

**Constitution/Bylaws  
of  
Bay Farm Community Church  
Alameda, California**

Approved by the BFCC membership on December 18, 2011

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# Preamble

*Bay Farm Community Church's Constitution and Bylaws has five purposes:*

First, it is a public record clearly stating the name, purpose, affiliation, Articles of Faith, government, policies and the procedures of this church.

Second, it acts as the first line of defense against those who want to harm this sacred institution. This document systematically identifies what this church believes to be true according to its interpretation of the Word of God.

Third, it is a practical guide to aid the leadership of this church as they govern the church in a decent and orderly manner.

Fourth, it is a liberating policy that insures the freedom and the structure that is needed in this church for each church member to exercise their spiritual gifts and God given talents for the glory of God.

Fifth, this constitution is a guide for members to fully understand the privileges of membership, as well as the responsibilities and commitments incurred upon being accepted as a participating member in the church. The act of applying for membership should not be taken lightly, but only after serious and prayerful reflection.

This church endeavors to be a church as described, established and mandated by the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Therefore, this constitution is not meant to supersede the Word of God, it is simply a systematic review of the truths found in the Bible concerning the purpose, governance and operation of the local church. When a conflict or ambiguity exists with regard to this document, deference is to be given to the Bible to resolve the conflict or ambiguity. With this document we shall, by God's grace, endeavor to properly practice New Testament Christianity.

## Section One: Name

The name registered in the State of California for this organization is: Bay Farm Community Church. (Bay Farm Community Church will also be referred to as BFCC in this document).

## Section Two: Affiliation

Bay Farm Community Church is an independent community church subject only to Jesus Christ as the Head of the church, which operates as a 501c3 tax exempt organization meant to engage in religious, charitable and educational purposes. Bay Farm Community Church partners with Converge (formerly known as the Baptist General Conference). Converge is a movement of churches working together to strengthen and start more churches. See: [www.convergeworldwide.org](http://www.convergeworldwide.org)

## Section Three: History

In September 1988, Pastor Andrew Acquistapace and approximately 50 people moved their membership from Lakeside Baptist Church in Oakland to start Bay Farm Christian Fellowship in Alameda. Funds to build a new church facility in Harbor Bay Landing were provided through the sale of rental properties in downtown Oakland, as well as surplus cash reserves at Lakeside. The church continued to grow in size, and Pastor Jim Meyer was hired as an Assistant Pastor in 1999 and was subsequently called to the senior pastor position in 2000. As Bay Farm Community Church became part of the fabric of Alameda and the number of members increased, the facility was expanded to include a spacious new sanctuary in 2006. In 2011, the church called its current Lead Pastor John Willoughby.

## Section Four: Purpose Statement

Bay Farm Community Church exists to help people **know** Jesus, **grow** to be like Jesus, and **show** Jesus to the world.

*We fulfill our purpose through:*

- Relevant worship services and dynamic outreach events that help unbelievers get to **know** Christ and say "Yes!" to Him.
- Strategic discipleship programs and small groups that **grow** Christians to spiritual maturity.
- Local and global opportunities for Christians to **show** Jesus to the lost world.

## Section Five: Core Values

*At BFCC, we value...*

**Christ** – Jesus is our Lord and Savior and is worthy of our praise and devotion. We are committed to becoming like Christ and fulfilling His mission!

**Obedience to the Bible** – We trust the Bible with our lives because it is trustworthy. We are convinced that it alone is the living Word of God that has the power to transform lives.

**Relevance** – We are committed to relating to our culture while remaining true to the Scriptures. It is a balance that allows us to present the Gospel in such a way that reaches the heart of our community.

**Excellence** – We are convinced that excellence should permeate everything we do for there is no reward for squandered potential, half-hearted effort or lukewarm faith. God deserves our very best!

**Variety** – God has made us unique so we can uniquely make a difference in our world. We believe lots of different people in one church focused on one purpose greatly glorifies God.

**All people** – Because God sent His only Son Jesus to die for all people so that all people can be saved, we strive to get the Gospel to every people group in the world.

**Life change** – A ministry is only effective if it produces life change. We believe more lives are changed in small groups where people can intimately study the Bible, pray and fellowship. Big growth occurs in small groups!

**Unity** - We promote godly confrontation, forgiveness and restoration because unity in the church honors God and reflects His love.

**Evangelism** – Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ is supposed to be a normal, natural part of every Christian's life. We passionately share the Good News because it is good news!

**Spiritual gifts** – We are convinced that Christians must discover, develop and deploy their spiritual gifts before they can do fruitful and fulfilling ministry.

# Section Six: Articles of Faith

## Article 1: *The Scriptures*

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments as originally written were verbally inspired (God-breathed) and penned by Spirit-controlled men. The Bible is without error, infallible and is the final authority in faith and life. We believe the Word of God to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried. Ps. 19:7-11; Pro. 30:5-6; Matt. 5:18; John 10:34-35; Rom. 15:4; II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Pet. 1:19-21; Rev. 22: 18-19.

## Article 2: *The Trinity*

We believe there is one living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love. We believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in all the divine attributes and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of creation and redemption. Ex. 20:2,3; I Cor. 8:6; II Cor. 13:14; Rev. 4:11; Matt. 28:18-20; I John 5:7.

