

Church Polity of

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J A N E S V I L L E, W I

"Bringing People to Faith and Maturity in Christ."

Revised 9/27/2006

Constitution and Bylaws

Section 1: Name and Affiliation

This congregation shall be called “Faith Community.” We are independently organized, but desire unity and fellowship with other organizations and individuals who love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2: Purpose

The purpose of this congregation is to bring people to faith and maturity in Christ, by expressing the Kingdom of God through worship, discipleship and biblical community, and by advancing the Kingdom of God as witnesses, locally and globally, of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 3: Polity

We are an elder-led congregation with the Senior Pastor entrusted with general oversight and leadership of the church’s ministries and staff (see Appendix 3 for further explanation).

Section 4: Membership and Voter Qualification

A member of the congregation must meet the following criteria: is at least 18 years old, adheres to the Articles of Faith (see Appendix 1) and has been a regular attendee for at least six months. Members in good standing (as defined in Section 11) shall be eligible to vote at congregational business meetings.

Section 5: The Senior Pastor

Paragraph 1: Definition

The word “pastor” means shepherd, a metaphor for one who leads in order to serve the needs of another. The Senior Pastor is the head elder, the overseer of the local flock, with broad leadership responsibilities over the church and for the church (Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:11).

Paragraph 2: Duties

Faith Community Church affirms the office and role of Senior Pastor with the responsibility of preaching and teaching the Scriptures (Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 5:17), exercising spiritual leadership and authority

over the church and for the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17), equipping church members to do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12), and shepherding the members of the church for their overall well-being (1 Peter 5:1-4). As shepherd and overseer of the local church, the Senior Pastor is entrusted with broad leadership responsibilities.

Paragraph 3: Qualifications

The qualifications of the Senior Pastor are those of an elder or overseer as prescribed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These requirements include, but are not limited to: being a man (see Appendix 4) of Christ-like character and habits, having a good reputation within the church and community, being spiritually mature, and if married, leading his family in a Christ-like manner. The Senior Pastor shall be an ordained minister.

Paragraph 4: Selection

The Senior Pastor shall be nominated by the pulpit committee and elected to the church by the membership in accordance with these bylaws (see Sec. 12).

Paragraph 5: Senior Pastor Leaving

The Senior Pastor leaving this church must give at least thirty days written notice to the Elder Team and the Board of Trustees and either written or verbal notice to the membership.

Paragraph 6: Presenting Prospective Senior Pastors

The Elder Team shall act as the pulpit committee or appoint such committee for the task. The current Senior Pastor shall present names of available candidates and the pulpit committee may employ other means of finding candidates and receiving applicants. After due consideration, the pulpit committee shall select a candidate to present to the church body for review.

Section 6: Ministry Credentials

Paragraph 1: Local Church Authority

Faith Community Church affirms the biblical authority of the local church to appoint and credential ministers (as defined in Section 10) who meet biblical qualifications, have exhibited evidence of a divine calling or giftedness and have received appropriate ministry training or biblical education for their specific scope of church leadership ministry.

Paragraph 2: License for Ministry

A candidate for a ministry license must meet the above requirements and be in full agreement with our Articles of Faith (see Appendix 1). A License for Ministry is an affirmation from the Senior Pastor that a person has met said requirements and is now being entrusted with said responsibilities. The license is granted for a one-year period and may be renewed at the request of the licensed minister and the approval of the Senior Pastor.

Paragraph 3: Ordained Pastor

Ordination is for pastors and includes everything a license does, but is not granted until after a minimum of one year of faithful services as a licensed minister and requires the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in a ministry-related field. Ordination is granted upon the request of the licensed minister and the approval of the Elder Team. Ordination is permanent so long as the man continues to meet the biblical qualifications of a pastor.

Section 7: The Elder Team

Paragraph 1: Definition

An elder is a qualified, recognized and appointed leader in the church. The team of elders presides over the affairs of the church in order to: provide for sound doctrine, preserve unity and moral purity and resolve conflicts (Acts 14:23; 15:6; 16:4; 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-2).

Paragraph 2: Qualifications and Appointment

Elders shall be male church members (see Appendix 4) meeting those specified requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5. Elder team members are appointed by the Senior Pastor (cf. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) for a three-year (renewable) term. The Senior Pastor shall prayerfully review potential candidates with the current Elder Team prior to appointment. Candidates' names shall then be announced to the congregation with instructions that if anyone has concerns about a candidate not meeting any biblical requirement for an elder, they can address those concerns privately to the Senior Pastor. If after four weeks from the announcement, the candidate remains in good standing, the appointment becomes enacted.

Renewable terms are subject to the elder's desire to continue serving and the Senior Pastor's approval. There are no term limits. The minimum number of elders, including the Senior Pastor, shall be three, with at least two non-paid members. The Senior Pastor shall determine the best way to prepare, educate and otherwise orient new elders to the Elder Team.

