

Living Vine Community Church Structure Document

(Revision 4.3 Revision Date:050313)

OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE

The purpose of this document is to provide the church with an effective and orderly decision-making structure to accomplish its mission.

This is a congregational church. In that respect, each member is equally responsible for the welfare of the church and has an equal voice in matters brought before the church. Each member of the church should be provided the maximum freedom and encouragement in developing their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The appropriate perspective of each church leader is as a servant for the benefit of the overall congregation. Accordingly, the responsibility and authority of leaders are limited to that which has been expressly assigned by the congregation in this document or by other specific action.

This document describes the purpose, responsibilities and basic policies related to the major elements of the church organization including the Elders, Deacons, Church Council, and Operational Teams. Likewise, it is expected that as committees and other needed groups are formed, their purpose, responsibilities and policies will be clearly articulated. In this manner, this structure will empower effective decisions at the lowest possible level in the church's organization.

For the purposes of this document, the term "structural policies" means the specific policies and procedures described in this document. The term "operating policies" refers to operating ground rules for the day-to-day activities of the church. This document is not intended to be a detailed operating policy document but rather one, which describes an organization, which will determine effective operating policies. The few structural policies stated are designed to provide an effective structure, which will encourage a dynamic leadership, made up of spiritually mature believers, to develop operating policies to match the situation as it changes.

It is intended that consensus be the basis for all but a limited few specific decisions made within the structure described. Consensus means "general agreement or accord". Under consensus, the group agrees that it will defer making a decision if one member is opposed as a matter of conscience. Likewise, each member of the group agrees that they will not hold up a decision unless it is absolutely a matter of conscience. Consensus requires perseverance but provides a powerful opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak through a group as it comes into agreement. Consensus is critical to the integrity of the structure described in this document. There should never be an Elder, Deacon, Council, Team or Committee decision that is based on majority and minority positions.

Communication is the lifeblood of this organizational structure. It is absolutely necessary that communication and consultation exist between all the members of the structure. No member of the structure can be effective if they are isolated from the others for any reason. Likewise, each component of the structure should seek every opportunity to communicate with the congregation. As servants of the congregation, leaders should encourage and respond to input from the church membership. Church members should be provided access to all elements of the decision-making structure described in this document to express their input, opinions, concerns and ideas. All significant decisions should involve input from the congregation and the decisions themselves should be reported to the congregation.

This structure provides for a dynamic leadership being shared in cooperative partnerships between the laity and ordained ministers of the church. In this manner, the church can take full advantage of all the leadership and spiritual gifts with which God has provided it.

1. LIFESTYLE COVENANT

The membership of Living Vine Community Church shall be asked to live by this lifestyle covenant as a condition of membership.

“I covenant with God and those who join with me to be accountable in the following areas of my life:
I will take time for personal devotions on a regular basis to get alone with God for the purpose of developing my relationship with the Father, seeking spiritual guidance and maturity in my faith.
I will avoid allowing resentments and animosity to separate me from other members of the congregation.
I will serve with the gifts God has given me by sharing generously with the church and the community of my time, talent and resources.
I will financially support the church, tithing on a regular basis, giving unselfishly and generously.
I will maintain a morally and sexually pure lifestyle.
I will endeavor to share my faith in Jesus Christ with others in any and every way possible.
I will give the vision of the church and the needs of the congregation a priority over my individual needs and opinions when they differ. I will persevere as those differences occur.
I invite those who have voluntarily entered into this covenant with me to confront me if any of these areas of my life appear to be compromised.”

2. CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Purpose

The Church Council will coordinate activities of the church to ensure that all groups have available for their use a proportional share of the available resources, including time, space, personnel, staff attention, physical and financial resources. Through prayer and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, it is charged with keeping the church on course to achieve its mission.

B. Responsibilities

1. Ensuring that planned activities do not conflict in terms of space they will require, the physical resources they expect to be able to use or the presence or assistance they expect to have by staff personnel.
2. Reviewing the recommendations by the operational teams for people to fill vacancies on their teams or for workers in the activities for which they are responsible, to ensure that all teams have a proportional share of workers.
3. Ensuring that conflicts are resolved at the lowest appropriate level in the organizational structure. It will initiate Elder involvement in the event that the normal organizational structure is not effective in resolving a particular conflict.
4. The Council will set and publish the date and time of regular and special business meetings. They will also establish and publish the proposed agenda for business meetings. (Section 16)
5. The Council will ensure that a spirit of teamwork and cooperation exists between the various organizational groups in the church, the Council, and the staff. In this respect, it will strive to surface and resolve any conflict among these groups.
6. Ensuring that the congregation is openly communicated with concerning the church's activities and ministries. As a part of this, the Council will ensure that a calendar of activities for each month is made available to all members.
7. Council members will make attendance at prayer meetings and business meetings a priority in their lives.