## Article 3: *God the Father*

We believe God the Father is an infinite, eternal, all powerful, all knowing Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. Gen. 1:1; Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 46:9; Romans 11:33; Ephesians 4:6; I Timothy 1:17; Revelation 19:6.

## Article 4: *God the Son – Jesus Christ*

We believe God chose His only begotten Son to be the mediator between God and man, the prophet, priest and King, head and Savior of the church, the heir of all things, and the judge of the world. Jesus being equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit is infinite, eternal, all powerful and all knowing. He also made the world and upholds and governs all things.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can ever be born of woman. Jesus was born with two perfect and yet distinct natures, human and divine, inseparably joined together in one person without conversion, composition, or confusion, yet one and therefore He is both the Son of God and God the Son.

Jesus lived a life of absolute sinlessness and in His death made a full and sacrificial atonement for our sins, dying not as a martyr, but as a voluntary substitute in the sinner's place. We believe Jesus rose bodily on the third day and ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest, interceding and preparing a place for us. I Pet. 1:19, 20; I Tim. 2:5; Acts 1:9-11; 3:22; Psa. 2:6; Luke 1:33, 35; 24:2-6, 39, 51; Col. 1:16-18; John 1:14, 34; 5:22, 27; 20:27; Gal. 4:4; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; 28:6, 7; Rom. 8:3; 9:5; I Cor. 15:4; Mark 16:6, 19; Rev. 3:21; Eph. 1:20-23; I John 2:1; Heb. 2:14,16-18; 4:15; 5:5, 6, 9, 10; 4:14-16; 8:6; 12:2.

## **Article 5: *God the Holy Spirit***

The Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son, and is infinite, eternal, all powerful and all knowing. He was active in the creation and in His relation to the unbelieving world. He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and He bears witness to the Truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony. The Holy Spirit is the agent in the New Birth who seals, endues, guides, teaches, comforts, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer conform to the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit's primary ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the early church He divinely enabled men to perform miracles, signs and revelatory gifts such as prophecy and tongues; that these revelatory gifts gradually ceased as the New Testament was completed; and that today He gives believers ministry gifts such as prophecy (declaring truth from the Bible), teaching, faith, giving, leadership, and others. I Cor. 12-14; Heb. 2:4; 9:14; I Pet. 4:10; Eph. 4; John 1:33; 3:5, 6; 14:16-17, 26; 16:8-15; Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; 24:49; Gen. 1:1-3; Acts 5:30-32; 11:16; Eph. 1:13, 14; Mark 1:8; Rom. 8:14-16, 26, 27; 12.

## **Article 6: *Angels***

We believe in the existence of angels who were created by God to serve Him and bring honor and glory to His name. Angels who have chosen to follow God are ministers for Him on behalf of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Sadly, some angels chose to follow Satan when he rose up against God. They are now called demons and are presently functioning in Satan's counterfeit system as rulers of darkness, to be resisted by the believer through the armor provided by God. Isaiah 14:12-15; Matthew 17:18; Eph. 2:2; 6:11-13; Col. 1:16; I Timothy 4:1-2; I Peter 1:12; 5:8-9; Jude 6; Rev. 19:16-20; 20:10; II Thess. 2:9-10; Heb. 1:14.

## **Article 7: *Satan and His Demons***

We believe that angels were created by God to worship, serve and honor Him. But Lucifer, a high ranking angel, chose to rebel against God. With great pride he desired to be equal and even above Almighty God and was thrown from heaven with a great host of other angels. Lucifer is now referred to as Satan and the fallen angels are now referred to as demons.

We believe Satan, the "god of this age" and "the prince of the power of the air," is currently the power of all darkness and evil. We hold him to be man's great tempter, the enemy of God, the accuser of the saints, the author of all false religions and the chief power behind the present apostasy in our world. He is the lord of the antichrist and the author of all the followers of darkness who are destined for final defeat at the hand of God's Son, and for the judgment of the eternal Lake of Fire, a place prepared for Satan and his angels. Isa. 14:12-15; Psa. 34:7; Eph. 2:2; Heb. 2:14; I Peter 5:8; II Pet. 2:4; Matt. 4:1-11; II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:7-9; 19:16-20; 20:10; Zech. 3:1-2; Heb. 1:14.

## **Article 8: *Creation***

We believe in the Genesis account of creation. We believe that account is to be accepted literally, not allegorically or figuratively. Also, we believe mankind was created directly in God's own image and after His own likeness. Mankind's creation was not a matter of evolution or evolutionary change of species, or development through periods of time from lower to higher form. In addition, we believe that all animal and vegetable life was also created directly by God, for His established law was that they should bring forth only "after their own kind." Genesis 1; John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 10:6.

## **Article 9: *Man and His Fall***

We accept the Genesis account of the creation of man. Man came by direct creation of God and not from any previously existing form of life, and not by evolution. We believe that people were created in innocence under the law of their maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from their sinless state. In consequence, all mankind are now sinners by nature and by choice, and therefore under just condemnation to eternal judgment and separation from God in a place called hell without defense or excuse. Gen. 1:27; 3:1-6, 24; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 1:18, 32; 3:10-23; 5:12-19.

## **Article 10: *The Atonement for Sin***

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace. Jesus, God's own Son, submitted to the Father and freely took upon human nature, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins. Jesus' atonement consisted not in setting up an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, "the just dying for the unjust." "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed." Jesus is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. II Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 7:25; 12:2; I Peter 2:24; 3:18; I John 2:2.

