

Community Bible Church **Of Ventura County**

Constitution

Preamble

Having individually received the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:8), we band ourselves together as a body of believers (Heb. 10:25), and adopt the following articles, to carry out more efficiently the commission given by Jesus Christ to His Church (Mt. 28:18-20).

Article 1

Name

The name of this congregation is "Community Bible Church of Ventura County" (here after referred to as the church), located in Ventura, California.

Article 2

Purpose

Based on the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), the purpose of this church is to make faithful followers of Jesus Christ. We expect to do that by:

Observing the New Commandment (Jn. 13:34,35);

Believing that God will do a great work in the people of this community and around the world through us (Eph. 3:20);

Extending love to both Christians and non-Christians without prejudice. (Acts 10:15; Rom. 15:7; Eph. 2:13-16);

Caring for them in the meeting of their physical, emotional and spiritual needs through our gifts (spiritual and material), our time and our prayers (Gal. 6:2; Jas 2:8);
and

teaching what the Word of God says about Jesus Christ and our life in Him (Mt. 28:18-20; Jn. 10:10).

Article 3
Statement of Faith

The members of this church have adopted the following as their statement of faith:

1. The Holy Scriptures. Both the Old and New Testaments are the complete and divine revelation of God to man. We believe interpretation of these Scriptures must be in accord with their normal, grammatical and historical meaning (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Mt. 5:18).

2. The Godhead. We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three persons-- Father, Son and Holy Spirit--each co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, coequal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Dt. 6:4; Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Jn. 14:10, 26).

2.1 The Person and Work of the Father.

2.1.1 We believe that God the Father is a Spirit-Being, one in essence, personal in nature, invisible, inscrutable, immutable, incomparable, unequalled, unsearchable, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and worthy of our worship (Jn. 4:24; Dt. 6:24; Jn. 17:1-3; Jn. 1:18; Is. 40:28; Num. 23:19; 2 Sam. 7:22; Is. 40:13-25; Rm. 11:33-34; I Kin. 8:27; Is. 57:15; Jer. 32:17, 27; Ps. 139:7-12; 1 Jn. 3:20).

2.1.2 We believe that God the Father is the creator, defender and preserver of the universe, and is therefore its ruler and judge (Is. 40:12, 22, 26; Ps. 47:2, 7, 8; Ps. 96:10, 13; Ps. 59:1; Ps. 121:3-8).

2.1.3 We believe that God the Father loves the world so much that He sent His Son to deliver the world from just condemnation, that He gives life and authority to His Son so we can become His children, that He sent His Spirit to remain with us, that He responds to our prayers, and has committed Himself to dwell with His people (Jn. 3:16; 5:19-26; 17:1-3; 14:16, 26; 16:23, 26-27; Rev. 21:3).

2.2 The Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

2.2.1 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men (Is. 7:14; 9:6; Lk. 1:35; Jn. 1:1-2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Gal. 4:4-5; Php. 2:5-8).

- 2.2.2 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and that our justification is made sure by his literal physical resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:18-36; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:3-5).
- 2.2.3 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, he fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate (Acts 1:9-10; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; Rom. 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1-2).
- 2.3 The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.
- 2.3.1 We believe that the Holy Spirit is a Person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them for the day of redemption (Jn. 16:8-11; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:13-14).
- 2.3.2 We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Teacher who enables believers to understand and appropriate the Scriptures and that it is the privilege of the saved to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 1:17-18; 5:18; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27).
- 2.3.3 We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowal of spiritual gifts to every believer. God uniquely uses evangelists, and pastor-teachers to equip believers in the assembly in order that they can do the work of the ministry (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28; Eph. 4:7-12).
- 2.3.4 We believe that the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and the gifts of healing, were foundational and temporary. (1 Cor. 1:22, 1 Cor 13:8, 14:21-22,) However, we realize that many earnest believers of charismatic and Pentecostal background do not share this view. In the interest of body unity we do not encourage the teaching or use of these gifts among our members. (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph 4:3; Phil. 1:27; Phil. 4:2; Col. 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:8)

We strongly affirm that God answers the prayer of the earnest believer for healing. James 5:13-16

3. The Total Depravity of Man. We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and, that man is totally depraved, and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Gn. 1:26; 5:1-2; 9:6; Rm. 5:12; 3:10-23; Eph. 2:1-3).

