

Mt. Lassen Community Church, Inc.

Constitution and By-Laws

Preamble

We, the members of Mount Lassen Community Church, Inc.(MLCC), do hereby declare and establish this Constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our Christian faith, to govern our local body of Christians in an orderly manner, and to maintain the autonomy of this Church in freedom of belief and action in relation to other churches and organizations.

Article One NAME

This organization shall be known as “Mount Lassen Community Church, Inc.”

Article Two AUTONOMY

1. MLCC is self-governing, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government independent from any hierarchy of individuals or organizations.
2. MLCC is responsible for its own doctrinal purity and practice, discipline of members, appointing of officers, ordaining men and women into the Gospel ministry, and determining the extent and method of interchurch cooperation.¹
3. MLCC is a local manifestation of the universal Church of Jesus Christ.
4. MLCC is subject to the control of no other civil or ecclesiastical body. However we recognize the benefits and sustain the obligations of mutual cooperation and service to and with other local congregations.
5. MLCC submits to the laws of the state of California and of the United States of America insofar as those laws do not require disobedience to biblical principle.

Article Three OBJECTIVES & MISSION

1. To help people find and follow God.²

¹ Matthew 18:15-17; Acts 6:3-5;

² Proverbs 8:35; Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 5:1-2, 10;

2. To be a dynamic spiritual family and organization/organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to manifest God to others and to communicate the Good News of salvation and the free gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ to people in our church, community, country and throughout the world, which is the mission of His church.³
3. To be a branch of God's local family and a house of worship for those who want to glorify, fellowship, and experience the presence of God, as well as experiencing meaningful fellowship with believers and to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ through study of the Word of God (the Bible).
4. To equip others to witness and serve one another, their families, community, country, and the world in Jesus' name.⁴ To be a church whose purpose is to be Christ-like in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of time, talents and treasures to the lordship of Jesus Christ.⁵

Article Four

STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE/ PRINCIPLES OF FAITH⁶

God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Sanctity of Marriage and Human Life

The Biblical doctrine of man's creation in the image of God is foundational for all of Christian ethics because it teaches that the lives of all human beings have intrinsic, and not merely instrumental, value.⁷ Our lives have value as such, not merely in terms of what we may be able to do for others but simply who we are. Human beings have inestimable value in the sight of God, irrespective of gender, race, states of health, dependency or social and economic utility, but simply and profoundly because human beings,

³ Matthew 28:18-20;

⁴ Ephesians 4:11-12

⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:8

⁶ MLCC's beliefs and statement of doctrine express the orthodox and evangelical Christian faith, as noted in this adopted Statement of Doctrine from the Evangelical Free Church of America

⁷ Genesis 1:26-28

among all God's creatures, have been designed and created for the purpose of enjoying a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe through Jesus Christ.⁸ At the moment of conception, a new human being, created in God's image, joins the human race.⁹ Every precious human life deserves our nurturing and protection, whatever the circumstances of conception, and should be valued, treated with, and given the rights of any human being outside the womb.

We also affirm God's plan in the Bible for marriage and sexual intimacy between one man and one woman for life.¹⁰ We believe sexuality is a gift from God and a precious trust reserved for marriage.¹¹

Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate. He will return at the End of the Ages to rescue¹² and judge¹³ mankind.

The Work of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the Cross as the perfect, once-for-all, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation. Apart from Jesus, there is no Savior. As Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me."¹⁴

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

We believe that the true church comprises all who believe in and have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

⁸ John 17:3

⁹ Psalm 139:13-14

¹⁰ Genesis 2:24; Matt. 19:5-9; 1 Cor. 7:39

¹¹ Song of Solomon 7:6-10; ; Prov. 5:15-19; Matt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 6:9-20, 18; 7:3-6; Eph. 5:3; Heb. 13:4

¹² Matthew 24:30

¹³ Matthew 25

¹⁴ John 14:6

Christ's Return

We believe in the personal and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁵ God's mercy and patience extends life on the earth each day so that His love and mercy in Christ is accepted by more and more souls, as He wants none to perish.¹⁶ But at time known only to God, the Second Coming of Christ will be ushered in during the End Times and Christ will gather His elect from the four corners of the earth. His imminent return warrants constant expectancy and, as our Blessed Hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic evangelistic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the Gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁷ We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world.¹⁸ We believe that those who profess their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior will live eternally with Him in a new Heaven and new Earth.¹⁹ Those who reject Jesus Christ and His sacrifice of atonement for their sins are condemned to eternal punishment.²⁰ The Devil and demons are sent there by divine decree,²¹ but humans choose to go there when by their own volition reject the love, mercy, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.²²

Article Five **PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH**

It is man's chief end and the Church's primary purpose to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.²³