## **Article 11: *Salvation***

We believe the Scriptures teach that Jesus died for the whole world and that salvation of sinners is divinely initiated, wholly of grace, and accomplished only through the work of Christ. We believe that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent wickedness and voluntary rejection of the Gospel.

We believe that repentance and faith are solemn obligations and inseparable graces, brought about in our souls by the Spirit of God. Being deeply convicted of our guilt, helplessness and the judgment to come, and realizing the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with genuine repentance, confessing our sin and receiving the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior. When a person receives Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, he is born again, regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit and becomes the recipient of a new nature.

We believe that Christ secures salvation to all who put their trust in Him. Romans 3:24 states, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Our justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of Christ's righteousness. It is not given to us for any works of righteousness, which we have done, but solely through faith in our Redeemer. Jesus Christ's righteousness is given to us. II Corinthians 5:21 states, "For God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Eph. 2:8; Acts 13:39; 15:11; 16:31; John 3:16; 10:28, 29; Matt. 18:11; Phil. 1:6; 2:7; Heb. 2:14; Isa. 53:4-7; I John 4:10; I Cor. 15:3; Isa. 53:11; Zech. 13:1; Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:1, 9; 8:1, 35-39; Jude 1.

### **Article 12: *The New Birth***

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again and that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus. Salvation is instantaneous and not a process. In the new birth, the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God.

The new birth is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, not by culture, character, nor by the will or deeds of human beings, but solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth. Evidence of the new birth appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith, the newness of life and our voluntary obedience to the Word of God. John 3:3; 6-8; II Cor. 5:17, 19; I John 5:1; Acts 16:30-33; II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13.

### **Article 13: *Eternal Security***

We believe all people who have exercised personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are completely pardoned and justified (declared righteous) and in possession of eternal life, which is eternally secure. We believe that all people who are truly born again are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ.

The new birth is a one-time event just as physical birth is a one-time event. Eternal life is the result of being born into an eternal family. Eternal security is not based on how a person acts or feels towards God, but the doctrine of eternal security is founded on justification. When a person trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ to save him he is justified by the blood of Christ, and saved from the wrath of God through Christ (Romans 1:4; 4:25; 5:8-10). We are saved by God's grace, not by our works; therefore we cannot possibly keep our salvation by our works. II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:6; 8:35-39; 16:25; Phil. 1:6; II Tim. 1:12; Jude 24; John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:40; 10:28-29; 11:25-26; 12:46; Titus 1:2; Eph. 1:7; Col 1:14, 21-23; I Peter 1:5, 18-23; 2:24; II Peter 1:4; I John 5:11-13.

### **Article 14: *The Eternal State of the Saved and Unsaved***

We believe there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. People who trust in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior are justified (declared righteous) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, sanctified by the Spirit of our God and are truly righteous in His esteem. But everyone who continues in sin and unbelief are in God's sight wicked and remain under the curse of sin.

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men. The souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord where they consciously await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul and new body are reunited forever glorified with the Lord in Heaven. The souls of the unbelievers after death remain in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when with spirit, soul, and body reunited, they shall appear before the Great White Throne Judgment. After the Great White Throne Judgment all unbelievers will be cast in the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment for their sins. The chief sin being rejecting Jesus as their personal Savior. Mal. 3:18; Gen. 18:23; Matt. 25:34-41, 46; Luke 6:25; 16:19-26; John 5:28-29; 8:21; II Cor. 5:8-10; Phil. 1:23; I John 5:19; Rom. 6:23.

#### **Article 15: *The Local Church***

We believe that a local church is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by a membership commitment and the fellowship of the Gospel. They observe the ordinances of Christ, govern by His laws and exercise the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word.

There are two offices in the local church – elders (also called bishops or pastors) and deacons (I Timothy 3). The ultimate mission of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission as given by our Lord in Matthew 28:18-20.

We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self government, free from interference of any hierarchy, of any individuals or organizations, and that the one and only superintendent is Christ, through the Holy Spirit. We do believe it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel. But each local church has the right to judge the measure and method of its cooperation with other churches. On all matters of membership, policy, government, discipline and benevolence, the will of the local church is final. Acts 2:41, 42; 20:17-28; I Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:11; 5:23, 24; Col. 1:18.

#### **Article 16: *Baptism and the Lord's Supper***

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, done in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We hold that baptism is one of the two ordinances that Christ gave to the local church. Thus, it should be performed under the authority of the local church. Likewise, baptism should only be performed on a person who has given a clear testimony of faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior Jesus Christ. As Christ died, was buried and rose again, Christian baptism pictures the believer's death, burial and resurrection to a new life in Christ.

We believe the Lord's Supper is the second ordinance given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ. Communion is the commemoration of Christ's death and a celebration of His risen life. The bread represents His body that was broken for us, and the grape juice represents His blood that was shed for us. Believers, before partaking of these elements, are called upon to examine themselves, "for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

We believe the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were given by the Lord to the local church and are to be observed only under its authority. We are commanded to do these ordinances till our Lord returns. Acts 8:36-39; John 3:23; Rom. 6:3-5; Matt. 3:16; 28:19-20; Col. 2:12; I Cor. 11:23-28.