4. Salvation. We believe that salvation is divinely initiated, wholly of grace, and accomplished only through the mediatorial work of the Son of God. We believe that we are saved and justified when we recognize ourselves as sinners, and put our trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and His finished work on the cross of Calvary. Salvation is by grace through faith plus nothing else (Jn. 1:12, 3:16-18, 36; Rom. 3:23-24, 10:9-10; Eph. 1:7, 2:8-10; 1 Pet. 1:18).

5. The Eternal Security and Assurance of Believers. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (Jn. 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1, 38-39; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; 1 Pet. 1:4-5). We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, but that it clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an excuse for sinful behavior (Rom. 13:13-14; Gal. 5:13; Titus 2:11-15).

6. Creation. We believe that God created the universe. (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:11).

7. Human Sexuality. We believe that God prohibits sexual immorality. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. We reject any form of perversion of God's gift of sex, including pornography (1 Cor. 6:13,18, 10:8; Eph 5:3; Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23).

8. Sanctity of Life. We believe that human life begins at conception, and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. We reject any teaching to the contrary (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1,5; Jer. 1:5, 20:15-18; Lk. 1:44).

9. We believe that the next great event on God's prophetic time clock is the personal, bodily, return of the Lord Jesus Christ. When this event occurs, Jesus will remove from the earth His Church and reward Christians according to their works (Jn.14:2-3; Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 15:51-53; 2Cor. 5:10; 1 thes.4:15-17; Titus 2:11-13; Rev. 3:10). We believe that this event, known as "the Rapture," is imminent. By imminent We mean that Jesus can come back for those who are "dead and alive in Christ" (1Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-58) any day and at any moment! His return in the clouds for His Church is impending and more near than ever before (Titus 2:13)!

This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing statement of faith accurately presents the teaching of the Bible, and represents its significance for our church and society. All literature used in the church will be in complete agreement with the statement of faith.

Article 4
Affiliation

This church is an independent Bible church and not affiliated with any denomination or association. Changing this would require an amendment to the constitution. Community Bible Church is led by elected elders, not by professional and or paid staff.

Article 5
Membership

Church membership is open to those who profess a personal relationship in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10) and are willing to consent to the statement of faith and to these by-laws.

Article 6
Church Government

Qualifications for selection and/or appointment to positions of leadership will be addressed on an individual basis according to 1 Timothy 3 and/or Titus 1. Church leaders, of any kind, must be in full agreement with the constitution and its by-laws.

Section 1 The Membership

The membership has final authority in the matters of: 1) calling and dismissing a pastor. 2) The election or dismissal of elders and deacons. 3) Approval of financial budget. 4) Approval of building expansion, sale/transfer, relocation and 5) approval of amendments to this constitution and its by-laws.

Section 2 The Elders

The elders are men who are the servant-leaders of the church in spiritual matters. They shepherd the congregation and oversee all interests of the church. Elders are selected and recognized by the membership, according to the by-laws of the church, on the basis of the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. They meet regularly according to the by-laws. The elders elect their own chairman and secretary. The chairman and secretary of the elders also serve as president and secretary of the corporation. Decisions made by the elders must be by unanimous vote with the exception of the termination of an officer as identified in the by-laws Section 2.9. Elders must not vote in areas that may involve a conflict of interest.

Section 3 The Deacons

The deacons are the servant-leaders of the church in temporal matters. They function under the authority and direction of the elders. They attend to the physical and material needs of the flock. Deacons are men having the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3. They are elected by the membership in accord with the by-laws. They meet as specified in the by-laws. Deacons must not vote in areas that may involve a conflict of interest.

Section 4 The Pastor

The pastor is a key spiritual leader of the congregation. He is an elder and is accountable to the elders of the church. He should provide overall vision and direction for the church. His calling, dismissal, or resignation will be according to the by-laws of the church. He will administer the ordinances according to the by-laws Section 5. As an elder he has voting rights except in the area of his salary and any other personal matter that may involve a conflict of interest.