We confirm that our purpose is also the communication of the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, reconciling all persons to God.²⁴

We endeavor to equip and enable each individual for this purpose through the provision of opportunities of worship, education, service, and fellowship.²⁵

Article Six **GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH**

¹⁵ Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18

¹⁶ 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9

¹⁷ John 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹⁹ John 3:16; Romans 6:23; 10:9-10; 2 Pet. 3; Rev. 21-22

²⁰ Matthew 25:46; John 3:36

²¹ Matthew 25:41

²² Matthew 25:46; John 3:36; Revelation 20:11-15

²³ Westminster Shorter Catechism

²⁴ Romans 1:16-17

²⁵ Ephesians 4: 11-16

The government of MLCC is vested in the elected and active Board of Elders and Board of Deacons as well as the active members of the Church. who owe their chief allegiance to its head and founder, the Lord Jesus Christ. The governing boards which oversee, administrate and serve the entire congregation (including all other subordinate Church groups and ministries) are regarded as active and official Elders and Deacons/Deaconesses, to whom the rest of the congregation shall support in so far as they follow God and the Word of God.²⁶

Persons duly received by the Elders and active members as members shall constitute the membership. These members shall be individuals who have in common with the members their spiritual union with the Lord Jesus Christ and their agreement on the principles of faith and practice contained in this document. These members, so bound together, regard one another as having equal rank and privilege as well as equal responsibility and obligation in fulfilling the purpose of this church.²⁷

All internal or external groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the Elder Board, unless otherwise specified by church action under authority of this Constitution.

Article Seven **SOLE AUTHORITY**

There shall be no worship, education, committee, ministry or service by members or fellowship conducted which is in conflict with this Constitution. All rules, regulations, bylaws and policies previously approved, if any, by this Church, in conflict with this Constitution are each and all hereby repealed, set aside and superseded. The church shall not conduct any business transaction or establish any rules, regulations, or bylaws and policies contrary to the Constitution. This Constitution shall be and is, hereby established as the sole “Constitution” for this Church.

Article Eight **AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended or modified under the following circumstances: the proposal must be read at one regular business meeting. The proposal must then be presented at the next regular business meeting for action by the church. The proposal must then be approved by the active Elder Board and two-thirds majority vote of members present voting in the affirmative.

Article Nine **RATIFICATION**

This constitution is hereby ordained and established for Mt. Lassen Community Church by vote of the Founding and Director’s Board and Church Plant Team on APRIL 1, 2014.

²⁶ Hebrews 13:17

²⁷ Galatians 3:26-28

(Scriptures referenced in the articles of this document are provided for review in the Appendix.)

BY-LAWS

Article One **CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the equipping of the poor, and to the spreading of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Article Two **CHURCH MEETINGS**

Section 1: Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning for worship and teaching from God's Word (the Bible). The pastor shall direct and oversee the services.

Section 2: Special Services

Special services and other Church meetings essential to the advancement of the Church's

objectives shall be approved by the Board of Elders and placed on the Church calendar.

Section 3: Business Meetings

With the fiscal year from July 1 to June 30, the Church shall hold an annual business meeting by no later than the first Sunday of August. The Church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. Notice of Special Called Business Meetings must be published and announced at least one week before the meeting is to take place, unless extreme urgency makes such notice impractical. The notice shall include the subject, date, time and place; and it must be given in a way that all resident members have opportunity to be made aware of the meeting. The Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Elder Board shall preside as moderator of any and all business meetings. With the consent of the above, the Senior Pastor may act as moderator.

Section 4: Quorum

The quorum consists of those members who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called. The quorum number sufficient for business transactions and called actions shall be defined by the Elder Board and stated in MLCC's Policy Manual.

Section 5: Parliamentary Rules

Roberts Rules of Order, Revised, is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the Church.

Article Three **CHURCH SACRAMENTS**

Understanding that a sacrament is a "a religious ceremony or act of the Christian Church that is regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace or work,"²⁸ we recognize the following in particular:

Section 1: Baptism

This Church shall receive for baptism any person who has publicly professed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

- A. Baptism shall be by immersion in water wherever possible
- B. The pastor, or any one so designated by the Church shall administer baptism
- C. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the Church or officially recognized Church event.
- D. A person who professes Christ and is not baptized within a reasonable length of time shall be counseled and encouraged to do so by the pastor and/or staff or deacons.

Section 2: The Lord's Supper

²⁸ http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/sacrament

The Church shall observe the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of each month and any other deemed sacred and official events, unless otherwise scheduled by the Church. The pastor(s) and Elders and other Church Leaders shall administer the Lord's Supper, and the deacons/ deaconesses shall be responsible for its preparations.