C. Membership

The members of the Church Council shall be the senior pastor, a second staff member nominated by the senior pastor, the chairman of the Elders, the chairman of the Deacons, the Lead Shepherd, the Youth Team Leader, the Treasurer, and the leaders of each of the Operational Teams. When a member cannot attend a meeting, they should request another member of their group to represent them. The senior pastor will serve as chairman of the Council. In his absence, the Chairman of Elders will act as chairman. Should he also be absent, the Chairman of Deacons will serve as chairman.

OPERATIONAL TEAMS

The orderly functioning of a New Testament church involves many different activities, programs, and ministries. To allow the pastor and staff to focus on their primary responsibilities, and to spread the leadership among the laity of the congregation, Operational Teams will oversee the day-to-day functions of these activities, programs, and ministries. Additional Operational Teams may be created as needed, as determined by the Church Council, and affirmed by the congregation.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

A. Purpose

The Administrative Team will ensure that the business affairs of the church are properly conducted. Its areas of responsibility shall include budgeting, finance, major purchases, personnel, legal, insurance, property acquisition and maintenance, and membership records.

B. Responsibilities

The Administrative Team will ensure that the church has an annual budget, that all spending is in accordance with the budget, that good records are kept of all gifts received, other income, and expenditures. They will set employment policies and salary schedules for personnel employed by the church. They will also ensure that the church meets all applicable legal requirements, and that all of its assets are listed and adequately insured. They will ensure that good stewardship is maintained in all purchasing. They will ensure that all membership records are up to date. They will ensure that all property is adequately maintained.

The Administrative Team will carry out its duties or design the appropriate committee structure to do so. It will recommend persons to serve on those committees subject to approval of the Church Council, and affirmation by the congregation. It will also describe the spiritual gifts, education and experience desired for members of each of the committees in order to provide clarity to the selection process.

The Administrative Team will develop clear descriptions of the responsibility and decision making authority for each committee. These shall be affirmed by the Church Council. It will also communicate the overall plan and operating policies established by the Church Council to each committee so that they will have a comprehensive perspective. It will describe the reports and feedback desired from the respective committees.

The Administrative Team will develop and implement strategies to effectively communicate its significant decisions with all constituencies and members of the church. It will also solicit input and feedback from the church concerning its areas of responsibility.

The Administrative Team will ensure that membership records are kept which reflects dates of professions of faith, baptism, transfer of membership, and cancellation of membership due to inactivity, relocation, or death. This is the specific responsibility of the Church Clerk, who will also keep the minutes of the Church Business Meetings, and send and receive Letters of Membership to and from other churches. It will also have the responsibility to furnish the deacons with a list of inactive members, i.e. members who have not participated in any church activity for a year.

The Administrative Team will establish and amend the operating policies through which it carries out its responsibilities, subject to approval of the Church Council.

C. Membership and Appointment

The Administrative Team shall be composed of four to seven members, of which one may be a staff member designated by the senior pastor. Potential new lay members of the Team will be recommended by the Administrative Team to the Church Council, which will make the final selection subject to affirmation by the congregation. The Administrative Team will annually select its own chairperson by January 1st.

D. Term of Service

The staff member will serve at the pleasure of the senior pastor. Lay members will serve a three-year term and may be re-appointed; however at least a one-year hiatus between terms of service should occur when there are adequate candidates for service on the Team. To maintain continuity, the first appointments will be staggered with approximately one-third to serve one year, one-third to serve two years and one-third to serve three years. If a member's term is not completed for any reason, a replacement will be appointed to serve the remainder of the term. A member who fails to attend three regular meetings of the Team during a calendar year without offering a valid reason will be replaced.

E. Qualifications

Members of the Administrative Team should be individuals who are well known in the church, are spiritually mature, have demonstrated leadership ability, are willing to make decisions based on consensus, and are willing to participate regularly in meetings. When new members to the Team are being considered, an effort should be made to find individuals who are knowledgeable in the following areas: finance, salary administration, maintenance, insurance, accounting, and budgeting.