### **Article 17: *Giving***

We believe God is the source of all blessings - physical and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. God's method of financing His earthly work, which includes the work of the local church, its ministries, pastors, and its mission, is by the offerings of His people. Thus we believe that every Christian, as a steward of God, is obligated to support his local church financially, as God has blessed them. We understand that God is pleased when His children rally together and joyfully give to His church, its ministers and its ministries, "for God loves a cheerful giver." Gen. 14:20; Prov. 3:9-10; Acts 2:45; 4:34-37; 11:27-30; Gal. 6:6; Eph.4:28; I John3:17; I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 8:1-9:7; 9:6-7; I Tim. 5:17-18.

### **Article 18: *Missions***

We believe this church shall be missionary in spirit and practice, contributing to the support of missions home and abroad. Support for missionaries or mission projects shall be upon recommendation of the Missions Committee and upon approval by the Elder Board. We believe that the command to give the Gospel to the world is clear and unmistakable and the Great Commission was given to every Christian and local church. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; John 20:21; Rom. 10:13-15.

### **Article 19: *The Body of Christ***

We believe the Scriptures teach that the "Church which is His body" is the entire company of believers in Christ. I Cor. 12:13, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12; Hebrews 12:23.

### **Article 20: *Marriage***

We believe that the home was the first institution God provided for man; that marriage is a sacred relationship between one man and one woman for life. Scripture teaches that Christians should only marry Christians. We believe that God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Gen. 2: 18-24; Mark 10:9; Mal. 2:14-16; Rom. 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:2; Eph. 5:22-23; Matt. 19:1-9.

### **Article 21: *Human Sexuality***

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and woman. We also believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. Gen. 2:24; 19:5,13; 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; I Cor. 5:1; 6:9; I Thess. 4:1-8; Heb.13:4.

## **Article 22: *Sanctity of Human Life***

We believe that all human life is sacred from fertilization throughout the entire natural human life; that human beings are created in God's image and, as such are to be protected; that the weak, vulnerable, infirm, handicapped, pre-born, and needy deserve our respect and our care. Gen. 1:26; 9:6; Ps.51:5; 82:3-4; 139:13-16; Jer. 1:5; Lk. 1:41.

## **Article 23: *Civil Government***

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society. Governing officials are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, except in things opposed to the will and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and coming King of the Kings. Rom. 13:1-7; II Sam. 22:3; Exodus 18:21, 22; Matt. 10:28; 22:21; 23:10; Acts 4:19-20; 5:27-29; 23:5; Dan. 3:17-18; Titus 3:1.

## **Article 24: *Future Events***

We believe in the "Blessed Hope," the personal, imminent appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to rapture all believers of the Church before the Tribulation Period. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up (Latin word for caught up is "raptured") together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16-17). I Cor. 15:51-52; II Thess. 2:1-2; Titus 2:13; I John 3:2. We believe that every saved person of the Church Age will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ to be judged by the Lord in regard to his service and receive rewards according to his works. Matt. 6:2-4; Rom. 14:10; I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10.

We believe that the Tribulation Period and the Battle of Armageddon will culminate in the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish a physical, earthly, millennial reign. Christ will literally rule on the earth from the throne of David for a thousand years. At the close of the millennium Satan will be loosed, the nations will revolt, and Satan will be eternally cast into the Lake of Fire.

We believe the Great White Throne Judgment will follow the Millennium period and will be a final judgment on unbelievers. After the unbelievers are judged and their names are not found written in the Book of Life they will be cast into the Lake of Fire - which is the second death. The righteous will worship and serve God forever. Matt. 22:8-14; 24; John 14; I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:20-53; Phil. 3:20-21; II Cor. 5:10; Ezek. 14-21; 28; Dan. 7-12; Rev. 6; Zech.14; Acts 1:11; 2:29-36; II Thess. 1:6-12; Mark 13; Isa. 11; Rev. 12-22; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32, 33; 21.

## Section Seven: Government

The New Testament clearly states that Jesus, the head of the church, gives authority for the leadership of the church to a group of godly men called “elders” who are affirmed by the church and accountable to God. Acts 14:23, 15:6, 16:4, 20:17, 1 Tim 5:17, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1, Philippians 1:1, Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2.

### Description of Elders:

The church’s leaders are known by three titles in the New Testament, each of which reveals a separate aspect of their function.

- They are first called “**elders.**” An elder (Greek “presbuteros”) is a godly leader, whose wisdom and maturity are respected by God’s people.
- Next, these are men who give oversight. That is, they are “**overseers**” (Greek “episkapos”). An overseer is a person who is a good manager of resources and guardian of people.
- Finally, these leaders are called “shepherds,” which is also translated as “**pastors**” (Greek “Poimain”). This word refers to the role of caring for and leading the flock.

All three titles are used in 1 Peter 5:1-2, “Therefore, I exhort the **elders** (Greek “presbuteros”) among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** (Greek “Poimain”) the flock of God among you, exercising **oversight** (Greek “episkapos”) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness.”

### Basically, an elder’s assignment falls into four major categories:

First, these men are given both the responsibility and authority to skillfully and lovingly **lead the church** (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17). Elders are God’s stewards (Titus 1:7), or household managers. A steward is officially responsible to oversee his master’s servants, property, and his finances. Elders are responsible to God for the local church. They are to lead in practical matters (Acts 6:1-6; 11:29-30). They are to lead in matters of doctrine (Acts 15; 16:4). They are also to guide in matters of discipline and character (Heb. 13:17).

