



LIVING WORD
CHURCH OF WORCESTER

Constitution & By-Laws

LIVING WORD CHURCH OF WORCESTER
CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS

Adopted- May 5, 1953	Revised - July 10, 1962	Revised - Oct. 16, 1979
Amended- Oct. 20, 1981	Amended - Oct. 18, 1983	Revised - Oct. 16, 1984
Amended - Oct. 16, 1994	Amended - Oct. 16, 2001	Revised - Oct. 21, 2012
Revised - Oct. 18, 2015		

PREAMBLE

For the purpose of establishing and maintaining a place for the worship of Almighty God our Heavenly Father, to provide for Christian fellowship for those of like precious faith, where the Holy Spirit may be honored according to our distinctive testimony, to assume our share of responsibility and the privilege of propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ by all available means, both at home and in foreign lands: we, whose names appear upon the roster of the church under the above initial date, do hereby recognize ourselves as a local church in fellowship with and part of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, and do adopt the following articles of church order and submit ourselves to be governed by them

CONSTITUTION

Article I **NAME**

The name of this church shall be the Living Word Church of Worcester, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Article II **PREROGATIVES**

Section 1. This church shall have the right to govern itself according to the standards of the New Testament Scriptures, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ... till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."
(Ephesians 4:3,13)

Section 2. To have a Membership which is determined by the local church and to discipline its Members according to the Scriptures.

Section 3. To elect its Elders and Officers, determine salaries, and transact all other matters pertaining to its life and conduct as a local church.

Section 4. To establish and maintain such ministries, gatherings, and institutions as may be deemed necessary for the propagation of the Gospel and for the work of the local church. This includes, but is not limited to: Parent affiliated churches, church plants,

fresh expressions of church, gatherings, non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses and new networks for ministry.

Section 5. To purchase or acquire by gift, bequest or otherwise, and to own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, lease or otherwise dispose of any real estate, assets or goods as may be necessary for the furtherance of its purposes: all in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws or as the same may be hereafter modified or amended.

Article III **AFFILIATION**

While maintaining its inherent rights to sovereignty in the conduct of its own affairs, this church shall voluntarily enter into full cooperative fellowship with churches of like precious faith associated in the Southern New England Ministries Network of the Assembly of God and The General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA), and shall share in the privileges and assume the responsibilities enjoined by the affiliation.

As such, this local church broadly affirms the doctrinal statement of the Assemblies of God (USA), but for purposes of clarity towards our local mission to make disciples, and simplicity of communication to our neighbors, we hold to the following Statement of Faith.

Article IV **Statement of Faith**

WE BELIEVE

- The Scriptures are true, authoritative, and sufficient. The Word of God is the same yesterday, today and forevermore. God's Word is relevant today and is a source of life and direction. (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- There is only one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, who eternally exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All of creation is good and humans being made in the image and likeness of God, are declared very good. As being made in God's image and likeness, humans are created for relationship with God and with one another, and together are given stewardship and rule over creation. (Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6, 46:9-10; Matthew 3:13-17, 28:17-20; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, 12:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5).
- Humans rebelled against God, and the relationship with God and creation was broken. As such, humans are sinful in both birth and action; and the deserved penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death for humans and a creation that is cursed (Genesis 1-3; 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23, 5:8-21, 6:23, 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3; James 1:14-15).
- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin and is both fully God and fully human and is without sin. Jesus Christ came to save humanity from sin and death by dying as

a sacrificial substitute to pay the penalty for sin. Only through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ and repentance from sin can one be reconciled to God and experience rebirth by God's Spirit. As renewed humans, we join God in the work of reconciliation and restoration of His creation. (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4, 1:14, 1:29, 3:18, 10:1-8, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26, 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Peter 3:18)

- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead as victor over sin and death, he ascended into heaven and sent the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit helps, guides, fills, and transforms those who have been reborn and reconciled to God through Jesus. The Spirit also empowers, strengthens, gives gifts, sanctifies, and moves freely. Those who are reborn are to seek the infilling of the Spirit, walk-by the Spirit, practice the gifts of the Spirit, and bear the fruit of the Spirit in line with the scriptures. All ministry of the Spirit is to be done in order, for edification and for the glorification of God. (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:1-16).

- Jesus Christ is the head of the church. The church consists of God's gathered people who have been reborn of the Spirit. The church meets regularly for worship, fellowship, communion, giving and serving in the love and truth of Jesus, with the main goals of making disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching the Word of God so that all can obey. The local church is led by Elders and is grateful for the gifts given by Jesus for the maturation of the church through apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The church works together towards healthy relationships and unity, and offers instruction, encouragement, correction, and discipline to that end. The church honors God's plan for singleness, as well as marriage, which is a lifelong covenant relationship between one man and one woman. When the church or any particular member of the church falls short in loving God or loving one another, the Word of God calls for confession of sin, repentance from sin, and reconciliation with God and with one with another. (Genesis 2:24-25; Exodus 20:1-17; Leviticus 18:22-23, 20:1-27; Matthew 18:15-20, 19:4-6, 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-21; Romans 1:18-31; 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, 11:23-29; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; I Timothy 1:8-11; 1 Peter 3:21; Jude 7).

- Jesus Christ will physically return to earth to righteously judge the living and the dead, to gather all who belong to Him, and to renew Creation - a new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells. For those who have refused the person and work of Jesus Christ, the penalty of sin and death remains eternally, but those who have received the person and work of Jesus Christ by faith are saved from the penalty of sin and death and given eternal life. Jesus Christ teaches that no man knows the day nor hour of His return, so we are to be watchful and ready, and remain faithful until that Day. (Matthew 24:15-30, 25:13, 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 12:40, 24:1-53; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:12-34, 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; 2 Peter 3:13; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7, 21:22)

Article V **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership in this church shall be eligible to all those who give evidence of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who voluntarily subscribe to the statement of faith, and agree to be governed by its Constitution and By-Laws as herein set forth, and to those who successfully engage in the membership process as determined by the Elders.