Paragraph 3: Spiritual Oversight of the Church Body

The Elder Team shall meet regularly to discuss the ministry and health of the body and to pray together for the ministries, families and individuals of the congregation. Together they should consider the following questions: Is our church body fulfilling our stated mission? Are we meeting our stated goals and serving the needs of the members of our body? Are we moving ahead with God's purpose and vision in our community and our world? Are we obeying God and His purpose for the church?

Paragraph 4: Moral-Ethical-Doctrinal Accountability for the Church Staff

The elders work in cooperation with the Senior Pastor to ensure that staff members conduct their lives and ministries in a manner consistent with biblical teaching and Christ-like character. This oversight includes the encouragement, support and partnership of the church staff from the elders. The Senior Pastor should seek the support and counsel of the elders when hiring and firing church staff, but final discretion is left to the Senior Pastor. Staff, as members of the church, may also be subject to the church discipline process outlined below.

Paragraph 5: Prevention-Discipline-Restoration of Church Members

If there is a moral or doctrinal matter that needs to be addressed to a member of the congregation, the process laid out by our Lord in Matthew 18 shall be followed. Should the member reject the loving, biblical counsel and authority of the elders, then that member shall be dismissed from leadership and/or church membership according to 1 Corinthians 5.

Any current member of the Elder Team, including the Senior Pastor, can only be dismissed from his position and/or church membership by a 2/3 majority vote of the Elder Team (not including the elder in question). Accusations against any church leader shall only be considered if the matter is brought by two or more corroborating witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

The Elder Team shall operate in this function according to the policies of the Prevention-Discipline-Restoration document (see Appendix 2).

Section 8: Deacons

Paragraph 1: Definition

A deacon is a servant of the church and its leaders, entrusted with administrative responsibilities, especially in caring for the benevolence needs within the congregation (Acts 6:1-7; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-15).

Paragraph 2: Qualifications

The office of deacon is provided for in Scripture on an “as needed” basis (see Appendix 3). Deacons can be men or women who meet the criteria listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-15.

Paragraph 3: Selection

Should the Senior Pastor determine there is an ongoing need for a team of deacons, the nomination and election procedures for deacons shall be the same as that of trustees. The Senior Pastor shall determine the number of members of the deacon team. The term shall be three years. The Senior Pastor shall determine the best way to prepare, educate and otherwise orient new deacons to that ministry.

Section 9: Corporation Board of Directors—Trustees

Paragraph 1: Definition

A trustee is elected to the seven-member team with the legal responsibility to manage the church’s assets. The Board of Trustees of the church shall consist of the Senior Pastor and members elected by the membership of the church at the Annual Business Meeting. The chairman of the board shall be the Senior Pastor or his designee. Any member in good standing whose term is expiring is eligible to succeed him/herself. No other ordained or licensed minister or near relative of any current board member shall serve on the Board of Trustees.

Paragraph 2: Qualifications

An eligible candidate for the Board of Trustees must be a member in good standing, have demonstrated financial integrity and responsible management in his/her household or business, be living in a manner worthy of the Lord and have a biblical understanding of the nature and purpose of the local church. The Senior Pastor shall determine the best way to prepare, educate and otherwise orient new trustees to the Board.

Paragraph 3: Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees acts as the board of directors for the church, being a non-profit organization. They have responsibility for the financial program of the church, managing all assets including property. They shall determine the salary and other benefits to be given to all employees of the church.

The Board shall determine policies for expenditure authority of church staff. Expenditures over 5% of the annual budget must have prior approval of the congregation in a business meeting called for such purpose.

Paragraph 4: Board Elections

The Board of Trustees of the church shall be nominated by an elder, the present Board of Trustees, or by the members of the church. Nominations from church members must be submitted to the Elder Team for approval at least two Sundays prior to the membership business meeting duly called for the purpose of elections. Should the Elder Team disapprove of a nominee submitted by a church member, that member may request a special congregational vote prior to the elections at the membership meeting duly called for the purpose of elections. The congregation shall vote to have that nominee placed on the ballot, a two-thirds majority of the voting members present is required to place the nominee on the ballot for election to the Board of Trustees. An expiring term Board member wishing to be elected to an additional term shall submit their name to the Elder Team for approval at least two Sundays prior to the elections. The terms of office shall be three years for the Board of Trustees. Two Trustees shall be elected each year.

Paragraph 5: Vacancies

In case of vacancy of the Board of Trustees, the Senior Pastor shall appoint another to fill the unexpired term of the office. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Pastor, the Elder Team shall select a member of the Elder Team to fill the Senior Pastor’s position on the Board of Trustees until a new Senior Pastor is hired. Should the church hire an interim pastor, the Elder Team shall determine if the interim pastor or one of the elders shall fill the Senior Pastor’s position on the Board of Trustees.