Second, they are to **feed the church** (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Titus 1:9), offering accurate and insightful teaching of the Scripture.

Third, they are to **care for the church** (James 5:14-15; Acts 20:35; Heb. 13:17). This care is shown in the love, concern, prayers, ministry and adept management of church resources.

Finally, they are to **protect the church.** A major part of the elder’s work is to protect the local church from false teachers, from harmful influences and wrong beliefs (1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 15:6; 20:17-31; Titus 1:5-9).

Elders do not form a separate “clergy class” of Christians. They are brothers with the people, always seeking God’s best for the members of the church. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; II Cor. 8:19).

Men who choose to be an elder must meet specific moral and spiritual qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-7). They must be publicly installed into office (I Tim. 5:22; Acts 14:23). They must be motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do their work (Acts 20:28).

## Qualifications for Elders

*The man must...*

- Be a participating member of Bay Farm Community Church.
- Understand and be committed to BFCC’s purpose statement, core values and Articles of Faith.
- Earnestly desire the office of elder and exhibit the character qualities in 1st Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. *These qualities are:*

*Above reproach:* Elders must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free from patterns of sin.

*The husband of one wife:* Elders, if married, must be devoted husbands.

*Temperate:* Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.

*Prudent:* Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgments, 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 their personal resources. They must be 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 quick to temper:* Elders must be gentle, patient, and able to exercise self-control in difficult situations.

*Not contentious:* Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.

*Free from the love of money:* Elders must not be stingy, greedy, out 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:* Elders must be mature believers. They must have been Christians for long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of their spirituality.

*Good reputation:* Elders must be well-respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.

*Not self-willed:* Elders must not be stubborn, prone to false opinions of others, or abuse authority. They must be servants.

*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 principle.

*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 own walk.

*Holding fast the Word:* Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, and continually seek to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

## **Duties of Elders**

The Elder Board oversees all the spiritual and administrative activities of the church, unless otherwise reserved to the church body elsewhere in this constitution. The Elder Board is ultimately responsible for the ministries of the church, visiting members, caring and praying for the sick, preparing the ordinances, and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.

- Elders model Christ-like behavior. They must live a life worthy of imitation. 1 Peter 5:3; Hebrews 13:7, 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12.
- Elders maintain and guard doctrinal purity. They ensure that the church remains on a true course Biblically. Acts 15:2-11; 20:29-31; Titus 1:9-16.
- Elders discipline unruly church members. They maintain the peace and purity of the church. They guard the body against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting Biblical truth or who are continuing in patterns of sinful behavior. They defend the church's purpose, core values, Articles of Faith and its staff.
- Elders ensure the body is being fed through insightful and accurate Biblical teachings. 1 Timothy 3:2; 4:13; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:7; Galatians 6:6.
- Elders review and propose amendments to the Constitution as needed to the membership.
- Elders supervise all the legal and fiscal affairs of the church. The exceptions being:
  - a. The Elder Board shall not encumber the church with loan, transfer, sale or purchase of real estate (land) without the membership's approval (See Voting Section).
  - b. The Elder Board shall not enjoin the church to any organization without the membership's approval (See Voting Section).

- Elders keep accurate financial records for the church.
- Elders approve the expenditures of the budget.
- Elders maintain the membership rolls.
- Elders hire, oversee and terminate all paid staff.
- Elders approve all potential elders, deacons and church staff.
- Elders appoint special committees to carry out activities of Bay Farm Community Church.
- Elders establish qualifications for staff and volunteer positions, set staff policies and other church policies as necessary.
- Elders appoint a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. (Neither the Senior Pastor nor a staff pastor can hold any of these positions).
- Elders call, advertise and oversee all Church Meetings.

## **Selection of Elders:**

*The steps for selecting an elder are:*

1. A man should express his desire to become an elder to the Elder Board (I Timothy 3:1).
2. The candidate must complete and submit an Elder Questionnaire to the Elder Board.
3. The Elder Board should examine the potential elder's calling and qualifications. The appointment of a man to serve as an elder is a solemn and serious matter (I Tim. 5:21-22). Therefore, the Elder Board shall earnestly, without any haste, bias or partiality, seek God's will with regard to the potential elder's appointment to the Elder Board.
4. If the Elder Board agrees with the potential elder that he is truly called and he meets the biblical qualifications then the Elder Board shall recommend him to the church body to be affirmed as an elder.
5. If the affirmation vote is favorable (See Voting Section) then the new elder is brought before the congregation where the elders lay hands on him, and pray for his new ministry of overseeing the flock of God (I Tim. 5:17-25).

## **Term for Elders**

Each Elder, upon appointment, shall be asked for a three-year commitment, subject to review, recommitment, and reaffirmation by the Elder Board. The only exception is the Lead Pastor whose term is indefinite.

*An elder's service may be discontinued by:*

1. His own decision.

2. By the unanimous decision of the other elders. An elder can be removed from office if he becomes incapacitated or spiritually unqualified.
3. By a no confidence vote by participating members who are qualified to vote at a special church meeting called for that particular purpose (See Voting Section).