Section 5 Staff

The need for additional staff will be determined by the elders of the church. Staff will be called by the elders and will be directly accountable to the elders or designated person. Staff members may be dismissed by a majority vote of the Board of Elders of the church, with or without congregational approval. Staff members are not automatically elders, but will be present at meetings when invited, by the elders. They must become members of the church upon their call.

Article 7
Congregational Meetings

Section 1 Annual Congregational Meeting

An annual congregational meeting will be held. At this meeting a written financial statement, provided by the treasurer, and a proposed budget will be offered for membership approval. At this meeting the officers of the church, and other ministry leaders, will report, either in person or through an agent, to the congregation on their areas of responsibility. At this meeting the pastor will give a state of the church report and share his vision for the coming year. In his absence, the report will be given by an elder.

Section 2 Other Meetings

The elders will call at least three other quarterly joint board meetings during the course of the year for the purpose of gaining input and keeping lines of communication open. Members may request special meetings through the board of elders.

Section 3 Public Notice

Public notice as to time and purpose will be given at least 14 days prior to any joint board meeting.

Article 8
Church Property

Section 1 Acquisition and Possession of Property

This church has the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of California and as deemed necessary for the business of the church, and has the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed, or otherwise.

Section 2 Property Disputes

In case of a division of the church (from which we pray that God, by His mercy, will preserve us), the property of the church will remain with those who are following the constitution, by-laws and leadership of the church. Members agree not to litigate any property disputes in the court system, but will submit any unresolved disputes to the church leadership for resolution.

Section 3 Dissolution of Property

In case of a dissolution of the church organization, the property will be assigned to any non-profit group of like faith and practice, to enable them to renew the work or use its resources for other Christian enterprises. The church will be considered dissolved, if so decided by the congregation, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain.

Article 9
Amendments

Amendments to this constitution may be made at any congregational meeting when a membership quorum is present, according to the by-laws, and two thirds of those present affirm the amendment or revision. Any constitutional change must be announced at least one month before this meeting.

Article 10
By-laws

The secondary rules which expedite the principles, regulations, business and purpose of this constitution will be known as the by-laws. By-laws may be added, removed or revised by a simple membership majority at any annual congregational meeting or as called in accordance with article 7 of the constitution and section 1 of the by-laws.

Community Bible Church
By-laws

Section 1 Congregational Business Meetings

1.1 Chairman of the Meeting

The Chairman of the Board of Elders or a designated elder will chair/lead the congregational meeting.

1.2 Notice of Meeting

Notice of a congregational meeting will be posted in the church bulletin and announced from the pulpit two weeks ahead of time.

1.3 Meeting Agenda

Items for the agenda may be submitted up to 1 week prior to the meeting. The agenda will be set by the board of elders.

1.4 Age of Voting Members

The minimum age of voting members is 18. Those members under the age of 18 have the responsibility to communicate their concerns with their parents or the leadership of the church.

1.5 Active Members

An active member is one who carries out the responsibilities of church membership with some degree of regularity, and who is not under church discipline. (see section 4.5).

1.6 Quorum for Voting

A quorum consists of those members who attend the meeting, provided it has been properly called (see 1.2 above).

1.7 Voting

Voting may be by show of hands, or secret ballot as determined by the elders. The election of officers will be by a secret ballot. All membership voting, unless stipulated elsewhere, will be decided by simple majority. Voting may be done in absentia, or by ballot at the meeting itself. A member's signature on the membership roster will allow for the receipt of a ballot which could be counted in absentia with all other ballots.

1.8 Annual Budget

The membership will approve the annual budget.

Section 2 Church Officers

2.1 Identification of the Church Officers

Officers of the church are the elders and deacons.

2.2 Selection of Church Officers

Candidates for elders and deacons will be made by the church membership and presented to the elder board for evaluation. The elders will screen potential candidates and will present qualified candidates to the membership for approval. The names of approved candidates will be presented to the congregation no less than one month before a congregational meeting, for confirmation at that meeting. A church officer will be confirmed if he receives an affirmative vote of 75% by members present and in absentia.