Section 10: Other Church Leadership

Paragraph 1: Ministerial Staff

Pastors are men in the church who serve in a role closely akin to that of the Senior Pastor and meet the same qualifications of an elder and ordained pastor as defined in these bylaws. Other staff serving in the areas of worship, discipleship or evangelism, but not meeting the criteria of a pastor are referred to as ministers, directors, or some other title appropriate for their ministry role.

Paragraph 2: Church Staff

A staff member is a paid employee of the church with defined responsibilities, and is chosen by the Senior Pastor in cooperation with the trustees and elders. Staff members are organized according to the Senior Pastor's determination and, once hired, must fulfill their job description and be members in good standing.

Paragraph 3: Team Leaders

A Team Leader is the one member of a ministry team who answers to his or her overseer on behalf of the team. Team leaders are appointed by their overseer, who may be another team leader, a staff member, or an elder. Anyone who joins a ministry team must agree to abide by the church's beliefs and policies.

Section 11: Church Discipline

The removal or discipline of any church member or leader/officer shall be conducted in accordance with the Prevention, Discipline and Restoration Policy (see Appendix 2).

"Membership in Good Standing" means that the church member consistently attends services when residing in the area, is contributing to the ministry of the church in a tangible way, and if under church discipline, is cooperating with the prescribed steps toward restoration.

Section 12: Voting Procedures

Paragraph 1: Voting on Prospective Senior Pastors

After the prospective Senior Pastor appears before the church body, a congregational vote by secret ballot shall then be taken at a membership meeting duly called for that purpose and moderated by a member of the Elder Team. If a two-thirds majority of the voting membership present cast votes for the candidate, he shall be considered elected and called. In doing so, the congregation affirms and accepts God's call and appointment of the candidate. If sufficient majority is not received, another candidate shall be presented.

Paragraph 2: Election of Officers

All elections at the church business meeting shall be by secret ballot. Absentee ballots are permissible provided that provision is made to ensure no one can vote more than once. There shall be one vote for each position to be filled. The candidates with the greatest number of votes shall be elected. In case of ties, succeeding ballots must be cast. Elections shall be conducted by an election committee appointed by the Senior Pastor. Ballots may consist of a blank piece of paper on which the voting member writes in one name for each position to be filled. A preprinted ballot may be used in which case the instructions for the particular vote will be printed on the ballot. The votes will be counted by the election committee and presented to the congregation at the meeting or the following Sunday as appropriate. Elections for trustees and/or deacons shall be held annually.

Paragraph 3: Congregational Decisions

Meetings called to discuss issues brought to the congregation for a vote shall be presided by a member of the Elder Team, who acts as the moderator. Voting methods shall be determined by the moderator and the decisions from the congregation shall be logged in the trustees minutes for that month.

Section 13: Amendments to Local Church Policies

Paragraph 1: Bylaws Amendments

Amendments to these church bylaws, including appendices, may be made at any regular or special meeting of the membership of the church by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present.

Paragraph 2: Church Policies Revisions

Other church ministry and operational policies shall be determined by appropriate church leaders as they pertain to a given area of responsibility. If necessary, the Elder Team has final authority to establish church policies not dictated in these bylaws.

Paragraph 3: Articles of Faith Revisions

Any changes to the Articles of Faith (see Appendix 1) may only be recommended by the Elder Team at any regular or special meeting of the membership of the church and enacted by a three-fourths majority vote of the voting members present.

Section 14: Dissolution

In case this church shall be dissolved, all assets and funds shall be distributed to such charitable Christian organizations as the Board of Trustees may choose. Such organizations must be approved by the Internal Revenue Service.

Articles of Faith

- A. The Bible is God's unique revelation to people. It is the inspired, infallible Word of God, and the supreme and final authority on all matters upon which it teaches, both for faith and conduct. No other writings are vested with such divine authority. *Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 8:19-20; Matthew 24:35; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21*
- B. There is only one God, Creator of heaven and earth, who is all powerful, all knowing, ever present and unchangeable, and who exists eternally as three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each fully God yet each personally distinct from the other. *Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 43:10-13; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 19:26; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 1:37; John 5:26; Romans 11:33-36; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 13:8*
- C. Jesus Christ, second Person of the Trinity, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless human life, willingly took upon Himself all of our sins, died on the cross and rose again bodily on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is at the right hand of the Father as our advocate and mediator. Some day, He will return to consummate history and to fulfill the eternal plan of God. *Luke 1:30-35; John 1:1-4, 14; Acts 1:1-11; Romans 4:25; Hebrews 4:15, 12:2; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18*
- D. The Holy Spirit, third Person of the Trinity, convicts the world of sin and draws people to Christ. He also indwells all believers, giving them a spiritual new birth, progressively transforming them into the likeness of Jesus Christ, and giving them spiritual gifts with which to serve the church and reach out to a lost and needy world. *John 16:7-15; Acts 5:3-4; Romans 8:5-11; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; 2 Corinthians 3:18*
- E. All people are created in God's image and matter deeply to Him. Central to the message of the Bible is that God loves all people, and invites them to live in fellowship with Himself and in community with each other. *Genesis 1:26-27; Isaiah 55; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 1:6-7*
- F. Apart from Jesus Christ, all people are spiritually lost and, because of sin, deserve the judgment of God. However, God gives salvation and eternal life to anyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His sacrifice on his or her behalf. Salvation cannot be earned through personal goodness or human effort. It is a gift that must be received by humble repentance and faith in Christ, His finished work on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. *John 3:3, 16-18; Romans 3:21-24, 5:16-17, 10:9; Ephesians 2:8-10*
- G. Death seals the eternal destiny of each person. At the final judgment, unbelievers will be separated from God into condemnation. Believers will be received into God's loving presence and rewarded for their faithfulness to Him in this life. *Matthew 25:14-46; 1 Corinthians 3:5-15; Hebrews 9:27-28; Revelation 20:11-15*
- H. All believers are members of the body of Christ, the one true universal church. Spiritual unity is to be expressed among Christians by acceptance and love of one another across ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, national, generational, gender, and denominational lines. *John 17:20-23; Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 3:11-14*