Article Four **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

A Christian becomes a member of the Body of Christ by his or her profession of faith in our Savior. Church membership is not a commandment in Scripture but an honorable commitment in a world that lacks it. It is a means through which we demonstrate our Christian commitment in, to, and through a local body of Christ. It is also a necessary constituent to preserve the integrity, legacy, and government of Mt. Lassen Community Church. The focus of Church membership is not so much rights but responsibilities and service.

Section 1. Requirements for MLCC Membership

- A. The candidate must be born again and give satisfactory evidence to the Board of Elders.
- B. The candidate must be at least 18 years of age.
- C. The candidate must have been baptized since being born again.
- D. The candidate must adhere to the Statement of Faith and support the policies and spirit of MLCC as set forth in this document.
- E. The candidate must support the ministry of the Pastor(s), Elders, and Deacons.²⁹
- F. The candidate must relinquish prior Church membership and all memberships in any religious organizations that are not in full agreement with MLCC's Statement of Faith.

Section 2. Non-members

We do not believe that any person or organization should hinder the Holy Spirit from using the members of Christ's Body among us for His glory, whether or not they are MLCC members. We believe that all Christians should be exercising their spiritual gifts in the local Church for the building up of the Body of Christ and for the advancement of His kingdom. Therefore, we permit non-members to serve in non-official capacities as long as they satisfy the following criteria:

- A. Exhibit clear evidence of salvation.
- B. Submit to MLCC's Constitution and By-Laws.
- C. Support the ministry of the Pastor(s), Elders, and Deacons.³⁰
- D. Are interviewed and approved by those who oversee the ministry.
- E. Are not teaching or promoting anything contrary to what MLCC believes and teaches.

²⁹ Hebrews 13:17

³⁰ Hebrews 13:17

F. Display no significant actions or beliefs that would hinder or tarnish the Gospel of Jesus Christ or MLCC.

Section 3. Procedure for Becoming a Member

- A. A person desirous of becoming a member shall attend MLCC's "Introduction to Mt. Lassen Community Church" class conducted by a Pastor or Elder. This class shall be offered at least once a year.
- B. An Elder shall interview any prospective candidate.
- C. The Board of Elders shall approve or disapprove the candidate based on the requirements in Section 1.
- D. If approved, the candidate's name (along with other candidates) shall be listed in Sunday's Worship Bulletin for three Sundays prior to a "New Member's Reception Sunday." The congregation will be encouraged to get to know the candidate if they don't know him/her. If anyone in the congregation is aware of any issue that would prohibit the candidate's admission to membership, he or she should privately contact one of the Elders. If a valid issue is discovered that prevents membership, the Board of Elders shall withdraw the candidate's name until the matter is resolved.
- E. All prospective MLCC members shall be presented to the congregation on a "New Members' Reception Sunday," during which all candidates must affirm their membership commitments to God and MLCC as read by a Pastor or Elder and outlined in the "Introduction to Mt. Lassen Community Church" manual. The congregation will, in turn, affirm their commitments to these prospective new members. During this time, the Elders shall come up front and lay hands on the new members praying God's blessings and power upon them.
- F. On completion of steps A-E, a candidate shall then be announced as an official member of MLCC and be presented before the Church to receive "the right hand of fellowship." A New Member reception line and/or gathering should follow the New Member Reception Sunday Church Service.

Section 4. Commitments, Duties and Rights of Members

Each member will maintain a consistent commitment to every requirement for MLCC members as outlined in the "Introduction to Mt. Lassen Community Church" manual. Among those commitments and duties, in particular, each member:

- A. Is expected to live a life of Christian love and service, including regularly attendance of MLCC's Sunday Services.
- B. Is expected to support the staff, boards, ministries, services and activities of MLCC, and to maintain a testimony that will support the convictions, attitudes, policies, and spirit of the Church by prayer, giving, and service.
- C. Is expected to be good stewards of the time, talents and treasures God has entrusted to them. It is understood that membership in this Church involves financial obligation to support the Church, its mission, ministries and causes with regular, proportionate gifts of tithes and offerings. Offering envelopes will be provided for members.
- D. Is expected to attend Church business meetings.

- E. Is expected to submit to the authority of the leadership that God has established over the Church.
- F. Is expected not to teach or promote anything contrary to what MLCC teaches as defined in this Constitution and the “Introduction to Mt. Lassen Community Church” manual.
- G. Is entitled to vote at all Church business meetings provided the member is present or provision has been made for absentee balloting;
- H. Is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the Church.