4. MINISTRY TEAM

A. Purpose

The Ministry Team is responsible for organizing, or assisting in the organization of, and supervision of the ministries approved by the Church. They will ensure that the approved ministries receive a proportionate share of the church resources in order to be able to function in the intended way, and to recommend to the Church Council persons to conduct the ministries.

B. Responsibilities

The Ministry Team is responsible for assessing needs and opportunities for ministries, and developing programs to meet those insofar as possible. Members of the congregation as well as the staff are encouraged to surface perceived needs and/or opportunities for new ministries. Ideas for new ministry programs should be presented to the Ministry Team who will work with the originating party (whether staff or church member) to develop clear objectives and a plan of action. This plan should describe the objective and all resources required by it so that the Church Council can adequately evaluate it and determine if the resources available will permit the ministry to accomplish its objectives.

The Ministry Team will organize each ministry program in a manner similar to committees under the Administrative Team. Recommendations for the personnel to serve in each program will be made to the Church Council for their affirmation. The Ministry Team will also describe the spiritual gifts, training and experience desired for prospective workers in each program to provide clarity to the selection process.

The Ministry Team will develop clear descriptions of the responsibilities of each ministry program, and communicate the overall plan and operating policies established by the Church Council to each team so that all workers have a comprehensive perspective. It will describe the reports and feedback desired from the ministry programs.

The Ministry Team will submit a recommended budget for the ministry programs to the Administrative Team for their consideration in preparing the church budget, and will work with the Administrative Team to modify the ministry budget, if necessary to ensure that ministry programs receive a proportionate part of the church's resources.

The Ministry Team will develop and implement strategies to effectively communicate its significant decisions with all constituencies and members of the church. It will also solicit input and feedback from the church concerning its areas of responsibility.

The Ministry Team will ensure that there is adequate communication with the congregation concerning all aspects of the ministries for which it is responsible.

The Ministry Team will establish and amend the operating policies through which it carries out its responsibilities, subject to the approval of the Church Council.

C. Membership and Appointment

The Ministry Team will be composed of four to eleven members, two of which may be staff members designated by the senior pastor. The Ministry Team will recommend potential new Team members and ministry workers to the Church Council, which will make the final selection subject to affirmation by the congregation. The Ministry Team will annually select its own chairperson by January 1st.

D. Term of Service

The staff members will serve at the pleasure of the senior pastor. Lay members of the Ministry Team will serve a three-year term and may be re-appointed; however at least a one-year hiatus between terms of service should occur when there are adequate candidates for service on the Team. To maintain continuity, the first appointments will be staggered with approximately one-third to serve one year, one-third to serve two years and one-third to serve three years. If a member's term is not completed for any reason, a replacement will be appointed to serve the remainder of the term. A member who fails to attend three regular meetings of the Team during a calendar year without offering a valid reason will be replaced.

E. Qualifications

Members of the Ministry Team should be individuals who are spiritually mature, have demonstrated leadership ability, who have spiritual gifts that relate to some aspect of ministry, who are willing to make decisions based upon consensus, and who are willing to participate regularly in meetings.

5. OUTREACH TEAM

A. Purpose

The Outreach Team will ensure that there is an active, comprehensive outreach program designed to: (1) reach out, at an appropriate time, to all categories of persons living within the area served by the church, (2) enable all church members to be involved, and (3) provide training on outreach methods. The Outreach Team will also ensure that the outreach program receives a proportionate share of the church's resources.

B. Responsibilities

The Outreach Team will ensure that a comprehensive outreach program is planned annually. This program will specify the groups/areas to be targeted, how they will be identified, the approaches to be used and the nature of the participation expected by each person/group within the church, i.e. adults, youth, children, Sunday School, the other teams, etc. The Outreach Team will develop a recommended budget for the outreach programs and submit it to the Administrative Team in time for their preparation of the annual church budget, and will work with the Administrative Team, if necessary, to properly modify the outreach budget, to ensure that the outreach program receives its proportionate share of the budget.

In planning the outreach programs, the Outreach Team will consult with the pastor and staff, the other teams, the Association and the State Convention soliciting suggestions from each. They will also maintain surveillance of publications, which may present new ideas for outreach programs or describe activities/events that have been successfully used at other evangelical churches.