Prevention-Discipline-Restoration Policy

I. Introduction

In order to understand the importance and validity of a church policy on member discipline, we first need to understand the nature and purpose of the church. Our Lord Jesus, in His prayer for His disciples just prior to His betrayal, revealed His heart's desires for His church. First, that **the church is a community of oneness**, of believers in loving relationship with God and each other (John 17:21). Second, that **the church is a holy people**, unlike the rest of the world (John 17:14-16). And third, that through the church's oneness and holiness, **the church glorifies God by revealing Jesus Christ** to the world (John 17:23; also compare v4 with v18). In short, we as the church can only *advance* God's kingdom to the extent that we *express* God's kingdom in our relationship with one another. Our mission in this world depends upon our identity as god's people: one with god and one with each other while following Christ together.

It is also the reality that the church is made up of sinners saved by God's grace who are being transformed into the likeness of Christ, but who haven't achieved perfection (2 Corinthians 3:18; Phillipians 3:7-16). Therefore, we must hold in tension the reality that we are not a holy people in the sense of being sinless, but our holiness and oneness flow out of our union with Jesus Christ through faith (John 13:34-35; Titus 2:11-14). We love and trust God enough to obey His commands and leave the results in His care and when a brother or sister fails, even severely, we forgive and help that church member repair the damage they've caused and be restored to loving and trusting fellowship with God and His people (Galatians 6:1-10; Colossians 3:12-14). Discipline must be part of that process since the church is an agent of God's will on earth, and God's discipline, although at times painful, is always rooted in love to serve the good purpose of transformation in the life of a child of God (Hebrews 12:4-11). Discipline is not penal, but remedial – it is not to punish out of revenge, but to correct out of genuine concern lest the offender persist in hurting himself and others by rejecting God's will (Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11). Likewise, rebellion against God is completely inconsistent with the nature and purpose of the church and so the church must soberly guard against it (1 Corinthians 5) lest we lose our identity and very purpose for being!

General Prevention, Discipline and Restoration Process

A. Prevention

Our aim is to prevent serious problems from happening in the first place. The most obvious way to do this is by teaching God's Word and growing disciples through the church's various ministries. In terms of leadership and church ministry teams, we seek to prevent problems in the following ways:

1. GPS Process

Anyone wishing to serve in a defined ministry role in the church must first participate in the GPS process so they can be placed in a role that best fits their God-given gifts, abilities, interests and current state of spiritual maturity. Having a personal consultation and filling out a ministry application completes the GPS process.

2. Communication

Anyone joining a ministry team should be given special care by an established team member to clearly communicate the church's and ministry's policies, expectations, core values and purpose.

B. Discipline

The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 13:9-11:

“We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; our prayer is for your perfection. This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority – the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down. Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the god of love and peace will be with you.”

Here we see that the authority of ministry leaders, church staff and elders is very real and God-ordained, and is intended to be used to lovingly serve the body, even sacrificially as our Lord did. Yet, when a church member turns from God's revealed will, it is the responsibility of the church family to do what is necessary to bring him to repentance (1 Corinthians 15:33-34; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; James 5:19-20) and to protect the body from harm. Our Lord Jesus laid out the process for this correction in Matthew 18:15-20.

1. Handle Confrontation at the Lowest Level

- a. If a person is sinned against, or observes sinful behavior or false doctrine, that person does the confronting, privately, without discussing the problem with others. They would be wise not to rush to judgment, but to ask questions first. Love is not naïve, but it assumes the best of motives until proven otherwise. Voicing concerns privately is an expression of true love, devotion and friendship (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Proverbs 27:6).
- b. If the one who sinned refuses to make necessary changes or apologies, then one or two others should be asked to help. Their purpose is to serve as objective mediators, listen to both sides, verify claims and keep the issue focused on biblical standards. The goal is to bring repentance and reconciliation.
- c. If that process fails, then the church elders will become involved as a last resort in trying to bring the sinning brother to his senses, or to facilitate forgiveness and understanding between the two disputing parties.
- d. In the rare case that people would be harmed without swift leadership intervention, then appropriate ministerial staff or elders should be notified immediately.