Section 5. Dismissal of Members

- A. A person shall be dismissed from membership at the member’s written request or if the member is deceased.
- B. The Board of Elders or its Chair shall review the Church membership at least annually to determine if any members are not fulfilling their membership responsibilities. That would include, infrequent attendance at services, obvious regular attendance at another Church, and unsupportive actions or attitudes. The Elders shall contact these members and encourage them to renew their interest and participation. Such members who do not show renewed interest may be dismissed from membership by a vote of the Board of Elders and given proper notification.
- C. All persons dismissed from membership and the reason for dismissal shall be made known to the congregation, whether in print or public forum. Dismissed members may not appeal to the membership.
- D. Any dismissed members can be re-admitted by repeating the process of membership (Section 2).

Article Five **DISCIPLINE**

1. Love and Discipline

It shall be the practice of this Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member.³¹ Indeed, as Jesus Himself said, His disciples would be known by their love for one another.³² The pastor, Elders and Deacons, and other members of the Church leadership teams will be available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption and restoration rather than punishment.³³

Should some serious condition exist which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare and harmony of the Church, the pastor, Elders and Deacons, and other members of the Church leadership teams will take prayerful, biblical and reasonable measures to resolve

³¹ Gal. 6:1

³² John 13:34-35

³³ Gal. 6:1

the problem.³⁴ If it becomes necessary for the Church to take action to exclude a member, a two-thirds vote of the Elder Board would be required; and the Church may proceed to declare the person to no longer be in the membership of the Church. All such proceedings shall be bathed in prayer and exhibit a spirit of Christian love, kindness and patience.

The Church may restore to membership any person previously excluded upon request of the excluded person, and by 2/3 vote of the Elder board upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and restoration.³⁵ Should there be a conflict within the Church that involves issues between pastor, staff, Elders, Deacons, and/or the Church membership that could divide or hinder the work of the Church, the Church will call for an outside mediator to work with the parties involved to make every reasonable attempt to resolve the conflict. The Church should request a mediator before the problem escalates to the point it causes a break in the unity, harmony and fellowship of the congregation. Mediation services include only those who are mature Christians.

2. The matter of discipline shall be the responsibility of the Board of Elders. Both members and non-members who regularly attend MLCC are subject to discipline.
3. The purpose of discipline is to restore an errant believer and to preserve the testimony, unity and fellowship of the Church.³⁶
4. Examples of reasons for Church discipline are:
 - a) Causing or supporting schism in the Church by advocating doctrinal, moral, or philosophical beliefs contrary to the Scripture.
 - b) Persisting in a course of personal conduct that is contrary to the Scripture.
 - c) Slander, gossip, an accusatory spirit, abusiveness, or refusal to submit to the Board of Elders.
5. If discipline is warranted, the Church shall follow the disciplinary principles as prescribed in Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6:1-2, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 and Titus 3:10-11. Those who refuse to repent shall be placed on Church discipline by a vote of the Board of Elders, and the Church shall be notified of this action.
6. Those on Church discipline will be prohibited from partaking in communion, from a voice in Church meetings, and from giving a public testimony in the Church until and unless they repent.³⁷
7. Any member who has been placed on Church discipline may not request termination of membership. If they refuse to repent, they shall be removed from Church membership by a vote of the Board of Elders.³⁸
8. Any accusation of sin against an Elder shall be presented in person by two or more witnesses to the Board of Elders.
9. Any officer whose actions are worthy of discipline may be removed from office by a three-fourths vote of a quorum if the board of elders does not take proper disciplinary action. Officers being

³⁴ Matt. 18:15-17

³⁵ Gal. 6:1

³⁶ Galatians 6:1

³⁷ Titus 3:10-11

³⁸ Titus 3:10-11

voted on for such disciplinary action and their spouses may not vote. Such dismissal of an officer does not have to be ratified by the Board of Elders after congregational action.

10. Any person who is disciplined may not appeal to the membership or any court of law regarding their discipline or the public.

Article Six

CHURCH OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

Throughout the New Testament, principles of church leadership point to a central theme: plurality. The church is to be led by a plurality of godly leaders. By relying on consensual agreement of godly Elders and Pastors selected from the congregation, the church creates healthy checks-and-balances of leadership direction, financial accountability, spiritual guidance, and ministry implementation.³⁹

Mt. Lassen Community Church implements these biblical principles in its leadership structure. A strategy of biblically based policies and guidelines within its Elder board and ministry leaders guides ministry decisions and ensure that a healthy, God-honoring implementation of leadership and pastoral care is carried out. We look to the future with confidence, thanks to the servant leadership among MLCC's team of seasoned Christ followers.

Section 1: Church Officers

The officers of this Church shall be the Pastor, Elders, Deacons, and any other leaders selected and appointed by the active Elder Board and affirmed by the congregation. All who serve as Officers of the Church and those who serve on Church committees shall be members of this Church.