The Outreach Team will oversee or recommend to the Church Council persons to lead the various parts of the outreach program. They will ensure that detailed planning/preparation for each activity/event is begun with sufficient lead-time so as to not compromise the potential for success. They will ensure that the congregation is kept aware of all planned activities/events and when appropriate, the community is also made aware of them.

The Outreach Team will develop and implement strategies to effectively communicate its significant decisions with all constituencies and members of the church. It will also solicit input and feedback from the church concerning its areas of responsibility.

The Outreach Team will ensure that all parts of the outreach programs receive prayer support by the church, corporately and individually.

The Outreach Team will establish and amend the operating policies through which it carries out its responsibilities, subject to approval of the Church Council.

C. Membership and Appointment

The Outreach Team shall be composed of four to twelve members, of which, two may be staff members assigned by the senior pastor. The Outreach Team may recommend potential new Team members and outreach workers to the Church Council, which will make the final selection subject to affirmation by the congregation. In seeking new members, an effort should be made to get adult representation from each program organization of the church in order to ensure that the interests of each receive adequate consideration. The Outreach Team will annually select its own chairperson by January 1st.

D. Term of Service

The staff members will serve at the pleasure of the senior pastor. Lay members will serve a three-year term and may be re-appointed; however at least a one-year hiatus between terms of service should occur when there are adequate candidates for service on the Team. To maintain continuity, terms should be staggered with approximately one-third being appointed each year. If a member's term is not completed for any reason, a replacement will be appointed to serve the remainder of the term. A member who fails to attend three regular meetings of the Team during a calendar year without offering a valid reason will be replaced.

E. Qualifications

Members of the Outreach Team should be individuals who are spiritually mature, have an interest in outreach, who have spiritual gifts that relate to some aspect of outreach, who are willing to make decisions based upon consensus, and who are willing to participate regularly in meetings.

6. TEACHING TEAM

A. Purpose

The Teaching Team will ensure (1) that a sound biblical teaching program led by well-qualified teachers is made available for every age level in the church; (2) that classes are available for any special groups that may develop within the church; (3) that training is available for those who believe that they may have the gift of teaching; (4) that appropriate curriculum materials are used; and (5) that the teaching activities receive their proportionate share of the church's resources.

B. Responsibilities

The Teaching Team will ensure that a high quality, biblically sound teaching curriculum, which utilizes appropriate teaching methods, is available for every teaching program. At least one team member will attend a conference at the state or national level annually in order to learn about new materials and/or methods. Cost should be a factor in the selection of curriculum materials, but not the controlling factor.

The Teaching Team will ensure that the teaching programs are conducted in a way that facilitates learning at every age level. They will be aware of the different ways that learning is achieved and provide the necessary materials and teaching aids so that each student progresses in their knowledge and understanding of the Bible, doctrine, the principles of Christian living, and of missions.

The Teaching Team will ensure that there is an adequate supply of trained teachers for every age-level by providing or locating training for all that feel they may have the gift of teaching.

The Teaching Team will ensure that the available space for teaching is utilized in the best way possible to meet the needs of each age-level and that appropriate furnishings are provided. Space utilization and furnishings will be evaluated annually to determine if there are changes needed to improve the overall teaching program. Significant changes will be recommended to the Church Council for affirmation.

The Teaching Team will develop a recommended budget for the teaching program and submit it to the Administrative Team for their consideration in preparing the church budget. They will work with the Administrative Team to modify the teaching budget, if necessary to ensure that teaching programs receive a proportionate part of the church's resources.

The Teaching Team will develop and implement strategies to effectively communicate its significant decisions with all constituencies and members of the church. It will also solicit input and feedback from the church concerning its areas of responsibility.

The Teaching Team will ensure that childcare is available as needed for church activities. They will develop procedures for use by childcare workers and ensure that all workers are qualified and have passed a security check. They will recommend an appropriate payment scale for employed workers and notify the treasurer monthly of the hours worked by each.

The Teaching Team will establish and amend the operating policies through which it carries out its responsibilities, subject to approval of the Church Council.

C. Membership and Appointment

The Teaching Team shall be composed of at four to twelve members, of which two may be staff members assigned by the senior pastor. The Teaching Team will recommend potential new Team members and teachers to the Church Council, which will make the final selection subject to affirmation by the church. In seeking new members of the team, an effort should be made to get adult representation from each teaching program of the church in order to ensure that the interests of each receives adequate consideration. The Teaching Team will annually select its own chairperson by January 1st.

