

**Constitution and By-Laws  
Of the  
Valley Baptist Church  
Yuma, Arizona  
Amended January 12, 2012**

The Constitution and By-Laws contained in this document shall supersede all preceding measures of Government and Procedure heretofore in force--August 29, 2010.

***Historical Sketch of Valley Baptist Church***

In 1901, a church known as the First Missionary Church of Yuma County was formed, and, by 1902, the first building for the newly-formed congregation was completed. That building, as well as other structures added through the years, remains on the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue C, where the church continues to hold its meetings and worship services.

**Article I**

*Name and Location*

The corporate name of this church shall be Valley Baptist Church, Incorporated. This corporation will, hereafter, be referred to in the By-laws as "Valley," or, "church." Valley shall have full power and authority to change the principal office and church location from one location to another. Any change of location shall be recorded by Valley's Secretary in business session minutes which authorize said location move.

**Article II**

*Purpose*

The Purpose of Valley is to work together to...

- Attract people to Jesus Christ
- Build disciples
- Cultivate service

...all in order to honor God.

This is to seek and to fulfill the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Valley seeks to be a church whose Christian influence extends throughout the city of Yuma, and beyond.

### **Article III**

#### *Affiliation*

Valley is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational or association control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches in world missions, this church voluntarily affiliates with the Conservative Baptist Association in its national, state, and local expressions.

### **Article IV**

#### *Doctrinal Statement*

##### 1. The Authority of Scripture

We believe that the Bible is God's infallible Word, written by men, divinely and uniquely inspired, and that it is our supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. We affirm our belief in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in their original autographs (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1: 20-21).

##### 2. God

There is one God who exists eternally in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These are one in essence but distinct in person and function. This is known as the Trinity (Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14; I Peter 1:2).

###### A. God, Our Heavenly Father (God the Father)

We believe in God the Father, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, and measureless in power. We rejoice that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayers, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ (Isaiah 6:3; Ephesians 2:10; Genesis 18:14; Isaiah 45:22).

###### B. Jesus, the Infinite God-Man (God the Son)

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, born of a virgin, sinless in His life, who atoned for the sins of the world by His death on the cross. We believe in His bodily resurrection, His ascension into Heaven, His High-Priestly intercession for His people, and His personal, visible, premillennial, pretribulational return to the world according to His promise (John 3:16; Matthew 1: 18; I John 2:2; I Corinthians 15: 1-3; Hebrews 7: 25; Revelation 1:7; I Thessalonians 4: 13-18; 4:9).

###### C. The Holy Spirit (God the Spirit)

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth to convict the world of sin, of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment; and to regenerate, sanctify, comfort and seal forever those who believe in Jesus Christ. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian is to seek to live under His control daily (John 16:3-11; John 3:3-5; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1: 13; 5:18).

### 3. Our Salvation

We believe that men are sinners by nature and by choice, but that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). We believe, therefore, that those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior will be forever in God’s presence, and that those who reject Christ as Lord and Savior will be forever separated from God (Revelation 20:15; Romans 5:12; John 5:24).

### 4. Eternal Security

The believer is secure in salvation for eternity because God gives man eternal life through Jesus Christ. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the effort of the Christian himself. A born-again believer cannot be unborn (John 3:3, 10:28-29; II Timothy 1:2; Hebrews 7:24-25, 10:10; I John 5:13).

### 5. Christ’s Church

We believe that the local church is composed of regenerated, immersed believers who are voluntarily united together for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission (Acts 2:41-42; Matthew 28: 19-20, 22: 36-40; I Timothy 3:15).

### 6. Our Baptist Heritage

We believe that our Baptist distinctives are scripturally sound. They include the following elements: the ability of the individual to approach to God directly; the priesthood of all believers; the Church membership of born-again people; the symbolic ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; the autonomy of the local church and its fellowship with other Baptist churches, free of government intervention; the solemn obligation to majority rule within the church, with equal rights to all and special privileges to none; and a world-wide missionary endeavor in obedience to the final command of our Lord.