2.3 Number of Church Officers

The church will seek to have at least five officers. These will consist of at least three elders and two deacons. If these offices can not be filled, the membership shall approve acting officers until such time as official officers are approved (see 2.7.5).

2.4a Terms of Church Officers

Church officers will serve a three year term and will be rotated off the boards annually as their terms expire. If there is a shortage of officers according to section 2.3, officers will be asked to remain on the boards, with membership approval, until replacements are available. Extensions will not exceed one year. A member will not serve consecutive terms.

2.4b Extended Terms of Church Officers

Church officers will serve a normal three year term with an extension up to 4 years if requested unanimously by the other officers. Should an officer serve a fourth year it will require membership approval. They will then be rotated off the boards annually as their terms expire. A member will not serve consecutive terms. (amended 12-2-07)

2.5 Meeting of the Church Officers

The elders will normally meet once a month. The deacons will meet as needed. Joint board meetings will include the elders, deacons and any invited staff. The Chairman of the Elder Board or designated elder will lead the meeting. The joint board will meet together at least once a quarter. It is desirable to have an elder representative present at all deacon meetings. Meeting notes will be kept at all meetings by a member and submitted to the elder board. Church officers are charged with reviewing the budget periodically.

2.6 Responsibilities of the Elders

2.6.1 Shepherd people by, caring for, discipling, leading, counseling, and comforting them. When necessary, carrying out church discipline according to Matthew 18 and Gal. 6:1.

2.6.2 Pray for and with the congregation and watching over their spiritual needs;

2.6.3 Oversee the administration of the ordinances;

2.6.4 Oversee the deacons and the financial affairs of the church, which includes supervising and administering all ways and means of raising funds; receiving and disbursing the funds; and hiring and discharging personnel (except to the extent membership approval is required in the constitution);

- 2.6.5 Make provision for pulpit supply in the absence of a pastor;
- 2.6.6 Evaluate church staff performance and compensation at a minimum on an annual basis;
- 2.6.7 Oversee any and all other matters pertaining to all ministries of the church.
- 2.6.8 Elders (with the exception of the pastor(s)) will receive no compensation.

2.7 Responsibilities of the Deacons

- 2.7.1 Directing property management and maintenance, including staff people, or hired contractors, in those areas;
- 2.7.2 Directing the kitchen and nursery ministries of the church including staff people in those areas;
- 2.7.3 Assisting and supporting the elders in the provision of care to the congregation;
- 2.7.4 Directing benevolence both inside and outside the church;
- 2.7.5 The deacons will select a deacon to temporarily assume the responsibilities of an elder, if the number of elders is less than three, until the elder board has at least three members. If the joint board, elders and deacons, has less than five members a steering committee will be elected by the congregation (reference 2.3).
- 2.7.6 Deacons will receive no compensation.

2.8 Church Treasurer

The church treasurer does not have to be an elder or deacon. He or she shall be any member of the church who has the ability to manage finances. This person, when invited, will be a part of joint board meetings and will present financial reports to the church body.

2.9 Termination of an Officer

The elder board (after a majority vote) may recommend the removal of a church officer to the congregation at a special meeting. The meeting will be announced at least two weeks ahead of time. The membership will vote upon the proposed removal. The motion will be carried by a simple majority vote.

Section 3 The Pastor

3.1 The Calling of a Pastor

When the church desires or requires a pastor, the elders will appoint a search committee that reflects a cross section of the church body. Following the examination of potential pastoral candidates the search committee will report to the elders with its recommendation. The candidate will agree to support the constitution and by-laws of the church and meet the qualifications of an elder (refer to Art 6 sect 2). A candidate will be examined not only on the basis of his teaching gifts, but also concerning his maturity and qualifications of an Elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Upon approval of the elders, the candidate will be presented to the congregation for confirmation. A 75% vote of confirmation by members present and in absentia will be required to call a pastor.

3.2 The Termination of a Pastor

Refer to section 2.9.

3.3 Responsibilities of Pastor

The Pastor shall minister unto the Lord in regular personal worship and praise. He shall give himself to the ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4) and shall walk uprightly before the Lord in his personal life. He shall seek the mind of God.