D. Term of Service

The staff members will serve at the pleasure of the senior pastor. Lay members will serve a three-year term and may be re-appointed; however at least a one-year hiatus between terms of service should occur when there are adequate candidates for service on the Team. To maintain continuity, terms should be staggered with approximately one-third being appointed each year. If a member's term is not completed for any reason, a replacement will be appointed to serve the remainder of the term. A member who fails to attend three regular meetings of the team during a calendar year without offering a valid reason will be replaced.

E. Qualifications

Members of the Teaching Team should be individuals who are spiritually mature, have an interest in teaching, who have spiritual gifts that relate to some aspect of teaching, who are willing to make decisions based upon consensus and who are willing to participate regularly in meetings.

7. YOUTH TEAM

A. Purpose

The Youth Team will ensure that there is an active youth program designed to reach out to the youth living within the area served by the church. The Youth Team will also ensure that the youth program receives a proportionate share of the church's resources.

B. Responsibilities

The Youth Team will ensure that a comprehensive program is planned annually. The Youth Team will develop a recommended budget for the youth program and submit it to the Administrative Team in time for their preparation of the annual church budget, and will work with the Administrative Team, if necessary, to properly modify the youth budget, to ensure that the youth program receives its proportionate share of the budget.

In planning the youth programs, the Youth Team will consult with the pastor and staff, the other teams, the Association and the State Convention soliciting suggestions from each. They will also maintain surveillance of publications, which may present new ideas for outreach programs or describe activities/events that have been successfully used at other evangelical churches.

The Youth Team will oversee or recommend to the Church Council persons to lead the various parts of the youth program. They will ensure that detailed planning/preparation for each activity/event is begun with sufficient lead-time so as to not compromise the potential for success. They will ensure that when appropriate the congregation and the community is kept aware of all planned activities/events.

The Youth Team will develop and implement strategies to effectively communicate its significant decisions with all constituencies and members of the church. It will also solicit input and feedback from the church concerning its areas of responsibility.

The Youth Team will establish and amend the operating policies through which it carries out its responsibilities, subject to approval of the Church Council.

C. Membership and Appointment

The Youth Team shall be composed of four to seven members, of which, one may be a staff member assigned by the senior pastor. The Youth Team may recommend potential new Team members to the Church Council, which will make the final selection subject to affirmation by the congregation. The Youth Team will annually select its own leader by January 1st. The Youth Team Leader will serve on the Church Council.

D. Term of Service

The staff member will serve at the pleasure of the senior pastor. Lay members will serve a three-year term and may be re-appointed; however at least a one-year hiatus between terms of service should occur when there are adequate candidates for service on the Team. To maintain continuity, terms should be staggered with approximately one-third being appointed each year. If a member's term is not completed for any reason, a replacement will be appointed to serve the remainder of the term. A member who fails to attend three regular meetings of the Team during a calendar year without offering a valid reason will be replaced.

E. Qualifications

Members of the Youth Team should be individuals who are spiritually mature, have an interest in teaching youth, who have spiritual gifts that relate to some aspect of teaching, who are willing to make decisions based upon consensus, and who are willing to participate regularly in meetings.

8. DEACONS

A. Purpose

The Deacons will ensure the spiritual, emotional, physical, and fellowship needs of all members and acting to meet those needs insofar as it is possible by maintaining regular contact with them. They will seek to preserve and protect the spiritual integrity of the church and its leadership. Deacons will be model servants for the congregation.

B. Responsibilities

The basic Deacon responsibility is one of servant rather than a position of authority or esteem. Deacons should always be open to ways to serve both the congregation and its leadership.

Each deacon will have certain families assigned to their care and will endeavor to maintain an awareness of their needs. Any needs that cannot be met by the deacon shall be brought promptly to the attention of the person or group who can best deal with them. He will act as liaison between the families and church leaders, and ensure that lines of communication are always open.

Deacons will administer church benevolence funds and ensure the confidentiality of the financial needs of members, and of assistance provided to them. Church staff and members should bring benevolence needs to the attention of the deacons.

Deacons will administer the Lord's Supper, but may be assisted by other members.

The Deacons will make a recommendation to the congregation when an individual's membership should be revoked. This is described in Section 14.

Deacons are to be peacemakers as described in Ephesians 4:3, 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace' and should always seek to keep unity in the congregation. They should be both sensitive to the needs of the congregation and assertive in protecting the church. The Deacons are responsible for church discipline as described, in Section 19.