### 7. Gifts of the Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit has given spiritual gifts to all believers for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and bringing glory to God. The gifts emphasize the need for unity and they are to be exercised in love. The gift of tongues is not needed as evidence for being baptized with the Holy Spirit or as evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The gift of tongues as a heavenly language is not to be used in a public service but in one’s prayer life. Only a language readily understood by the congregation is to be used in a public worship service. In an evangelistic opportunity, the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation may be used as a known language (I Corinthians 12:4, 11, 21-25; Ephesians 4: 11-16; Acts 2: 4-8; Galatians 5: 22-24; Romans 12:1-8; I Corinthians 12:1; 14:40).

## 8. Marriage Policy

We believe marriage is a union, ordained by God, between a man and a woman. It was first instituted by God in the early chapters of Genesis and codified in the Levitical law. The Old Testament prophets made comparisons of marriage to a relationship between God and his people, examples of which are found in the historical narratives—as well as the wisdom literature, which discusses the unique unity of this relationship. Jesus explained both the original intention and the core elements of marriage. Additionally, several New Testament epistles give explicit instructions for this union. Marriage is a typology of Christ and the Church. As such, Valley Baptist Church views marriage as a profoundly important and spiritual institution, established by God, and has, therefore, adopted the following policy:

### Clergy:

1. Only duly-ordained or licensed clergy shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property.
2. Clergy employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal and/or loss of ordination or license for officiating a same-gender marriage ceremony.

### Applicants:

1. Applicants wishing to have a ceremony performed by a pastor, or to use the church facilities, need to be approved by the Senior Pastor.
2. Applicants shall receive premarital counseling by clergy or counselors employed by the church, or by other persons who, in the sole opinion of the pastoral staff of Valley, have appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling.

### Premises:

1. Any marriage performed on the church premises shall be officiated by a member of the Clergy.
2. Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on the church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the Articles of Faith and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
3. The Clergy assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this marriage policy may, at his or her sole discretion, decline to make church facilities available for, and/or decline to officiate, a wedding ceremony due to concerns regarding either applicant's qualifications to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral, or legal reasons.

**Marriage:**

Marriage is a ceremonial act of the church. Marriage has been ordained by God. This church defines “marriage” as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman for a lifetime commitment. A civil government’s sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of “marriage” found in these Articles.

**Human Sexuality:**

Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, sexual activities outside of marriage are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible, and with Valley. Lascivious conduct and transgender behavior are also incompatible with Scripture.

**Qualifications:**

Every minister, board member, employee, and volunteer shall affirm their agreement with the Articles of Faith and shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent therewith.

**Article V**

*Church Covenant*

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

1. We will seek to protect the unity of Valley by acting in love toward other members, by refusing to gossip, and by following the church’s leaders.
2. We will share the responsibility of Valley by praying for its growth, by inviting the unchurched to attend, and by warmly welcoming those who visit.
3. We will serve the ministry of Valley by discovering our gifts and talents, by being equipped to serve by the pastors, and by developing a servant’s heart.
4. We will support the testimony of Valley by attending worship services faithfully, by living a godly life, and by giving regularly.

## **Article VI**

### *Membership*

Membership in Valley shall consist of all persons who have met the qualifications for membership and are listed on the membership role.

Qualifications for membership are these:

1. A personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
2. Baptism by immersion as a public testimony of salvation.
- \* 3. Completion of Valley's membership class.
4. A signed commitment to abide by the membership covenant.
5. An agreement to be governed by this constitution and by-laws.

Responsibilities of membership are described in the membership covenant.

Termination of membership shall be for the following reasons:

1. Death.
2. Transfer of membership to another church.
3. Personal request of the member.
4. Conduct not in accordance with the membership covenant in such a way that the member hinders the ministry influence of Valley in the community.

Revocation of one's membership requires a three-fourths vote of members present and voting at any regular or specially-called business session. This dismissal of a member shall be done according to Matthew 18: 15-17. It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such an erring individual, in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then the warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking to lead him or her to repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the unacceptable behavior has occurred--or is continuing to occur--and that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. The first and second warnings may occur with no specified time interval. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then it shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Deacons. If the Board of Deacons confronts the erring individual and confirms the individual's refusal to repent, the Board of Deacons may recommend to the small group, or to the entire church body, that this individual be stripped of their membership and fellowship.

\* Prior to the date of this constitution, and as of said date, all previous active members are grandfathered in as members.