2. Disciplinary Action

- a. Church staff and ministry leaders, in communication with each other, can dismiss a team member if that member has been unfaithful to his commitments, is a detriment to the team, or is unrepentant of sin.
- b. The body of elders can likewise dismiss a person from any ministry role and if necessary, remove a person from church membership (1 Corinthians 5).
- c. When a person is dismissed from a ministry position, his/her reputation will be respected and the confidentiality of the circumstances will be upheld, while limited but necessary information will be shared with all of the ministerial staff so the dismissed person can receive optimal pastoral care and the person's other ministry roles in the church can be evaluated. Again, the well being of the individual and the church body is our biblical mandate (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

- d. In order to serve the disciplined member's spiritual wellness, relevant church leaders will work with that member to establish an action plan so clear steps can be established and followed to restore that member to fruitful ministry and the full benefits of Christian community.
- e. All disciplinary action is to serve the purpose of bringing the offender to repentance, to protect the body from false doctrine and immoral influence, and to preserve church unity in biblical truth and moral purity (2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 1 Timothy 1:18-20).

3. Discipline is an Act of God's Grace

- It is not mean, but firm.
- It is not out of hatred, but out of love.
- It is not retaliatory, but corrective.
- It is not pleasant, but necessary.

C. Restoration

Because the church is a loving, holy community of oneness whose purpose is to testify of our Lord by how we treat one another within the church, the goal of church discipline is not exclusion, but restoration. We have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-20).

1. Repentance Brings Restoration

- a. Restoration is given upon evidence of genuine repentance, which includes: emotional sorrow; admission of wrongdoing; not passing blame or giving excuses; change in behavior (2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; contrast King Saul (1 Samuel 15) with King David (Psalm 51)).
- b. Positions of trust and responsibility must be earned.

2. Never Give Up on a Person

- a. A mature believer may periodically reach out to a disassociated person, not in fellowship, but in hope (Galatians 6:1; parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32); James 5:19-20; Ezekiel 34:1-16).

III. Specific Issues Requiring Specific Policies

(Divorce, Intentional Transgression, False Doctrine, Divisiveness)

A. Divorce

In this section we establish a marriage policy for the church, define biblical exceptions to the biblical prohibition for divorce and determine policy for handling church members who divorce on unbiblical grounds.

Faith Community Church Marriage Policy

- Weddings at Faith Community Church must be for church members or those with a close affiliation with the church.
- Marriage must be between a man and woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31).
- We will not perform a wedding between a believer and an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15).
- A divorced person may remarry provided one of the following is true:
 - a) their ex-spouse was sexually unfaithful (Matthew 19:9); or
 - b) their ex-spouse initiated the divorce for unbiblical reasons (1 Corinthians 7:15); or
 - c) their ex-spouse is deceased (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-3); or
 - d) the divorce occurred before they received Christ and there is no hope for reconciliation with the ex-spouse (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

Otherwise, the divorced person is biblically prohibited from remarrying on the basis of being a covenant breaker (Mark 10:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11), since marriage is ordained by God (Matthew 19:4-6; Hebrews 13:4) and is a visual symbol of the church's union with Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32).

- Engaged couples are expected to take pre-marital counseling.
- The final decision to perform a wedding ceremony is at the discretion of the officiating minister.

Discipline and Restoration of church members having engaged in unbiblical divorce

A church member serving in a ministry role who is actively pursuing a divorce on unbiblical grounds (as defined in our church's marriage

policy), or who is or has had such a divorce and is wanting to serve in a ministry role, shall not serve in a ministry or leadership role until he/she:

1. Demonstrates a genuine repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9-11) and if possible, has made a worthy effort to reconcile with the ex-spouse (1 Corinthians 7:11; Romans 12:18).
2. Clearly subscribes to a biblical view of marriage and divorce (Ephesians 5:21-33; Hebrews 13:11; 1 Timothy 1:9-11).
3. Has actively participated in counseling and mentoring to help him/her see their own part in the marriage problems and avoid making the same mistakes (Galatians 6:1).
4. Has waited a minimum of one year from the date of divorce, presuming their heart and mind have been restored as outlined above.
5. Has been given final approval by the elder team in cooperation with his/her mentor or counselor.

By ministry role, we mean serving in a defined ministry position. These stipulations are by no means meant to prohibit the member's participation in the benefits of church fellowship, such as weekend service attendance or small group participation, unless the elder team has determined that such discipline is necessary for the protection of the body and the instruction of the church member.

Guidelines for divorce because of physical, emotional and/or financial abuse

1. Romans 12:21 states, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*"
2. Separation, calling the police, pressing charges, issuing a restraining order, etc. are appropriate when necessary for protection.
3. The time of separation is for protection, counseling and the hope of restoration.
4. Church members who have a pattern of abuse should be handling according to the regular process of church discipline and restoration according to the elders' discretion.
5. Faith Community Church does not advocate divorce in an abusive situation.