The Deacons will establish and amend the operating policies through which they carry out their responsibilities, subject to the approval of the church.

C. Qualifications

Deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, they may serve as deacons. If married, their mate must also be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. Deacons must manage their children and households well. Prospective deacons should be well known to the church, spiritually mature, willing to participate regularly in meetings and willing to make decisions based on consensus.

D. Selection Process

1. Nomination

Active deacons, with the advice of the senior pastor, shall in the first quarter of each year develop a list of those considered to be worthy to serve as deacons. The congregation will also be asked to give nominations. Deacon nominees must be supported by a consensus of active deacons to be further considered. A person who has served as a deacon in another church may be considered as a candidate, but is not automatically entitled to serve as a member of this deacon body.

2. Screening

The Deacon chairperson will notify nominees in writing of their nomination. This notification will describe Deacon qualifications, responsibilities, term of service and the selection process. Nominees will be asked to search their hearts concerning their calling to serve in this capacity and to notify the chairperson about their willingness to be further considered. Those willing to serve will be interviewed by at least two active Deacons. Subjects to be discussed in the interview should include the candidate's testimony, sense of calling to serve, stewardship, and spiritual gifts. Nominees who satisfactorily complete the screening process will be presented to the church body for a vote of affirmation.

E. Ordination

New Deacons will be ordained by "laying on of hands" at a worship service.

F. Term of Service

Deacons will commit to serve for a three-year term and may serve additional terms. An effort will be made to avoid having more than one-third of the deacons end their terms in any given year.

G. Size of Deacon Body

There will be as many as one deacon for every six family units who are members or regular attenders. A family unit consists of those people living in a single household; however unmarried adult persons in a home may request to be considered as a separate family unit when deacon family assignments are made.

H. Officers

The Deacons will annually select from among their members a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary by January 1st.

9. ELDERS

A. Purpose

The Elders provide the Senior Pastor with a group of spiritually mature believers who will meet with him to pray, discuss any matters of concern, and comment on possible courses of action. They will assist in resolving any conflicts arising in the Church Council. They will also nominate for church affirmation, the members of a pastoral search committee.

B. Responsibilities

The Elders are to meet regularly with the pastor, and any staff members he requests to be present, in order to:

1. Pray for the church, its staff and members
2. Discuss and comment upon new situations, opportunities, and problems that have arisen in order to assist the pastor in reaching decisions and/or making recommendations to organizational groups, the congregation, and/or individuals.
3. Suggest to the pastor actions that might enhance the ministry of the church.
4. Assist in resolving any conflicts arising in the Church Council.
5. Assist in resolving any conflicts between the church and any group or individual in the community at large.
6. Recommending a Pastoral Search Committee for affirmation by the congregation as described in Section 13.

C. Qualifications

Elders shall be men who have served as deacons and proved themselves to be spiritually mature leaders. They shall be the husband of one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient, blameless and not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain, hospitable, loving good, self controlled, upright, and disciplined.

D. Appointment

Elders shall be appointed by the senior pastor and affirmed by the congregation. Men selected as elders may continue to act as deacons.

E. Term of Service

Elders shall serve a three-year term and may be reappointed.

F. Size of Elder Body

Up to eight men may serve as elders at any time.

G. Officers

The Elders shall annually select from among their members a chairman, vice chairman and secretary by January 1st.

10. TRUSTEES

A. Responsibility

The trustees will execute legal documents on behalf of the church. They will be furnished with documentation by the Church Clerk, which provides evidence that the congregation has properly approved such action and is consistent with the structural policies stated in this document.

B. Appointment

At least two and up to three trustees will be appointed by the Administrative Team subject to affirmation by the congregation.

C. Term of Service

The trustees will serve for a three-year term and may be reappointed. One trustee should be appointed each year so only one term would expire each year, thus ensuring a continuity of knowledge and experience.

11. SHEPHERDING PROGRAM

The church will have a Shepherding Program to provide a closer ministry to the members than the pastor can alone. Shepherds are to be men and women who have the gifts of mercy, helps, and related qualifications, and who are willing to accept the responsibility for watching over the welfare of a certain number of members and their families.

The Shepherding Program is to supplement the pastor's ministry and not replace it. Members can ask for the pastor's help at any time without going through their shepherd, and a shepherd is expected to call for the pastor's assistance in instances where help is needed which are beyond the shepherd's capabilities. The presence of the Shepherding Program should in no way be regarded as limiting the ministry of members who are not shepherds, and such ministry is always appropriate.

