lead Elder and Council of Elders will meet the following criteria as assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4):
  - 1.3.1.1. Above reproach
  - 1.3.1.2. Husband of one wife
  - 1.3.1.3. Temperate
  - 1.3.1.4. Self-controlled
  - 1.3.1.5. Respectable
  - 1.3.1.6. Hospitable
  - 1.3.1.7. Able to teach

- 1.3.1.8. Not given to drunkenness
- 1.3.1.9. Not violent
- 1.3.1.10. Gentle
- 1.3.1.11. Not quarrelsome
- 1.3.1.12. Not a lover of money
- 1.3.1.13. Manages his own family well
- 1.3.1.14. Not a recent convert
- 1.3.1.15. Has a good reputation
- 1.3.1.16. Adheres to the Constitution & By-laws in both action and belief

## **1.4. Elders Responsibilities:**

- 1.4.1. All Elders shall be responsible for:
  - 1.4.1.1. Seeking God's will for the church community to the best of their ability as they study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5)
  - 1.4.1.2. Caring for members and seeking their growth as a disciple of Christ, in part by equipping them for service (Eph. 4:11-13) and praying for them regularly
  - 1.4.1.3. Providing teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17-18)
  - 1.4.1.4. Being on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31)
  - 1.4.1.5. Exercising church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1)
  - 1.4.1.6. Setting an example and joining the church in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12).

## **1.5. Elder Selection:**

- 1.5.1. Prospective new Elders will be identified by current Elders based upon biblical qualification (I Timothy 3 & Titus 1) and personal observation.
- 1.5.2. The Elder candidate will be presented to the church body for comment (see Section 1.2.2).
- 1.5.3. If a member of Steel Valley Church possesses knowledge that would disqualify an Elder candidate, that person is responsible to share the knowledge with a current Elder prior to the Council of Elders' vote (see Section 1.2.2).
- 1.5.4. An Elder candidate will be selected as an Elder only by the unanimous decision of the Council of Elders (see Section 1.2.1).

## **1.6. Elder Term:**

- 1.6.1. The Elder's expected commitment is to faithfully serve two 3-year terms, with a sabbatical in between each term.
  - 1.6.1.1. Exception: All paid on-staff Elders are exempt from term limits, and should refer to job descriptions.
  - 1.6.1.2. Exception: In the event that the demands of the church require the term lengths to be extended, the Council of Elders can plan sabbaticals and furloughs at their discretion.
- 1.6.2. The expectations of the sabbatical are as follows:
  - 1.6.2.1. Length of time: three to six months
  - 1.6.2.2. Spiritual growth and renewal through a discipleship plan specified by the Council of Elders.
  - 1.6.2.3. Continued fulfillment of the obligations of a faithful Christian to the body of Christ.
- 1.6.3. Once the Elder has faithfully served all his terms, the Elder will be required to take a mandatory three- to twelve-month furlough from church leadership responsibilities. During the furlough, they are expected to continue to adhere to the guidelines of a faithful church member (see Section 3), and utilize their time according to Section 1.6.2.2-3. After observing their mandatory furlough, that church member will be eligible for reelection to serve again (see Section 1.5).
- 1.6.4. The Council of Elders is required to inform the church members of all elections or changes regularly as they occur. Term start dates and end dates will be managed by the Lead Elder.
- 1.6.5. The Council of Elders may not intentionally vote on matters that would not pass if an Elder on sabbatical was present.

## **1.7. Elder Removal:**

- 1.7.1. An Elder may be removed upon their personal request or an Elder can be removed by forced removal by a vote of the Council of Elders and church members (see Section 1.7.2 and Section 3.5) excepting the Elder being voted upon for removal (see Section 1.2.2).
- 1.7.2. Parameters of forced removal of an Elder:
  - 1.7.2.1. Any Elder may move to remove another Elder

- 1.7.2.2. The Council of Elders should first follow the process for Church Discipline before moving to removal (see Section 4).
- 1.7.2.3. The Council of Elders must vote unanimously in favor of removal.
- 1.7.2.4. After the unanimous vote of the Council of Elders, the church membership is required to vote (see Section 3.5).
- 1.7.3. Reasons for removal include but are not limited to:
  - 1.7.3.1. Personal reasons of exiting Elder
  - 1.7.3.2. Failure to live a holy life as determined by Scripture
  - 1.7.3.3. Moving to another city or state or church community
  - 1.7.3.4. Not adhering to the constitution and bylaws of Steel Valley Church in either action or belief
  - 1.7.3.5. Not adhering to the Member Covenant
  - 1.7.3.6. Consistent failure to perform Elder duties