B. Intentional Transgression

- Ephesians 5:3 states, “*But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.*”
- 1 Corinthians 5:11 states, “*you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.*”
- In this sense, the pattern established here applies to sexual immorality, as well as other forms of habitual, unrepentant sin.
- A person who is an honest struggler with a chronic sin should seek godly counsel, and brotherly accountability with a member of the same sex, and avail him/herself to the other transforming benefits of the church, the Word and prayer. The church leadership’s intention is not to conduct “witch hunts,” but rather to protect the body from immoral examples and from being victims of sinful predation, be that fornication, swindling, or otherwise. We care about the spiritual well-being of the one who sins, as well as the one sinned against.
- A person who struggles with homosexual desires, or other forms of sexual deviance, may need to avoid certain ministry roles or relationships for his/her own spiritual protection and for the protection of the body. This ought not to be viewed as discipline, but as prevention.
- A person engaged in a sexually immoral lifestyle, or other forms of intentional, habitual sin who is unrepentant, would face church discipline, which includes removal from ministry roles and if the person refuses to go through the process of repentance, counseling and restoration, possible removal from church membership at the elders’ discretion.

C. False Doctrine

- Jude 1:3-4 states, “*I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*”

- Acts 20:28-31 states, “*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard.*”
- 2 Timothy 2:23-26 states, “*Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*”
- Because we are an inter-denominational church, many points of doctrine are open to honest inquiry and a variety of biblically informed opinions, for example, the validity of tongues and the timeframe of Christ’s return. But there are a set of non-negotiable beliefs that must unite us. Philippians 3:15 is our guiding principle: “*All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.*”
- The Articles of Faith of Faith Community Church are our non-negotiable beliefs. Professed agreement of all of these beliefs are required for church membership and for everyone serving in a ministry that requires a completed ministry application. The one exception is in Article “I” regarding baptism by immersion. Although this is our church’s standard belief and practice, we recognize differences in belief and methods among Bible believing Christians.
- Doctrinal error will be dealt with in a patient and, when possible, private manner. Public correction of the error will be made if needed. Ministry leaders and, if necessary, the elders shall determine if the person in error can continue to serve in ministry and/or church membership depending upon the teachable attitude of the person.

D. Dissention

- Ephesians 4:3 states, “*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*”
- Titus 3:8-11 states, “*And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*”
- A divisive person is characterized by one of more of the following:
 - a) causes quarrels, brings division among the body and promotes dissention and factions
 - b) fails to follow the Matthew 18 correction process
 - c) participates in gossip and slander (Ephesians 4:29-32)
 - d) does not submit to church leadership (Hebrews 13:17)
 - e) actively recruits people to take their side against the church leadership (Numbers 16)
- A divisive person is not someone who is civil, respectful and wanting an honest dialogue about an issue of importance, nor someone who is merely expressing their opinion or concern for the health of the church body. This is the right and responsibility of every church member.
- A divisive person will be confronted and corrected and their continuation in ministry and/or church membership will be conditioned on their response and the discretion of their ministry leaders and body of elders.

APPENDIX THREE

Explanation of Our Church Polity

Church polity refers to how the church’s leadership is structured and decisions are made and carried out. The Bible has much more to say about how church leaders use their authority than how those leaders are organized. In fact, every tradition of church polity, from strict authoritarian to fully democratic, points to the Scriptures as the basis for their form of church government. We believe that different forms of church polity are found in the Bible because the Bible does not *prescribe* a specific form of church government. It *describes* how churches operated and prescribes the function church leaders and members have in the local body.

In the New Testament, we do see a general pattern of church governance that begins with totally directive leadership with a strong use of authority and matures toward more facilitative leadership with shared and/or delegated authority. This progression is seen the five leadership roles listed in Ephesians 4:11—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Inherent in these five leadership roles is authority. You cannot lead without it; you can only suggest. That authority is given by the Lord, while ordination affirms that authority. Church leaders must use their authority with humility before the membership and fear before the Lord and seek to equip the church members to share the authority and responsibility of church ministry (Ephesians 4:12-16). But even in healthy, mature churches, provision must be made for the strong use of authority by the church leadership as the need arises for protection of the body. This is the balance we seek to codify these bylaws.

The progression from directive to facilitative leadership is seen in the lives of Christ’s apostles. The first apostles were appointed to Christ as witnesses of his resurrection, preachers of the gospel, teachers of the true faith, and leaders of the church. Their authority was divinely ordained, but they governed the church humbly and often as a team, even as Peter had the main leadership role early on. As the church grew and matured and more needs arose for the care of the church, the apostles delegated some ministry responsibilities to qualified men chosen by the congregation, while the apostles focused their ministry on prayer and the preaching and teaching of God’s Word (Acts 6:1-7). The apostolic office subsumes all ministry roles because it is a pioneer ministry—primarily missions and evangelism to start with, then as new believers need teaching, shepherding and organizing, the apostle finds more of his duties directed to the health of the church. But this was and is a temporary office. By the time of the Jerusalem Council, less than 20 years from the inception of the church, the apostles who remained in Jerusalem shared their authority with elders, and James, the Lord’s brother, was the presiding officer of the council (Acts 15).