5. Habitual, continued, or unjustifiable absence from the services of the church, and non-financial support of the church, for one year.

Upon the action of Valley in a regular business session, such a member may be dropped from the roll or placed on an inactive roll. Inactive members are those members who are in the community and fail to attend and or contribute for another year. Non-resident members are expected to report to Valley or to the pastor at least once every two years. This will be dealt with at the Annual Meeting. Attempts will be made to contact non-resident members who have not reported to the church in two years. The Church Secretary will research and record as needed. Restoration of Members shall be by the Deacons according to the spirit of II Corinthians 2:7-8, when their lifestyles are judged to be in accordance with the membership covenant or report and become active after the one to two year period of inactivity.

## **Article VII**

### *Membership Meetings*

Meetings of the members shall be held at a building on the church property or at such other place or places within or outside Arizona as may be designated from time to time by the Deacons. Members must be eighteen years of age or older to vote.

### General Meetings

A general meeting of the members shall be held in February of each year, or at such a time as determined by the Deacons. This general meeting shall be the annual membership meeting. The purpose of this meeting shall be to adopt a fiscal budget, March 1 through the last day of February, and to elect the officers and deacons of the church. Any other proper business may be conducted at this meeting.

### Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called at any time by the Board of Deacons, for any purpose, by giving notice to the members as follows:

#### General Requirements.

Whenever members are required or permitted to take any action at a meeting, notice shall be given to members no less than two weeks prior to a meeting. Meetings must be announced from the pulpit for two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting. Notification of membership meetings shall be given in any of the following manners:

- A. Distribution of written material to the congregation in attendance at a regular worship service
- B. Announcement of the meeting in the church newsletter, either electronically or printed
- C. Oral announcement to the congregation at a worship service
- D. Delivery of a printed announcement.

#### Required Vote

Action by the members on any proposal shall require three-fourths approval by those members present and entitled to vote.

#### Quorum

A quorum shall consist of no less than 5% of the church membership, or a minimum of 20 members.

#### Order

All questions of order shall be settled by the customary rules governing deliberative bodies, as given in "Robert's Rules of Order, Revised."

### **Article VIII**

#### *Deacons*

##### Number and Term

There shall be a minimum of five deacons. The Board of Deacons shall be the Board of Directors of the corporation, subject to the authority of the church membership. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary of the Board shall be the President, Vice-President, and the Secretary, respectively, of the corporation.

##### Powers

General Corporate Powers: Subject to the provisions and limitations of the Articles of Incorporation, and these by-laws, the activities, business, and affairs of the church shall be conducted and all corporate powers shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Deacons.

##### Meetings of the Deacons

Regular or special meetings of the deacons may be held without notice if the time and place of such meetings are fixed by resolution of the deacons. They may be held anywhere, with or without the pastors, if agreed by resolution of the deacons. The purpose of these meetings shall be to carry out the incorporation, by-laws, constitution, work, and ministry of Valley.

## **Article IX**

### *Officers*

#### Moderator

The moderator shall preside at all membership meetings of the congregation. He shall be a member of the Board of Deacons. In the absence of the moderator, the Board of Deacons shall appoint a moderator.

#### Church Clerk

The church clerk shall keep a current roll of the membership, issue letters of dismissal, conduct the official correspondence of the church, and preserve all documents, papers, and letters coming into his or her hands. The church clerk may work in conjunction with the church office.

#### Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall keep a complete record of all receipts. He or she shall keep a record of all known individual contributions, and provide a receipt to contributors.

#### Treasurer

The treasurer shall pay all funds authorized for payment by the church specifically, or within prescribed limits. He or she shall present a financial statement monthly. An audit shall be done annually by two members of the church appointed by the deacons, or the Board may secure the services of a Certified Public Accountant, and submit a report to the church.

#### Deaconesses

The Board of Deaconesses shall consist of three or more members. They shall be responsible for equipment and supplies needed for the observance of Ordinances, assist in caring for the sick and needy and provide nursery care and fulfill such other duties as the Board of Deacons may assign.