The Pastor shall be the shepherd of the church. He shall give considerable time to the study of the Word and shall teach the Scriptures to the flock by precept and example. He shall aim to feed the flock, equip the saints for ministry and guard the church against the attack of the enemy.

He will administer the ordinances as per section 5. He will provide for the marriage, burial, dedication, and recovery ministries. He will appear in person or send qualified representatives.

3.4 Protection of the Pastor

The Pastor's priorities, in order, must be his relationship to God, his family, and then this church. The Elders commit themselves to promote the spiritual, mental, and physical welfare of the Pastor.

Section 4 Membership

4.1 Membership Requirements

All born again believers, who are trusting in Jesus Christ (by grace through faith alone) for their salvation, and are willing to consent to the statement of faith and to these by-laws, will be considered members of the church upon verification by the Elders and presentation to the congregation. (See Article 5)

4.2 Membership Procedure

Any born again believer, desiring to join the church may make that desire known by contacting the church office or any church officer. Upon that notification, prospective members will be interviewed by at least two elders of the church, will learn the responsibilities of church membership, and will give verbal account of his/her salvation to those elders and then be presented to the congregation.

4.3 Membership Acceptance

A person will be received into membership by announcement at any regular service upon that person's verbal account of salvation to the elders and the church. Believer's baptism is expected to follow this profession of faith, as soon as possible, if not previously done.

4.4 Membership Privileges

Active members over the age of 18 will be allowed to vote at congregational meetings and serve as church officers. Members will be subject to, if the need arises, church discipline. Non-members will still be cared for by the congregation and may have the opportunity to participate in church ministry. Other than guest speakers, invited by the elders, those teaching adults on a regular basis must be members of the church. Non members desiring to teach youth and children must give verbal account of salvation to the elders and receive their approval to teach.

4.5 Membership Responsibilities

It is assumed that members will give of their time, talents, and finances, not out of obligation, but as each is lead by the Lord. (2 Cor. 9:7)

4.6 Membership Evaluation

The elders of the church will regularly examine the membership roster to make sure it is current.

4.6.1 Relocation of a Member

Any member moving away will be placed on the inactive church roll, unless the leadership is notified otherwise and substantial reason given. Inactive members may not exercise voting privileges.

4.6.2 Attrition of a Member

Any member of the church who, for a period of one year, has not carried out the responsibilities of church membership with some degree of regularity, provided he is not hindered by sickness, or disability, or other extenuating circumstances, will be contacted by the leadership of the church to discuss the person's relationship to the church. If there is no longer a relationship, the person's name will be removed from the membership roster.

4.6.3 Discipline of a Member

Any member living in unrepentant and persistent sin, according to the standards of the New Testament, and who has been contacted by the church, according to the principles of church discipline/restoration in Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5, will be removed from the church membership under the oversight of the elders. Such a person will not only have no vote, but have no role in the ministry of the church, until the elders determine he/she is repentant. At such time, the person will be restored to fellowship.

The purpose of church discipline is to restore a member who errs (Gal. 6:1), uphold biblical standards of conduct and doctrine in the church (Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:9; Titus 3:10), and to deter sin (I Tim. 5:20). Members of the church who err in doctrine or conduct will be subject to dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Before such dismissal:

- 4.6.3.1 It will be the duty of any member of the church who has knowledge of an erring member's sin to warn and correct this member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
- 4.6.3.2 If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member will again go to the erring member, accompanied by one or two elders who have investigated or have personal knowledge. They will warn and correct, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
- 4.6.3.3 If the erring member refuses to heed this warning, he or she will be brought before the church and publicly dismissed (Matt 18:17). There will be no appeal of this decision to any court.
- 4.6.3.4 It is understood that the above process, if it reaches the elders, will proceed to conclusion. An appropriate public statement of the outcome will be issued to the congregation.
- 4.6.3.5 If the erring member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement, he or she will be publicly restored to membership.

Section 5 The Ordinances

5.1 Communion

The Lord's Table will be observed at least quarterly and will be open to all believers except those under church discipline.

5.2 Baptism

The church will practice believer's baptism using immersion as the normal mode.