James' leadership in the Jerusalem church was still evident eight years later when no apostles are even mentioned in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18). Near the end of their ministries, both Peter and John referred to themselves as elders (2 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1).

The leadership role of elder was established in Israel since at least the time of Moses (Exodus 3:16; Numbers 11:16) and we see elders in the Jerusalem Church by the time it was 11 years old (Acts 11:30). In the churches planted by the Apostle Paul, elders were appointed by the apostle or one of his representatives within a fairly short time after their initial visit (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The title of elder in Greek (*presbuteros*) denotes a man of character who has the leadership responsibility of an overseer (*episkopos*). An overseer is not a passive observer, but an active leader, guardian and administrator (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 2:25). The elder's leadership role is described using the biblical imagery of a shepherd or pastor (*poimen*) of God's flock (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2), emphasizing our Lord's teaching that men in authority in God's kingdom must use it to serve the good of God's people (Luke 22:24-30).

An elder's duties were varied as 1 Timothy 5:17 shows: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." An elder of this sort is the same as the role of pastor given in Ephesians 4:11, the only time in Scripture that title is used of anyone besides Jesus. A pastor is a shepherd of God's flock whose responsibility is to teach the true gospel and equip the church members to use their gifts in ministry.

In Ephesians 4:15-16 the church is likened to a physical body, with leadership to teach and direct all the members to work together to serve God's purposes. In one instance in Scripture, the verb form of overseer (*episkopos*) is directed to the entire church body:

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. *See to it* that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. *See that* no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son (Hebrews 12:14-16).

The concern and active participation for the health of the church body belongs to every member of the body, while specific leadership roles in the body are given by God to help the body work together to fulfill its purpose, which is Christ's mission in the world (1 Corinthians 12). Members should submit to their leaders as everyone submits to the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:12-13; Hebrews 13:17).

Sometimes members of the body are called upon to attend to the organizational and benevolence needs of the local church with the biblically defined ministry role of deacon. It is likely that the choosing of the seven servants in Acts 6:1-7,

just two years after Christ's ascension, set the precedent for elected deacons in the church; however the specific office of deacon is not mentioned in the New Testament until 30 years later (Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Furthermore, the office is conspicuously absent when Paul instructs his emissary, Titus, in the qualifications for church leadership (Titus 1:5-9). This makes sense when we notice that the membership in the Jerusalem church in Acts 6 was over 5,000, that the Philippian church was about 13 years old when Paul wrote them and the Ephesian church was 20 years old at the writing of 1 Timothy, while the church in Crete that Titus supervised was only a couple years old. While church eldership is seen throughout the New Testament, the office of deacon is provided for in the New Testament on an "as needed" basis. It is not a position of authority, but of service and assistance to the needs of the church family, which is an important ministry function. Here again, we see the priority of function over form in the Scriptures.

Conclusion for Faith Community Church

The fact that most of the NT letters were written to entire church bodies rather than only leaders demonstrates that God intends for NT believers, being filled with His Spirit, to take ownership of the health, maturity and ministry of the church body. By His grace, Christ provides leadership in the church to teach and equip its members to minister. Inherent in leadership is authority. The NT pattern for church authority begins with apostles (modern-day church planters) and moves to appointed elders as the church matures. In the early churches, elders led as a team, or had an overseer (*episkopos*) who led the team of elders (modern-day Senior Pastor). At Faith Community Church we recognize the wisdom and need for a Senior Pastor who "governs diligently" (Romans 12:8) for the edification of the congregation. Elders are appointed by the Senior Pastor and work together with him to shepherd the flock. Associate pastors, ministerial staff, deacons, trustees, team leaders and support staff are provided for in these bylaws as the church needs them and the Lord so directs.

However a local church organizes itself, its structures and decisions must be consistent with the nature and purpose of Christ's church. This is why the purpose statement of Faith Community Church is the foundation of all that we do:

...to bring people to faith and maturity in Christ, by expressing the Kingdom of God through worship, discipleship and biblical community, and by advancing the Kingdom of God as witnesses, locally and globally, of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is our prayer that our structures and policies will serve Christ's mission in and through the church, led by His Spirit, for His glory until His return. Amen.

Gender Roles in Church Leadership

As in any area of theology and its application to church life, care must be made to avoid conforming to the values of this world, be they liberal and innovative, progressive and modern, or conservative and traditional. Our goal is not to preserve traditions, nor to satisfy the cultural values of our day. Our goal is to rightly interpret and apply the principles and specific commands of Scripture within our contemporary context. Specific applications change. Biblical principles do not. In that humble commitment to the authority of God's Word, let us explore the biblical teaching on gender roles in the church.