#### Nomination Committee

The nomination committee shall consist of three members or more. One of the members shall be a deacon, and one shall be the Pastor and one shall be a member at large. This committee shall prepare and present to the deacons a slate of qualified candidates for officers and deacons. With the approval of the deacons, the positions are to be filled at the Annual Meeting. The report shall be posted not later than two weeks prior to the election.

#### Removal of Officers, Deacons, and Staff

If any individuals in these positions are not carrying out their duty, or is guilty of conduct which impairs his service as an officer, deacon, or staff member, the Board of Deacons may recommend to the church their removal.

#### Vacancies

Vacancies in officers or deacons occurring between the Annual Election Meetings shall be filled by the Board of Deacons, subject to ratification by the church membership.

## **Article X**

### *Senior Pastor*

#### Responsibilities

The Senior Pastor shall be leader, teacher, shepherd and guide of Valley. He shall perform all the scriptural and necessary duties of the Pastoral Position. He shall be an ex-officio member of the board of deacons and serve as ex-officio of all other needed board and committee meetings as needed. He is subject to oversight by the deacons and, ultimately, the church membership.

#### Qualifications

The Senior Pastor may be called prior to membership in the church, but he must meet the qualifications of membership. He shall be one who is convinced of his call to the ministry, and shall be qualified, gifted, and well-trained for the task. He shall be in agreement with the Constitution and By-laws of Valley.

#### Method of Selection

The Board of Deacons may act as a Pulpit Committee or they may select a Pulpit Committee. The Pulpit Committee shall thoroughly investigate possible candidates, and invite to preach as a candidate, and, if possible, remain in the community several days. Announcements shall be made from the Pulpit on at least two consecutive Sundays immediately prior to the date set by the Pulpit Committee for the special membership meeting called to vote upon him. The vote required to call a candidate to serve as the Pastor for the congregation shall be a three-fourths majority of the quorum present and voting. No other candidate shall be invited unless the candidating pastor does not receive the required three-quarters vote.

#### Consideration

The initial salary, allowances, and vacation, as well as any other consideration deemed advisable, shall be determined by the church at the time of the call and submitted to the candidate in writing.

#### Termination

The relationship between the Pastor and the church shall be continuous until terminated or placed on administrative leave. In the event that the Pastor voluntarily resigns, he shall give not less than thirty days written notice. In the event that the church initiates action to terminate, severance pay for no less than thirty days—with the option of a longer duration--shall be granted to the former pastor at the discretion of the Board. Any such action to terminate shall be presented to the church by the Board of Deacons, at a special business meeting called for this purpose. Notice of such meeting shall be given from the pulpit on at least two consecutive Sundays immediately prior to the said meeting. The vote required to dismiss a pastor is a quorum and a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting.

## **Article XI**

### *Pastoral Staff*

#### Qualifications

Pastoral Staff may be called prior to membership in the church, but he must meet the qualifications of membership. He shall be one who is well trained for the task. He shall affirm his agreement with Valley's Constitution and By-laws.

#### Method of selection

The Senior Pastor shall select all pastoral staff with confirmation by the Board of Deacons. The candidates shall be voted upon at an all-church business meeting. Announcements shall be made from the pulpit on at least two consecutive Sundays immediately prior to the date set by the deacons and Pastor to be voted on. The vote required to call will take a three-fourths majority of those present and voting. No other candidate shall be invited unless the pastoral staff candidate does not receive the required three-quarters vote.

#### Considerations

The initial salary, allowances, and vacation, as well as any other consideration deemed advisable, shall be determined by Valley at the time of the call and submitted to the candidate in writing.

#### Termination

The relationship between pastoral staff and the church shall be continuous until resignation, termination, or administrative leave brings the period of service to a close. In the event a pastoral staff member voluntarily resigns, he shall provide written notice not less than thirty days prior to his last day of service to the church. In the event that the church or Senior Pastor initiates action to terminate a pastoral staff member, severance pay--for no less than thirty days, with the option of a longer duration--shall be granted to the former pastoral staff member at the discretion of the Board. Any such action is to be at the discretion of the Senior Pastor with the Board of Deacons' approval.

## **Article XII**

### *Amendments*

This constitution and by-laws may be revised by the three-fourths vote of the voting members present and voting at the regular business meeting, provided that said revision or amendment has been made available in writing and announced from the pulpit two weeks before the vote is taken.