- A. The pastor and Board of Elders are responsible for leading the Church to proper function and as according to Jesus Christ's Church in Scripture. They have the responsibility to model and lead the congregation, its ministries and leadership to perform their biblical duties and Constitutional tasks. They will be expected to delegate appropriate responsibilities to other Church Officers to insure the work of the Church is done in a consistent manner.

The pastor is leader of shepherding or pastoral ministries in the Church. As such he works with the Elders, Deacons and the Church staff to: (1) lead the Church to carry out the mission and purpose of the Church, (2) the proclamation of the Gospel both inside and outside the Church, (3) to provide appropriate care and equipping for both Church members and persons in the community. The Senior Pastor is an Elder of the Church but a non-voting Elder.

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the Church whenever a vacancy occurs. The election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose. At least one week's public notice shall be given before a candidate for pastor shall be presented for consideration. A pastor search committee shall be elected by the existing Board of Elders after prayerful consideration of each individual and the group as a whole, ensuring that adequate representation of the congregation and its diversity is represented on the committee. The Elder Board shall draft specific ministry descriptions for pastors that should be agreed and affirmed by each member of the search committee. Adequate time should be given to the selection process and

³⁹ We are indebted to Willow Creek Community Church for much in Article Six
<http://www.willowcreek.org/governance>

sufficient numbers of prospective candidates interviewed to help the Church through the transition period.

- B. The pastor search committee will have the responsible for seeking the person that will fulfill the pastor's role for the congregation. The recommendation of the pastor search committee will constitute a nomination the Elder Board's consideration. Only if the Elder Board approves will the nomination be brought before the congregation. Election shall be by ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those present and voting (unless previous arrangements are made for absentee balloting) is required to call (elect) the pastor.

The individual called to fill the pastor's role shall serve until the relationship is terminated by their request or the Elders' request. The pastor shall preside at meetings of the Church unless another staff member or Church member has been designated to fill that role. If so designated the pastor may serve as moderator in all business meetings in keeping with the rules of order authorized in these bylaws.

The pastor may relinquish the office of pastor by giving at least two weeks' notice to the Church at the time of resignation.

The Elder Board may declare the office of pastor to be vacant. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose with at least one week's public notice given. Such meeting should take place only after the Church has followed the Matthew 18:15-17 principles and/or the Church has sought help through mediation. The meeting may be called upon the recommendation of a majority of the personnel committee and the Elders or by written petition signed by not less than one half of the active Church members. The moderator for this meeting shall be designated by the Elders present and elected by majority vote. The moderator for this meeting shall be someone other than the pastor. The vote to declare the office vacant shall be by secret ballot; an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present being necessary to declare the office vacant. Except in instances of gross misconduct by the pastor so excluded from office, the Church will compensate the pastor with not less than one twelfth of the pastor's annual compensation. The termination shall be immediate and the compensation shall be paid in not more than thirty days. (NOTE: a common guide would be to give the pastor one month for each year served as pastor unless other circumstances apply.)

- C. Other Church staff besides the Pastor shall be called and employed as the Elder Board determines the need for such positions. A job description shall be written when the need for a new ministerial or administrative position is determined. The Pastor may do the hiring of other Church staff but must present prospective candidates to the Elder Board for approval and hiring. At the time of resignation, at least two weeks' notice shall be given to the Church by any paid staff position. The Elder Board may vote to vacate the position upon the recommendation of the personnel committee. The personnel committee is to follow the same principles and process used to terminate a pastor. Such termination will be immediate and compensation conditions shall be the same as for the pastor, except that the amount provided shall be determined by the Elder Board and relate to the individual's annual compensation and length of employment. Such employment and termination of services shall be with the recommendation of the supervising staff member and, as appropriate, with the consultation of related leaders or committees of the Church.

- E. The Church shall elect Elder by ballot at regular business meetings of the Church. It should be the prayerful goal that there shall be one Elder and Deacon elected for assigned service for every twelve to fifteen families. Elders shall serve on a prospective board of each on a three-year rotation. Each year the assigned term of office of one third of the number of Elder and election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to their number as the Church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the Church may elect an Elder to fill the unexpired term. An Elder shall be eligible for reelection only after the lapse of at least one year off their board. There shall be no obligation to recognize as an active Elder or Deacon one who has fulfilled such position in another Church. An Elder or Deacon joining from another Church shall not be elected to serve until a member of this Church for one year.