## **1.8. Lead Elder Responsibilities:**

- 1.8.1. The Lead Elder is designated as the teaching pastor and head of the Council of Elders. In addition to the above list (see Section 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4), he is responsible for:
  - 1.8.1.1. Setting the agenda for meetings of the Council of Elders
  - 1.8.1.2. Facilitating the decision-making process through discussion, prayer, and Scripture
  - 1.8.1.3. Calling for a vote at meetings of the Council of Elders
  - 1.8.1.4. Overseeing and coordinating the day-to-day administration of the church
  - 1.8.1.5. Preaching the majority of weeks unless otherwise decided by the Council of Elders
  - 1.8.1.6. Ensuring that the Council of Elders fulfills its' duties

## **1.9. Lead Elder Selection:**

- 1.9.1. In the case of the absence of a Lead Elder, the Council of Elders shall appoint an Elder search team that shall be responsible for seeking out and selecting a new Lead Elder.
- 1.9.2. A Lead Elder should be selected by majority vote of the Search Team and then proposed to the Council of Elders (See Section 1.2.2).
- 1.9.3. The Council of Elders must unanimously agree with the selection.
- 1.9.4. The Council of Elders must then acquire member vote (see Section 3.5).
- 1.9.5. Only one candidate may be presented to the members at a time.

## **1.10. Interim Lead Elder:**

- 1.10.1. If sufficient time is not available to find a qualified and agreeable replacement, the Council of Elders shall appoint an interim Lead Elder from the current Council of Elders by vote (see Section 1.2.2).
- 1.10.2. The interim Lead Elder will serve until a suitable candidate may be found and chosen as the new Lead Elder.
- 1.10.3. If the interim period lasts beyond one year from the date the interim Lead Elder is selected, a two-thirds vote by the members is necessary for the interim to continue his duties.

## **Section 2: Deacons & Deaconesses**

### **2.1. Deacons/Deaconesses Summary:**

- 2.1.1. Deacons and Deaconesses labor as the hands of the Church, bringing unity, ensuring the mission is carried out efficiently, and ensuring Elders are freed up for prayer, discipline and the ministry of the Word.

### **2.2. Deacon/Deaconess Qualifications:**

- 2.2.1. Deacons and Deaconesses are selected based upon observable servant-leadership and meeting biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-12) as listed:
  - 2.2.1.1. Dignified
  - 2.2.1.2. Not double-tongued
  - 2.2.1.3. Not addicted to much wine
  - 2.2.1.4. Not greedy for dishonest gain
  - 2.2.1.5. Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience
  - 2.2.1.6. Must be tested and proven blameless
  - 2.2.1.7. Wives/Women must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober minded, faithful in all things
  - 2.2.1.8. Husband of one wife
  - 2.2.1.9. Managing household and children well

## **2.3. Deacon/Deaconess Responsibilities:**

- 2.3.1. Protecting unity within the church.
- 2.3.2. Serving and organizing other members to serve people, especially other Christians and most especially other members of Steel Valley Church.
- 2.3.3. Helping the Elders with whatever is necessary to do their job of equipping and training members for the work of the ministry.

## **2.4. Deacon/Deaconess Selection:**

- 2.4.1. Deacons and Deaconesses are selected by a vote of the Council of Elders (see Section 1.2.2) and presented to the members for comment.
  - 2.4.2. The Council of Elders will consult with all the current Deacons before such a vote is made in order to promote and ensure unity in serving Steel Valley Church.

## **2.5. Deacon/Deaconess Term:**

- 2.5.1. The Deacon's expected commitment is to faithfully serve two 2-year terms, with a sabbatical in between each term.
  - 2.5.1.1. EXCEPTION: All paid on-staff Deacons are exempt from term limits, and should refer to job descriptions.
  - 2.5.1.2. EXCEPTION: In the event that the demands of the church require the term lengths to be extended, the Council of Elders can plan sabbaticals and furloughs at their discretion.
- 2.5.2. The expectations of the sabbatical are as follows:
  - 2.5.2.1. Length of time: three to six months
  - 2.5.2.2. Spiritual growth and renewal through a discipleship plan specified by the Council of Elders.
  - 2.5.2.3. Continued fulfillment of the obligations of a faithful Christian to the body of Christ.
- 2.5.3. Once the Deacon/Deaconess has faithfully served all their terms, the Deacon/Deaconess will be required to take a mandatory three- to twelve-month furlough from church leadership responsibilities. During the furlough, they are expected to continue to adhere to the guidelines of a faithful church member (see Section 3), and utilize their time

according to Section 2.5.2.2-3. After observing their mandatory furlough, that church member will be eligible for reelection to serve again (see Section 2.4).