Church members have the right to rebuke an elder due to a continuing sin in his life, based upon the procedure established in I Tim. 5:19-20 and Matt. 18:15-17. Church members also have the right to remove an elder from office at a Special Church Meeting. (See Voting Section)

## **Number of Elders**

Although the Bible does not direct the church to have a certain number of elders, BFFC desires to have a minimum of four Elders to oversee the church.

## **Deacons**

While Scripture indicates that Elders bear the ultimate responsibility for the spiritual watch-care of the church, Deacons generally function in areas of service. The role of a Deacon, as Acts 6:1-7, clearly states, was that of waiting on tables and the distribution of food to the widows in the Jerusalem church. (The root word “diako” from which “diakonos” is derived means “to run errands”). Seven spiritual men of good character were elected, not by the apostles, but by the congregation to look after that business. This was to free the pastors from hands-on tasks so they could better attend to their responsibilities of studying, preaching/teaching and overseeing the flock of God (Acts 4:4; 20:28).

The ministry of a Deacon is a leadership position that is available to both men and women. Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the congregation’s physical welfare. Deacons have the honor of modeling, for the local church and the lost world, God’s compassion, kindness, mercy, and love. As the church compassionately cares for people’s needs, the world sees a visible display of Christ’s love, which will draw people to the Savior. Deacons are to be an example of commitment, unity and harmony in their service.

## **Duties of Deacons**

The Deacons are to effectively and carefully administer the Church’s charitable activities. They are the collectors of funds, the distributors of relief, and agents of mercy. They help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the elderly, the homeless, the shut-in, and the disabled. They comfort, protect and encourage people. Although they do in many ways meet spiritual needs of those whom they serve, their primary service is related to physical needs.

- Deacons service the physical needs of the membership exhibiting the love and compassion of Christ.
- Deacons give specific attention to widows and widowers, the needy and the aged.

- Deacons collect and administrate the church's benevolence fund.
- Deacons assist the Elder Board in the preparation and serving of the Lord's Supper and aid people during Baptism.
- Deacons help the Elder Board where needed.

## Qualifications for Deacons

*The man or woman must...*

- Be a participating member of Bay Farm Community Church.
- Understand and be committed to BFCC's purpose statement, core values and Articles of Faith.
- Earnestly desire the office of deacon and exhibit the character qualities in 1st Timothy 3:8-13. *These qualities are:*

*Worthy of respect:* Deacons must demonstrate a well-ordered life and honorable behavior.

*Sincere:* Deacons must be genuine and transparent.

*Not indulging in much wine:* Deacons must be free from addictions and willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.

*Not pursuing sordid gain:* Deacons must not be stingy, greedy, out for dishonest gain, or preoccupied with amassing material things.

*Keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience:* Deacons must be stable in the faith and obedient to the word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Spirit.

*First to be tested:* Deacons must not be new believers. They must have been Christians long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of their spirituality.

*Not malicious talkers:* Deacons must be able to maintain confidentiality and not be guilty of gossip or slander.

*Temperate:* Deacons must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.

*Faithful spouses:* Deacons must be faithful in their marriages, sexually pure in deed and thought.

*Manage their children and household well:* Deacons must have a well-ordered household and a healthy family life. If there are children they must respect their parents.

## **Selection of Deacons**

As the need for additional Deacons arises the Elder Board will accept nominations from the congregation and the Deacon Board. The Elder Board will review qualifications, interview the nominees, and determine if they meet the qualifications listed in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3. Candidates meeting the qualifications will be appointed to serve by the Elder Board.

## **Term for Deacons**

Each Deacon, upon appointment, shall be asked for a three-year commitment, subject to review, recommitment, and reaffirmation by the Elder Board at the end of the term.

*An individual's service as a Deacon may be discontinued by:*

1. Their own decision.
2. The decision of the elders. A deacon can be removed from office if he or she becomes incapacitated or spiritually unqualified.

## **Number of Deacons**

Although the Bible does not direct the church to have a certain number of deacons, BFFC desires to have a minimum of four deacons to oversee care for the church body. The Elder board will add deacons as needed.

# Section Eight: Staff

## Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor's role in the church is to mature believers through insightful and accurate presentation of biblical truth, equipping them to be the true "ministers" in the body. He teaches and leads by word and example, and stresses both the understanding and the application of God's truth.

- The Lead Pastor provides strategic leadership and vision to the body.
- The Lead Pastor serves on the Elder Board and mentors the other elders in the difficult task of equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11).
- The Lead Pastor arranges the public and regular services of the church.
- The Lead Pastor administers the two ordinances of the church.
- The Lead Pastor daily oversees the paid and volunteer staff ministering at the church.
- The Lead Pastor conducts weddings, funerals and does counseling when needed.

## Qualifications for the Lead Pastor

In addition to the biblical qualifications listed for Elders in I Timothy 3:1-7, a man desiring the office of Lead Pastor must:

1. Be able to show a history of spiritual maturity and leadership from previous ministries (II Tim. 2:2; James 3:13-18).
2. Demonstrate a servant attitude, a passion for ministry and a mind to work (Phil. 2; Gal. 5:22, 23; Neh. 4:6).
3. Preach and teach in a biblical and applicable manner (II Tim 3:16-17). He must seek to minimize any dependence on human wisdom, personality and man-made methods for accomplishing the work of the Lord.
4. Love God supremely and love others as himself (Luke 10:27).
5. Feel a definite call to shepherd the flock of God.
6. Seek in his entire ministry to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and to promote loyalty to Him before seeking loyalty for church, denomination or self (Col. 1:18).
7. Subscribe to BFCC's Constitution/Bylaws, purpose statement, core values and Articles of Faith.