F. Qualifications of Elders

- 1) Elders must meet the character and spiritual qualifications as outlined in Scripture verses that address the role of an Elder: 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1:5, 9; I Peter 5:1–4; Acts 20:28–31; James 5:14

a. First “C”—Character (1 Timothy 3:2–7 and Titus 1:6–9)

- **Above reproach**—Elders must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free from patterns of sin.
- **Husband of one wife**—Elders, if married, must be devoted spouses.
- **Temperate**—Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, and free from excesses.
- **Prudent**—Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
- **Respectable**—Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and honorable behavior.
- **Hospitable**—Elders must be unselfish with personal resources, willing to share blessings with others.
- **Able to teach**—Elders must be able to communicate truth and sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way.
- **Not addicted to wine**—Elders must be free from addictions and willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
- **Not pugnacious or quick-tempered**—Elders must be gentle, patient, and able to exercise self-control in difficult situations.
- **Uncontentious**—Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.
- **Free from the love of money**—Elders must not be stingy, greedy, or for sordid gain, or preoccupied with amassing material things.
- **Manage own household**—Elders must have a well-ordered household and a healthy family life.
- **Not a new convert/not a new believer**—Elders must not be new believers. They must have been a Christian long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of spirituality.

- **Good reputation with outsiders**—Elders must be well-respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.
- **Not self-willed**—Elders must not be stubborn, or prone to forcing their opinions on others or abusing authority. They must be servant-minded.
- **Loving what is good**—Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.
- **Just**—Elders must desire to be fair and impartial. Their judgments must be based on scriptural principles.
- **Devout**—Elders must be devoted Christ followers, seeking to be conformed to His image. They must be committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their spiritual walk.
- **Holding fast the faithful Word**—Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, and continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

b. Second “C”—Competence: Defined as specific, Holy Spirit-endowed gifts and abilities, combined with skills acquired through training and life experience.

c. Third “C”—Chemistry: The intangible quality of being able to “fit” within the existing team. The ability to blend into and enrich the current circle of community and relational harmony within the board.

d. Fourth “C”—Courage: The ability, when needed, to enter into difficult exchanges and defend the faith, the church, and individuals in ways that preserve and maintain the community. The ability to speak the truth in love without destructive results.

e. Fifth “C”—Calling: The ability to sense God’s calling on one’s life for a particular season of service to the body of Christ: “I think God is in this.”

- 2) Elders must have attended MLCC for at least **2** years.
- 3) Elders must be participating members of MLCC.
- 4) Elders must have participated in and generally led a ministry group or served in a volunteer role for at least **two** years, preferentially in a coaching or leadership role.
- 5) Elders must be known and approved for consideration by a staff member, a major MLCC leader, and/or a member of the Elder board.

G. Duties of Elders

1) Elders’ general overview:

- a. Carry the ultimate responsibility and authority to see that the church remains on a true biblical course; that its members are being appropriately shepherded, that the body is being fed through insightful and accurate biblical teaching, and that the life of the church is being well managed with the assistance of competent and godly leaders.

- b. Guard the body of Christ against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting biblical truth or continuing in a pattern of sinful behavior.
- c. Shepherd the church by being an example and role model.
- d. Care about the spiritual and physical well-being of members; pray regularly for the sick.
- e. Oversee all of MLCC's ministries and missions.

2) Elders' specific responsibilities and duties:

- a. Provide Spiritual Oversight
 - Assure spiritual & biblical growth and care in congregation, from cradle to grave
 - Defend Biblical truth & MLCC vision and Constitution. Confront false teaching and behavior contradictory to biblical truth and implement appropriate church discipline
 - Maintain the administration of Baptism and Communion as instituted by Christ
 - Review and evaluate teaching and curricula for biblical accuracy and consistency with MLCC values (weekend services, classes, and sub-ministry materials)
 - Implement and monitor compliance with board policy
 - Mandate ministry to the widows and distressed

- b. Shepherd the Flock
 - Assure spiritual & biblical growth and care in congregation, from cradle to grave
 - Participate (as needed) in the biblical process of conflict resolution outlined by Jesus in Matthew 18
 - Direct people into appropriate processes for guidance, assistance, and problem resolution
 - Respond to letters/phone calls from the church body, staff, or public

- c. Manage the Church
 - Affirm the annual MLCC budget
 - Encourage the senior pastor, his staff, MLCC ministry committees and volunteers
 - Admit/Manage/Remove senior leaders who require dismissal for cause
 - Conduct annual review of the senior pastor & staff
 - Delegate to qualified assistants, staff, and/or outside experts as needed
 - Delegate to qualified individuals/teams:
 - Subordinate Ministry teams/committees/boards/consultants
 - Staff & Conciliation Teams—oversees processes leading to conflict resolution

- Elder Response Teams—manages situations where people, particularly participating members, are experiencing significant relational difficulties or moral failure
- Prayer Team—anooints those who are sick with oil for healing purposes\

d. Pray for the Sick

- Be available on Sundays (particularly Communion Sundays) to pray for needy
- Affirm the work of the Prayer Team & Ministry
- In special circumstances, visit participating members and others who are sick (at home or in the hospital) for private counsel

3) Elders' time requirements:

- Elder's three-year term (mandatory single year absence in between consecutive terms) Under extraordinary circumstances an Elder's term can be extended by majority vote by the Church membership at the annual meeting.
- Elders' meeting—one evening per month.
- Elders' retreat—The Elder's plan for a retreat one weekend per year
- Four to six hours (on average) per month for review of Elder board materials, policies, correspondence, meeting preparation, and team conference calls.
- In addition to the regular Elders' meeting, committee responsibilities may require additional hours each month, depending on the committee's requirements.
- If serious ministry issues arise that require immediate attention by the Elder board, additional hours may be required outside of regular Elders' meetings.
- Regular Sunday Church attendance & ministry availability
- Attendance of MLCC's Annual Leadership Summit Meeting (January), Annual Congregational Meeting (June) and special called meetings by Elders/Pastor.

4) Organization of Deacons—A proper standing and faith as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

- MLCC Deacons are the Leaders of ministries at MLCC Focused on meeting physical needs of members, facilities, gatherings, community outreach, etc. These teams might include, but aren't limited to: Greeters, Providing meals, Maintenance, Safety, Communion, etc. Teams might be ongoing ministries, or a temporary group assembled by the Elders for a task.
- Term limits will not be set on Team Leaders (Deacons") in general, unless the Elders deem a particular team would benefit from a regular: changing of the guard".
- Each Team will report to a point person designated by the Elders, to keep the Elder Board updated on the needs and health of the ministry. The point person might possibly be an Elder, volunteer representative, or staff member.
- Leaders of the teams that minister to spiritual needs through discipleship and teaching (as opposed to the areas of physical service) will be accountable directly to the Elders. Examples of such teams would be, Children's Ministry, Men's and Women's Ministry, Widows Ministry, Small Group Ministries, etc.

5) The Church shall elect annually a moderator as its presiding officer. In the absence of the moderator, the chairman of Elders shall preside; or in the absence of both, the clerk shall call the Church to order and preside for the election of an acting moderator.

- K. The Church shall elect annually a clerk as its clerical officer. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the Church, except as otherwise provided in these by-laws. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a register of names of members, with dates of admission, dismissals, death or erasure, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall issues of dismissal approved by the Church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give required notice of all meetings where notice is necessary, as indicated in these by-laws. The Church may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to a Church secretary or ministry assistant who will assist the elected clerk. All Church records are Church property and shall be kept in the Church office when an office is maintained.
- L. The Church shall elect annually a Church Treasurer as its financial officer or appoint the Treasurer among the Deacons. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of invoices or vouchers approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money or things of value paid or given to the Church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to provide to the Church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements during the period between business meetings. The Treasurer's report and records shall be audited annually by an audit committee or public accountant. The Treasurer shall be bonded, the Church paying for the bond. Upon completion of the audit at the end of the fiscal year and its acceptance and approval by the Church, the records shall be delivered by the Treasurer to the Church clerk, who shall Keep and preserve the account as a part of the permanent records of the Church.

Section 2: Church Committees

The Elder Board shall determine the number and types of committees that are needed to fulfill the mission of the Church. Committees of the Church may include but are not limited to: Personnel Committee, Mt. Lassen Theatre Board; Missions & Outreach Committee; Christian Education Committee; and any other regular and special committees as the Church shall authorize. It is preferred that each committee shall have an active Elder and Deacon serving on it so they can be a liaison to their perspective boards. If necessary, an Elder or Deacon can attend the committee meetings to act as a liaison from their boards while not serving on the committee board.

All active committee members must be members of MLCC. Standing committees and their members shall serve a one year and be renewed insofar of their good standing, faithful service and the approval of the Elder Board. Though the Chair of each committee can recommend new members for that committee, approval of inclusion shall only be official after Elder Board approval or otherwise specified in these by-laws. Committee members shall serve on a three-year rotation basis with one-third elected each year.

ARTICLE SEVEN **CHURCH FINANCES**

Section 1: Budget

The Elder Board, in consultation with the pastors, and other Church leaders, shall prepare, oversee and monitor an annual, inclusive budget, indicating by item and ministry the amount needed for local and other expenses. The Treasurer, and Financial Secretary shall administrate the budget during any fiscal year.

Section 2: Accounting Procedures

All funds written to and received by MLCC for any reason and all purposes shall pass through the Church Treasurer and Financial Secretary, and be properly recorded. Those who have responsibility that involves actual handling of funds shall be bonded, the Church paying the bond. A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the Elder and Deacon Boards. The Treasurer or financial secretary shall provide an accurate accounting at the end of each year to those members who have contributed during the year. An biannual audit shall be performed by a reputable and professional CPA firm, and accreditation among the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) or their equivalent.