- 2.5.4. The Council of Elders is required to inform the church members of all elections or changes regularly as they occur. Term start dates and end dates will be managed by the Lead Elder.

## **2.6. Deacon/Deaconess Removal:**

- 2.6.1. A Deacon or Deaconess may be removed upon their personal request or by a vote of the Council of Elders (see Section 1.2.2).
  - 2.6.1.1. The Council of Elders will consult with all the current Deacons before such a vote is made in order to promote and ensure unity in serving Steel Valley Church.

# **Section 3: Members**

## **3.1. Members Summary:**

- 3.1.1. Members are Christians covenanted together to unify as Steel Valley Church which is our local expression of the body of Christ.

## **3.2. Member Qualifications:**

- 3.2.1. A member must be a believer in Jesus as defined by the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.
- 3.2.2. A member must be baptized in water.
  - 3.2.2.1. Baptism is defined as “believer’s baptism” or complete immersion following a confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God.
  - 3.2.2.2. Exception: If a potential member was baptized as an infant and does not believe that he or she should be baptized again, or if a potential member is physically incapable of being baptized, a petition to the Council of Elders is to be made. This petition will be followed by an interview with at least one Elder to discuss the matter.
  - 3.2.2.3. This is to be a defining matter not a dividing one. The goal is unity in the church.
- 3.2.3. A member must be in full agreement with the mission of this church.



- 3.2.4. A member must be consistently part of church fellowship as testified to by the members of Steel Valley Church.
- 3.2.5. A member must be in submission to church leadership and diligent to preserve unity and peace even unto the point of receiving church discipline from the Elders.

### **3.3. Member Responsibilities:**

- 3.3.1. Members must strive to be active disciple-making disciples, including but not limited to the following:
  - 3.3.1.1. Studying the Bible with one another (Colossians 3:16-17)
  - 3.3.1.2. Entering into mentorship relationships (Titus 2:1-6)
  - 3.3.1.3. Regular corporate participation in worship (Hebrews 10:24-25)
  - 3.3.1.4. Being salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-14)
  - 3.3.1.5. Participating in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:14-17)
  - 3.3.1.6. Attend quarterly membership meetings

### **3.4. Member Process:**

- 3.4.1. All potential members must complete the membership process
  - 3.4.1.1. Step 1: Initiate membership interest
  - 3.4.1.2. Step 2: Complete membership classes
  - 3.4.1.3. Step 3: Complete an Elder interview
  - 3.4.1.4. Step 4: Be presented to the church membership for comment
  - 3.4.1.5. Step 5: Elders conduct vote (see Section 1.2.2.)
  - 3.4.1.6. Step 6: Elders present new members for public recognition

### **3.5. Member Authority:**

- 3.5.1. Members confirm the following things as a body via two-thirds majority vote:
  - 3.5.1.1. Lead Elder selection
  - 3.5.1.2. Lead Elder removal
  - 3.5.1.3. Interim Lead Elder (term extension)
  - 3.5.1.4. Purchase or sale of land or buildings
  - 3.5.1.5. Approving debt for the church in excess of one twelfth (1/12) of the annual operating budget.
  - 3.5.1.6. Changing the Constitution of Steel Valley Church

- 3.5.2. Those members present and voting at any meeting duly noticed and called will constitute a quorum of the members for voting (if at least 20% of members are present).
- 3.5.3. Whenever members are required or permitted to vote, notification of such a meeting shall be given at least two weeks in advance by announcement or distribution of written material to those present at a Sunday service or delivery of a written/electronic notice via US mail/Email to each member identified on the membership roll.

### **3.6. Member Removal:**

- 3.6.1. Any member of Steel Valley Church may request to be removed from membership in writing to the Council of Elders.
- 3.6.2. Members may be removed following the process of church discipline (see Section 4).
- 3.6.3. If any member becomes inactive in participation in church fellowship, the Elders will provide an opportunity for membership comment at a quarterly members meeting before removal.

## **Section 4: Church Discipline**

### **4.1. Church Discipline Summary:**

- 4.1.1. Any member guilty of consistent neglect of his responsibilities (as stated in the Member Covenant) or of grievous, unrepentant sin which may dishonor the Lord and damage His church will be subject to the disciplinary measures commanded by the Lord in Matthew 18:15-17, and summarized as follows.