Shepherds will be nominated and trained by the Elders, after approval by the congregation. The Elders will oversee the program. The Elders will appoint a Lead Shepherd to coordinate the efforts of the Shepherding Program. The Lead Shepherd will also serve on the Church Council.

Shepherds should be responsible for a maximum of five family units, with a family unit being defined as a single person or a family living in one residence. Persons over 21 who are still living with their families will be considered as a separate family unit. If the number of people qualified and willing to serve as shepherds is insufficient for a shepherd to be assigned to every member, preference will be given to newer members and to those who have situations which prevent them from being active in the church and having frequent contact with other members.

Shepherds will be assigned to families, but before they begin their service, the families will be notified of who their shepherd is. If they do not agree with the assignment, they may request, for any reason at all and without question, a different shepherd.

Shepherds will serve for three year terms but may accept additional terms without a break in service, if they are willing. Married couples may serve together as shepherds.

12. MODERATOR

The moderator will lead the business meetings of the church. The senior pastor will normally serve as moderator. In his absence, the Chairman of Elders will act as moderator. Should he also be absent, the Chairman of Deacons will serve as moderator.

13. PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

A. Responsibilities

The Pastoral Search Committee will locate and screen candidates for senior pastor of the church, and recommend the individual they believe God is calling to serve in this position. To locate the best possible candidates, they will solicit recommendations from the congregation, the Association, the State Convention, and from any other appropriate source. They will provide complete information concerning the person recommended to the congregation prior to his first visit including the criteria used in their evaluation. The Pastoral Search Committee will work with the Administrative Team to set the salary and other related items for the candidate.

During a candidate's visit the Pastoral Search Committee will ensure that opportunities are provided for him to meet with the broadest possible representation of the church leadership and membership in order to build consensus among the congregation.

The Pastoral Search Committee will be the liaison between the candidate and the church in all respects, working out the details of the hiring and transition of leadership. The chairman of the Pastoral Search Committee will formally present the candidate's name and qualifications to the congregation when the vote of affirmation is held.

The Pastoral Search Committee will keep the details of their work and the names of potential candidates confidential until a candidate has been selected.

B. Membership and Appointment

The Pastoral Search Committee will be composed of an odd number of persons, either five or preferably seven, both men and women. The members of the committee will be nominated by the Elders, subject to a vote of affirmation by the church membership. The members of the Pastoral Search Committee will select a chairperson from among themselves.

C. Qualifications

Members of the Pastoral Search Committee will be well known in the church, spiritually mature and willing to participate regularly in meetings and in any necessary travel.

14. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Becoming A Member

Membership is open to any person who has made a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ and has been baptized by immersion following their profession of faith. Persons who have done this prior to coming to Living Vine Community Church may request to become candidates for membership by presenting or promising a letter from another evangelical church, or by personal statement of their former membership in such a church if that church cannot be contacted. The senior pastor, at his discretion, may waive the requirement of baptism by immersion in instances of physical disability.

Candidates for membership must also complete the basic discipleship program, commit to a ministry, commit to the Lifestyle Covenant, and begin practicing biblical financial support of the church. Upon completion of these, the senior pastor will present the names of those seeking membership for a vote of approval by the congregation at a regularly scheduled business meeting.

Cancellation of Membership

If a member has not participated in the church program for a year, they will be contacted by deacons to determine if they are physically unable to attend, have moved out of the area, are attending another church, or no longer have an interest in the church. If none of these are true, they will be encouraged to again participate in worship, Bible study and ministry. If after an additional six months they continue to be absent, they will be notified that their names are being removed from the church roll; and at the next business meeting that action will be recommended. However, every effort should be made to recover members rather than discharging them. Membership may also be cancelled of any person who engages in actions that could bring disrepute to the church, and refuses to repent and seek forgiveness and restitution.

15. DECISIONS REQUIRING AFFIRMATION OF THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Certain decisions require an affirmative vote of 80% of church members in attendance who choose to vote at a properly called business meeting. These decisions are the following:

Pastoral Search Committee selection (Section 13)

Hiring the senior pastor

Hiring ordained clergy

Termination of employment of senior pastor or ordained clergy

Approval of new members (Section 14)

Transfer or cancellation of membership (Section 14)

Disciplinary action (Section 19)

Annual budget

Changes in the annual budget over 10% in aggregate

Non-budgeted individual capital expenditures exceeding 1% of the annual budget

Asset dispositions exceeding 1% of the annual budget

Debt to be incurred exceeding 1% of the annual budget

Deacon & Elder selection (Sections 8 & 9)

Changes to the structural policies stated in this document

Church membership initiatives

All other affirmations of the church membership will be by consensus.