Section 3: Seven Standards of Responsible Stewardship

MLCC will obtain and maintain ECFA's *Seven Standards of Responsible Stewardship*TM, which are drawn from Scripture and are fundamental to operating with integrity.⁴⁰

Standard 1 - Doctrinal Issues

Every organization shall subscribe to a written statement of faith clearly affirming a commitment to the evangelical Christian faith or shall otherwise demonstrate such commitment, and shall operate in accordance with biblical truths and practices.

Standard 2 - Governance

Every organization shall be governed by a responsible board of not less than five individuals, a majority of whom shall be independent, who shall meet at least semiannually to establish policy and review its accomplishments.

Standard 3 - Financial Oversight

Every organization shall prepare complete and accurate financial statements. The board or a committee consisting of a majority of independent members shall approve the engagement of an independent certified public accountant, review the annual financial statements, and maintain

⁴⁰ <http://www.ecfa.org/Content/Standards>

appropriate communication with the independent certified public accountant. The board shall be apprised of any material weaknesses in internal control or other significant risks.

Standard 4 - Use of Resources and Compliance with Laws

Every organization shall exercise the appropriate management and controls necessary to provide reasonable assurance that all of the organization's operations are carried out and resources are used in a responsible manner and in conformity with applicable laws and regulations, such conformity taking into account biblical mandates.

Standard 5 - Transparency

Every organization shall provide a copy of its current financial statements upon written request and shall provide other disclosures as the law may require. The financial statements required to comply with Standard 3 must be disclosed under this standard.

An organization must provide a report, upon written request, including financial information on any specific project for which it has sought or is seeking gifts.

Standard 6 - Compensation-Setting and Related-Party Transactions

Every organization shall set compensation of its top leader and address related-party transactions in a manner that demonstrates integrity and propriety in conformity with ECFA's Policy for Excellence in Compensation-Setting and Related-Party Transactions.

Standard 7 - Stewardship of Charitable Gifts

7.1 Truthfulness in Communications

In securing charitable gifts, all representations of fact, descriptions of the financial condition of the organization, or narratives about events must be current, complete, and accurate. References to past activities or events must be appropriately dated. There must be no material omissions or exaggerations of fact, use of misleading photographs, or any other communication which would tend to create a false impression or misunderstanding.

7.2 Giver Expectations and Intent

Statements made about the use of gifts by an organization in its charitable gift appeals must be honored. A giver's intent relates both to what was communicated in the appeal and to any instructions accompanying the gift, if accepted by the organization. Appeals for charitable gifts must not create unrealistic expectations of what a gift will actually accomplish.

7.3 Charitable Gift Communication

Every organization shall provide givers appropriate and timely gift acknowledgments.

7.4 Acting in the Best Interest of Givers

When dealing with persons regarding commitments on major gifts, an organization's representatives must seek to guide and advise givers to adequately consider their broad interests.

An organization must make every effort to avoid knowingly accepting a gift from, or entering into a contract with, a giver that would place a hardship on the giver or place the giver's future well-being in jeopardy.

7.5 Percentage Compensation for Securing Charitable Gifts

An organization may not base compensation of outside stewardship resource consultants or its own staff directly or indirectly on a percentage of charitable contributions raised.

ARTICLE EIGHT **CHURCH POLICY MANUAL**

The Elder Board shall develop and keep updated a Church Policy Manual. This manual should include Church policies and procedures, organizational charts indicating lines of responsibility to be used in the administration of the Church. This manual may be developed by a special committee or by the personnel committee as directed by the Elder Board. The manual shall be maintained in the Church office by the Church secretary and made available for use by any member of the Church. The Elder Board, personnel committee or a special committee formed for that purpose, shall review the manual at least annually, and shall recommend changes for the Elder Board to consider at any regular or a called business meeting for that purpose. Any Church member or Church ministry may recommend suggested changes in the manual by written request to the Elder Board. Additions, revisions, or deletions of Church policies require: (1) the recommendation from an official Church member or ministry to whose areas of assignment the procedures or policies relate, (2) the approval by the Elder Board, and (3) Majority approval by the Church members at a called meeting.

We are grateful and indebted to the following for MLCC's Constitution & By-Laws

<http://www.ecfa.org/>

<http://go.ecfa.org/resources/document/ecfa-statement-faith>

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/04/Official-Constitution-and-Bylaws-2013.pdf>

<http://www.newchurches.com/legal-steps/>

<http://texasbaptists.org/files/2010/10/Developing-a-constitution.pdf>

<http://www.willowcreek.org/governance>

<http://www.trinityonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/TRINITY-CONSTITUTION-7-12-10.pdf>

http://www.rpcerie.org/PDFs/EPC_Book_of_Order_2012-2013.pdf

<http://www.shadowmountain.org/default.aspx?page=4361>