### **4.2. Church Discipline Goal:**

- 4.2.1. It should be remembered that the supreme goal of this process is the glory of God, the good of the church, and the spiritual health of the guilty member. Thus all matters of discipline must be dealt with lovingly and gently—with the ultimate goal of full forgiveness and restoration.

### **4.3. Church Discipline Steps:**

- 4.3.1.1. Step 1: The guilty member will first be lovingly and privately rebuked by another church member.
- 4.3.1.2. Step 2: If this initial step fails to secure repentance and restoration, the rebuking member will then notify the Elders. That Elder, along with a facilitator, will together lovingly and privately confront the guilty member.
- 4.3.1.3. Step 3: If steps 1 and 2 fail to secure repentance and restoration, and after much prayer, make the situation known to the entire church membership. The entire church membership will be encouraged to plead with the guilty member for repentance and restoration, and the guilty member will be put on probation, having all membership privileges, including access to the church building and participation in communion, temporarily revoked.

#### **4.4. Church Discipline Outcomes:**

- 4.4.1. Outcome 1: If, in due time, the guilty member repents and makes any necessary restitution, he will be wholeheartedly forgiven and fully restored to membership in good standing.
- 4.4.2. Outcome 2: If, in due time, these processes do not result in repentance and restoration, the Elders will remove the guilty member from church membership with a majority vote.
  - 4.4.2.1. Should the guilty former-member, after his removal, publicly repent and make any necessary restitution, he may be restored by following the aforementioned membership process.
  - 4.4.2.2. In cases not requiring such severity of action, members may yet, under certain sinful circumstances, be admonished by the suspension of certain leadership and ministry positions, although not losing their membership.

## **Section 5: Financial Accountability**

### **5.1. The Budget:**

- 5.1.1. The budget of Steel Valley Church will be voted on annually by the Council of Elders no later than the final meeting of each calendar year (see Section 1.2.2).
  - 5.1.1.1. Before this meeting, a draft budget of the proposed expenditures for the coming year shall be drawn up by the Treasurer. When the budget is approved and accepted, it will be considered the basis for all current liabilities.

- 5.1.2. Any change to the budget must be approved by a vote of the Council of Elders (see Section 1.2.2).
- 5.1.3. The budget will be made available to all members upon request.

## **5.2. Appointment of Treasurer; Responsibilities:**

- 5.2.1. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Council of Elders based upon the requirements of a Deacon/Deaconess (see Section 2).
- 5.2.2. The Treasurer, who will be a Deacon or Deaconess and officer of Steel Valley Church, will lead the financial team that will manage the established budget.
- 5.2.3. This team will ensure that all leadership within Steel Valley Church are operating within the established budget.
- 5.2.4. The Treasurer will be responsible for administering and disbursing funding in accordance with the budget, as well as reporting the financial status to the Council of Elders each month.

## **5.3. Fiscal Year:**

- 5.3.1. The fiscal year shall be January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

# **Section 6: Amendments**

## **6.1. Amendments Summary:**

- 6.1.1. These Bylaws may be amended or repealed, and new Bylaws may be adopted, by the unanimous vote of Council of Elders and two-thirds majority vote of membership.

# **Section 7: Use of Building**

## **7.1. Use of Building Summary:**

- 7.1.1. The building and grounds at 801 Wick Ave Youngstown, Ohio are the property of Steel Valley Church, and are used primarily for Sunday services and other weekly church-sanctioned events as determined by the Council of Elders of Steel Valley Church.

- 7.1.2. Outside of this specification, the building and grounds may be requested for use, but only by a member of the church or ministry partner.
  - 7.1.2.1. The request for use must be approved by a vote of the Council of Elders (see Section 1.2.2).
  - 7.1.2.2. This vote may be unofficial and need not be taken in an official Elders meeting.
- 7.1.3. The requesting member must sign a use-of-building contract.

## **Section 8: Marriage Ceremonies and Services**

### **8.1. Marriage Ceremonies and Services:**

- 8.1.1. The ordained Elders of Steel Valley Church may perform marriage ceremonies at Steel Valley Church for engaged couples where at least one of the engaged persons is currently a Covenant Partner of Steel Valley Church and pursuant to the Use of Building Policy (see Section 7).
- 8.1.2. Marriage ceremonies may not be performed in Steel Valley Church by anyone other than an Ordained Elder of Steel Valley Church except by a unanimous vote of the Council of Elders.
- 8.1.3. The ordained Elders of Steel Valley are free to perform wedding ceremonies outside of Steel Valley Church at their own discretion but with the understanding that they are still representatives of the biblical values and convictions of Steel Valley Church regarding marriage as defined in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.