16. BUSINESS MEETINGS

The purposes of business meetings are: (1) for action to be taken on any item requiring a decision by consensus or a vote of affirmation; (2) to communicate plans, results of actions, activities, important issues and decisions to the congregation; and (3) to provide a forum for church members to express their ideas, issues, or opinions.

Regular business meetings will be scheduled each quarter. The Church Council will publish the date and time of the quarterly meetings for the next calendar year by December 31 of the current year. The Church Council will have the discretion to call a special business meeting for a vote of affirmation when issues requiring such decisions arise. The congregation will be notified of a special business meeting at least 8 days in advance through announcements at all services during that period, and by publication in the bulletin, newsletter, or special letter. The Church Council will be responsible for establishing and publishing the agenda for business meetings. Official Church publications are the newsletter, which is periodically mailed to the church membership, the bulletin, which is distributed at Sunday worship services, and letters mailed to all members. The Church Council will use any of these publications to announce at least twice, the date, time and agenda of a business meeting.

Votes will normally be taken by voice. A written secret ballot will be used at the discretion of the moderator or upon the request of any member provided a majority agrees. Only church members are eligible to vote or participate in a consensus. A membership quorum consists of those in attendance at the business meeting.

17. COUNCIL, ELDER, DEACON, AND OPERATIONAL TEAM MEETINGS

The Church Council, Elders, Deacons, and Operational Teams will meet regularly. The church staff will be kept informed concerning the dates, times and locations of these meetings. All significant decisions made at these meetings will be communicated to the congregation in the most appropriate manner.

18. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP INITIATIVES

If a member of the Church desires to have input to express an opinion or share an idea, they should contact the senior pastor, who will place them on the agenda of the appropriate operational team. In such instances, the respective operational team is obligated to consider the member's input and give the member timely feedback concerning the action taken. If the member is not satisfied with the team decision, they can appeal to the Church Council who will also give the member timely feedback concerning its decision on the matter. In the event that the member is not satisfied with Church Council's decision, they can appeal the decision to the congregation by requesting that the Church Council place the issue on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled business meeting. At that meeting, the church member will be given the opportunity to present their case to the church and the Church Council will explain their decision on the matter. An affirmative vote of 80% of the members in attendance is necessary to sustain the opinion of the petitioner.

19. DISCIPLINE

Discipline is one of the most sensitive responsibilities in the church and is assigned to the Deacons. In this respect, the purpose of discipline is to protect the church in the areas of (1) moral integrity of members or (2) divisiveness within the church. Concerning moral issues, the Lifestyle Covenant serves as the standard. The senior pastor is responsible for initiating Deacon involvement. **DEACON INTERVENTION IS APPROPRIATE ONLY IF ONE OF THE TWO AREAS MENTIONED ABOVE IS INVOLVED.** The objective of discipline is always twofold: (1) protecting the spiritual integrity of the church; and (2) restoration of the individual. This responsibility should be undertaken cautiously and prayerfully, yet decisively and boldly. All action should be based upon prayerful consensus of active Deacons.

To the extent possible, any disciplinary action taken with a staff member should be handled through their appropriate supervisor. All administrative means possible should be exhausted prior to Deacon intervention with a staff member. If restoration and reconciliation is not possible, the Deacons are authorized to temporarily suspend an individual, including another Deacon, from the rights of church leadership, church membership or employment. Such a suspension will be for a period of up to 45 days and will be reported to the congregation. A person so suspended has ten days from the date of suspension to notify the Deacons of their desire to have a hearing before the congregation. In that case, the Church Council will set the time and place of the hearing, within the suspension period, as well as the procedure to be followed. A vote of affirmation of 80%, of the church membership in attendance at the hearing, is necessary to make the Deacon action permanent. If a hearing is not requested by the individual suspended, the suspension will become permanent at the end of the ten-day period. Once a person has been so removed, their restoration to leadership, membership or employment must be approved by consensus of the active Deacons.

20. CHURCH YEAR

The church year will be the calendar year for the purposes of this document. Where applicable, the first year of service for members of the Church Council and Operational Teams will begin September 1, 2001.