## **Term for the Lead Pastor**

The Lead Pastor shall remain in office an indefinite period of time subject to the following conditions:

1. If a majority of the Elder Board (excluding the Lead Pastor) is in agreement to remove the Lead Pastor from his position, they have the authority to dismiss him with an affirmation vote from the participating church members who are qualified to vote at a Special Church Meeting called for that purpose (See Voting Section).

The Elder Board is to give the Lead Pastor one month's notice of its intention to dismiss him, unless the dismissal is for immorality reasons. The Elder Board shall determine severance compensation for the Lead Pastor.

2. If the Lead Pastor chooses to resign for his own reasons he must give one month's written notice to the Elder Board. If his resignation is accepted, the Elder Board shall notify the church of his resignation within two weeks.

The time limit of a Lead Pastor's resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the Lead Pastor and the Elder Board by mutual agreement provide otherwise.

## **Selection of a Lead Pastor**

In the event of vacancy in the office of Lead Pastor, the elders are responsible to:

1. Determine guidelines for the Lead Pastor search committee.
2. Select a Lead Pastor search committee.
3. To approve or disapprove a candidate recommended by the search committee.
4. To present the candidate to participating church members for affirmation.

The Lead Pastor's salary, benefits and moving expenses shall be set by the Elder Board at the time of his call and shall be annually reviewed by the Elder Board thereafter. Upon acceptance of a call, the Lead Pastor and his wife (if he is married) shall be added to the membership roll.

## **Staff Members**

The elders are responsible to appoint people to the church staff who have complimentary spiritual gifts, talents and personalities, to oversee ministry areas that cannot be filled by volunteers. The elders determine the description, duties, selection and qualifications of all staff personnel. They set staff members' salary, benefits and moving expenses at the time of their hire and review them annually thereafter. Upon acceptance of a position, all staff members shall be added to the membership roll.

## **Term for Staff Members**

Staff members shall remain in office an indefinite period of time subject to the following reservations:

1. The Elder Board has the authority to dismiss a staff member. The Elder Board will give the staff member one month's notice of its intention to dismiss them, unless the dismissal is for immorality reasons. The Elder Board shall determine any and all severance compensation for the staff member.
2. If the staff member chooses to resign for his or her own reasons they must give a one-month's written notice to the Elder Board. The time limit of a staff member's resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the staff member and the Elder Board by mutual agreement provide otherwise.

# Section Nine: Membership

Joining a church is a commitment to actively function as an appendage of a local body of Christ (Romans 12:3-21; I Corinthians 12). The Bible describes the church as a family, a body, and a flock of sheep. It is a place where you find unconditional love and support, protection, help and growth. The church is a family that challenges you to love God with your heart, soul, mind and spirit and to love others as you love yourself. Church membership encourages spiritual growth (Hebrews 10:24-25), reconciliation (Ephesians 4:25-32), participation (Acts 4:32-37), and right living (I Corinthians 5).

## Benefits of Church Membership

- Members have priority in facility usage, and in the elders, pastors and staff members' time.
- Members have priority in receiving information, benevolence money and personal support in ministry.
- Members are eligible to hold leadership positions within the church.
- Members have voting privileges (See Voting Section).

## Member Responsibilities

*BFCC members are expected to:*

- Attend church services and congregational meetings.
- Work in the Church's ministries and for church growth.
- Faithfully represent the Lord and the Church in our community.
- Regularly contribute according to their abilities.
- Hold church leaders in esteem and pray for them.
- Preserve the unity of the Church.
- Stay true to the purpose, core values and the Articles of Faith of BFCC.
- Strive with God's help to abide by the Membership Commitment.

## Membership Commitment

I (*name*), being in agreement with the purpose, core values and the Articles of Faith of Bay Farm Community Church feel led by God to become part of the BFCC family. In doing so, I am making a commitment to: Honor Christ with my life, submit to the leadership, protect the peace and purity and support the work of this church through prayer, service and giving.

## **Requirements for Church Membership:**

1. You must have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.
2. You must have been baptized by immersion after you received Christ as your Lord and Savior.
3. You must agree with BFCC's purpose statement, core values and Articles of Faith.
4. You must attend Membership Class.
5. Your request for membership must be approved by the Elder Board.

## **Termination of Membership**

The Elder Board shall terminate a person's membership and remove their name from the membership roll:

- At the death of the member.
- At the written request of the member.
- When the member has transferred his or her membership to another church.
- As a result of lack of participation in BFCC's worship service, ministries or giving for nine months.
- As a result of church discipline on the member.

## **Church Discipline**

Our Lord Jesus Christ states that it is the church's duty to discipline its members who choose to live in sin. His command to exercise church discipline is as definite as His commands to baptize, observe the Lord's Supper and make disciples around the world (Matthew 18:15-20). According to Matthew 18:15-18, all church members are called to exercise church discipline for we are all members of the body. Church discipline should be looked at as a positive action with the goal of restoring a member.