Galatians 3:28 states, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* This passage asserts that the provision and offer of salvation is equally and openly offered to all humankind, regardless of ethnic, socio-economic or gender divisions. The ground is level at the foot of the cross; in the church, we are one. However, this principle cannot be extended to assert that our oneness erases role differentiation, in particular, role differentiation established by God in creation.

In Genesis we read, *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* (1:27). Here we see the unity and equality of mankind—we are one race, all created in God's image. And we see the diversity in mankind—we are each one either male or female, and neither is better than the other because both sexes reflect God's image. Yet in the creation account, we also see differences in sex roles. Adam's role was to work, but he wasn't made only for work because God said, *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* (2:18). Eve's role was to help Adam and provide companionship. We notice that the curse of the Fall also pinpointed on these areas—work became harder for Adam, relationships and childbearing became harder for Eve. These are the roles for which we were designed by God.

In the home we see the further development of these different roles enveloped in the context of equality. A more literal rendering of Ephesians 5:21-22 reads, *"Submit to one another in the fear of Christ, wives to your own husbands, as to the Lord."* Mutual submission in the church and the home is consistent with our equality in creation and redemption. A Christian wife submitting to her husband's leadership and respecting his headship, while a Christian husband loves his wife, *"just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,"* (v. 25) is consistent with the diversity of roles between the sexes. In this passage, Paul makes a strong connection between the Christian's earthly household and the household of God, His church.

We learn in 1 Corinthians 12 that *"to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good,"* (v. 7) and that *"all these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines"* (v. 11). Here again we see the unity and equality of all members, male and female, in the body of Christ and we recognize that spiritual gifts are given at God's discretion to believers so they can use those gifts to benefit the body. Yet God, in the Scriptures, has also established roles in which spiritual gifts are used in an orderly fashion. This was true of Timothy, a man representing the Apostle Paul's divine-sanctioned authority, as he exercised leadership in Ephesus: *"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."* (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Similarly, the New Testament provides certain role-based parameters on how and to whom believing women exercise their spiritual gifts in the church.

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:16. This passage falls within the context of Paul's teaching that we deny ourselves certain rights so we do not unintentionally influence other Christians to sin, nor present an inconsistent testimony of Christ in the eyes of unbelievers. Moving into the specific teaching here of the demeanor of men and women in worship assemblies, Paul establishes a line of headship, from God, to Christ, to man, to woman, while again asserting the basic equality and interdependence of the two sexes, with different roles.

It is possible that the rationale for the head covering requirement was due to a woman's hair being an object of sexual attraction in that society, but it seems to fit the context more closely that the issue at hand is one of women demonstrating submission to male authority in the church and ensuring that proper dress distinctions are kept between the sexes (see Deuteronomy 22:5). That being the case, those biblical principles need to be appropriately applied in the contemporary cultural setting in which the church finds itself.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40. The context of this passage addresses the orderly use of spiritual gifts in church gatherings, especially the gift of ecstatic prophecy, which must be evaluated for its authenticity. It is in that context Paul instructs the church that women are not to speak in the church. But how is this consistent with 1 Corinthians 11:5 where Paul tells women how to conduct themselves as they publicly pray and prophecy in a mixed Christian assembly? Context must be our guide. We understand the prohibition in this passage as dealing only with the public evaluation of words of prophecy given in a worship assembly, because that a woman would be, in effect, exercising authority over a man, perhaps even over her husband who prophesied!

1 Timothy 2:8-3:15. Here again the context deals with *"how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household"* (3:15). As in the previous passage, Paul provides for women to receive instruction in the church, which was a very counter-cultural stance in both Jewish and Graeco-Roman culture. Again he

commands women to be silent and submissive and again context reveals the specific situation to which he refers—having authority over men and giving authoritative teaching to men. Consistent with these established, God-ordained gender roles, Paul then specifies that elders/overseers in the church must be men (as in Titus 1:6), because of the inherent authority of that role.

From these passages, then, we reach the conclusion that the headship of men over women is established in creation and is to be expressed in the home and in the church (no other spheres of society are mentioned). The outworking of the headship principle means that men have the sober responsibility before God to exercise leadership in the church and home that reflects Christ's own self-sacrificial leadership. A woman may be given and therefore use any spiritual gift in the church, provided that she does not exercise direct authority over a man, thereby upsetting God's orderly roles for men and women.

Finally, we ought not approach this issue from the mindset of total liberty for men and definite restrictions for women, but rather identify the solemn responsibilities that men have in the God-given role as leaders and the much needed support and completeness that women provide in their God-given role as helpers, a role taken by the Holy Spirit himself! The church must not operate like secular hierarchies (Luke 22:24-27), but operate by the Christ-like values of mutual love, submission and respect.