## **The Purpose of Church Discipline**

1. To maintain purity in the church by encouraging members to be obedient to biblical standards and godly practices (I Cor. 5:6-7).
2. To restore the sinning member back into proper fellowship with his church and God (Gal. 6:1; I John 1:9).
3. To motivate other church members not to live in sin and experience its destructiveness (I Tim. 5:20; James 1:15).
4. To keep the members focused on the mission of the local church - to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).
5. To glorify God (I Cor. 10:31).

## **The Process of Church Discipline**

- Step 1: It is the duty of any member of the church who has knowledge of a sinning church member to privately rebuke, warn and correct the sinning member, praying that he or she will repent and ask forgiveness for their sin (Matt. 18:15).
- Step 2: If the sinning member does not repent of their sin, the correcting member should confront the sinning member accompanied by one or two witnesses. Their purpose is to again rebuke, warn and correct the sinning member, praying that he or she will repent and ask forgiveness for their sin (Matt. 18:16).
- Step 3: If the sinning member still refuses to repent of their sin, the matter should be brought before the Elder Board. The elders will investigate the allegation brought by the witnesses against the sinning member, and if the allegations are found to be true, the Elder Board will confront the sinning member and seek their immediate repentance and restoration. If the sinning member still refuses to repent of their sin, the elders will notify the church members (Matt. 18:17).
- Step 4: After notifying the church members about the sinning member, the elders will remove the sinning member from the membership roll. They will instruct all church members not to fellowship with the person, but to pray for his or her repentance and restoration (I Cor. 5; I Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10; II Thess. 3:6, 14 - 15).
- Step 5: A letter will be sent to the terminated member explaining to him or her why the Elder Board ended their church membership and why he or she is unwelcome at all church services and activities. In addition, the letter will lovingly explain how the sinning believer can be restored back into the fellowship.

## **Membership Restoration after Church Discipline**

If a terminated member heeds the elders' warning, demonstrates repentance and requests reinstatement, he or she will be publicly restored into the membership.

# **Section Ten: Meetings**

## **Annual Meeting**

An annual meeting of the members shall be held in November of each year at such time as determined by the Elders. The purpose of the meeting is to review the previous year, set goals for the new year and approve the church's annual budget.

The annual meeting shall be advertised to the church two weeks before the actual meeting. Only participating church members qualified to vote can vote on church matters (See Voting Section).

## **Special Meetings**

The Elders may call special meetings at any time to discuss church business with the members. Notification of the date, time, and place will be communicated to the members two weeks in advance if possible.

## **Notification of Meetings**

Notification of membership meetings shall be given in any of the following manners:

- Verbal or written announcement to the congregation in attendance at a weekend service.
- Announcement of the meeting in a church letter.
- Phone message and or email message.

# Section Eleven: Voting

## Quorum

33% of the participating church members qualified to vote will constitute a quorum for the transaction of church business at an Elder Board approved meeting.

- Members must be attending a worship service, serving in a ministry and giving to the church to be considered a participating member. When in doubt, the Elder Board will determine who is a participating member.
- Members must be at least 18 years old to be included in the quorum and qualify to vote on church matters.

## Voting

Each participating member qualified to vote is entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to the membership by the Elder Board. Members may vote at a church meeting, or they may vote by absentee ballot if they so choose. Absentee votes may be cast prior to a membership meeting, but no votes will be accepted after a meeting has been adjourned. An affirmation vote of 75% of the participating members qualified to vote on an issue is required to pass a motion.

*Members can vote on the:*

- Annual budget of the Church
- Election or removal of an Elder
- Disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the Church
- Merger or dissolution of the Church
- Acquisition of property and related indebtedness
- Amending the Constitution/Bylaws of the Church
- Calling or removing of the Lead Pastor.

## Voting Procedure

- 1<sup>st</sup> - Members must sign in as they enter a meeting where a vote is going to be taken. The elders will pass out the ballots to the member when they determine the quorum has been met.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> - After the vote, the elders will examine the signed ballots to ensure that the votes were cast by participating church members qualified to vote.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> - The elders will count the ballots and announce the results of the vote to the membership. The results will be recorded in the official minutes.

# **Section Twelve: Corporate Business**

## **Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of this corporation shall be January 1 through December 31.

## **Corporate Officers**

The officers of the Corporation will be consistent with those of a California 501c3 non-profit corporation. These officers will be appointed by the Elder Board and will serve until removed by them. The Elder Board has the authority to appoint additional officers to fulfill the business of the Corporation.

## **Indemnification of Elders and Officers**

The elders and or officers of the Corporation acting together shall be indemnified and held harmless for actions consistent with the purpose of Bay Farm Community Church. BFCC shall be primarily responsible for liability arising from such actions or inaction of the Elder Board and or Officers of the Corporation. Reasonable expenses to litigate or otherwise solve issues arising from the Elder Board's and or Officer's performance of its duties and responsibilities shall be paid by Bay Farm Community Church.

## **Dissolution**

Upon dissolution of this Corporation, the Board of Elders shall cause the assets herein to be distributed to another Corporation or ministry with a similar purpose and Articles of Faith.

## **Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended at the church's annual business meeting or a special church meeting by an affirmation vote of the participating church members qualified to vote. The proposed amendment must be presented in writing to the church membership at least two weeks before the advertised meeting.