Article VI **OFFICERS**

Section 1. Elders

There will be an Eldership Council with a minimum of 3 Members, and no maximum number, who shall oversee the spiritual ministry and direct the affairs of the church. The Elders will be made of both paid male pastors and unpaid qualified men.

Section 2. Stewards

There will be a Stewardship Council, comprised of male and/or female Members, with a minimum of 3 of unpaid Stewards, and no maximum number, to assist the Elders by providing transparency, accountability, counsel, and workflow in the areas of: Finance, facility, assets, investments, banking, insurance, and legal. The Stewards will be elected by the Elders to serve in staggered 3 year terms.

Section 3. The Church Council

There will be a Church Council of Elders and Stewards to meet at least once per quarter for budget and business planning. The Elders will make decisions with input and counsel from the Stewards. The Elders have the right to include any staff member in any Church Council meeting.

Section 4. Legal Officers

The Elders will elect 3 officers to conduct the legal business of the nonprofit organization known as, "Living Word Church of Worcester," including: President, Clerk, and Treasurer. The lead-Elder will serve as President of the Corporation, and the Clerk and Treasurer to be elected by Elders from within the Stewardship Council.

Article VII **MEETINGS**

Section 1. Meeting for public worship shall be held each Lord's Day and during the week as may be provided for under the direction of the Elders.

Section 2. There shall be an annual meeting of the church at which time the affirmation of newly elected Elders and Stewards will take place. The Elders will establish the date, place and time of the annual meeting and provide notice at least two

Sundays prior to the meeting.

Section 3. Special meetings of the church may be called by the elders when necessary. The Elders will establish the date, place and time of the special meeting and provide notice at least two Sundays prior to the meeting.

Section 4. Quorum

A quorum for any special or annual meeting of the church shall be one-fifth or more of the active voting Members present in person or by Early Ballot. If there is not a quorum no action requiring a vote may be taken however the meeting may be adjourned to a later date in order to acquire a quorum.

Section 5. The Elders will meet regularly for the discharge of their duties and will meet with the Stewardship Council at least once per quarter, and more as necessity demands.

Section 6. Early Ballot

The Elders, at its discretion, may make provision for an Early Ballot to be prepared for any regular or special meeting requiring a YES or NO response. The Early Ballot count shall be considered as part of the quorum.

Article VIII **MINISTRIES**

Ministries and parent affiliated churches shall be subordinate to the Elders and shall contribute to the harmony and development of the body and support of the mission and vision of the church. (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-13; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:17)

Article IX **FINANCES**

All funds for the maintenance of the church shall be provided by the voluntary contribution of the tithes and offerings of the Members and friends of the organization, as well as through the lease of property, investment income and other means of revenue generation. Offerings shall be accepted by the church at such times and in such ways as agreed upon by the Elders and shall be administered by the Treasurer under their direction (Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

Article X **PROPERTY**

Section 1. Real Estate

All property of the church shall be deeded to the church and held in its name. All property shall be bought, sold and maintained under the supervision of the Elders.

Section 2. Assets & Goods

Assets & Goods shall be bought, sold and maintained under the supervision of the Elders.

Article XI **AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended or changed by a two-thirds affirmation vote of the Membership of the Church, who are in attendance at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose, provided due notice of such proposed change shall have been made and posted at least two Sundays preceding the time of such meeting.

BY-LAWS

Article I **MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. Standard of Membership

The standard of Membership in this church shall be:

- a. Evidence of a genuine experience of regeneration (the New Birth) (John 1:12,13; 3:3-8; I Peter 1:18-25)
- b. Evidence of a consistent Christian life (Romans 6:4; 8:1-4; 13:13,14; Ephesians 4:17-32; 5:1,2,15; I John 1:6-7)
- c. Immersion in water (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47,48; Romans 6:4)
- d. Readiness to be governed by the Constitution & By-Laws as adopted by the church
- e. To fully subscribe to the statement of faith as set forth in the Constitution, and to the Membership process and guidelines set by the Elders.
- f. To contribute regularly to the support of the church according to scriptural teaching (Malachi 3:10; Genesis 14:17-20; Proverbs 3:9,10; Matthew 23:23; Hebrews 7:4-10).

Section 2. Reception of Members

- a. Persons desiring to become active Members of the church shall make their desire known to the Elders using prescribed means of communication.
- b. The Elders shall communicate to the Membership that the candidates for membership have met the requirements for Membership as established by the Elders. All persons who are approved for Membership shall be received into the church publicly at any of the regular services and their names entered on the roster.

Section 3. Classification of Membership

- a. Active Membership

All those who meet the standards for Membership as outlined in these bylaws and are eighteen (18) years old or over shall be considered active members. Voting privileges shall not be granted until a person has been a member for six (6) months in the church.

b. Inactive Membership

A Member shall be considered Inactive if:

- i. They shall absent themselves from the services of the church for a period of three consecutive months or
- ii. They are out of harmony with its teaching or its ministries or
- iii. They are involved in sinful or worldly practices

Members deemed Inactive will lose voting privileges until they return to or are restored to the fellowship. Their standing shall be settled by action of the Elders.

c. Parent Affiliated Church Provisional Membership

A parent affiliated church will have the ability to identify a process for acceptance of provisional members. This membership will be for the purpose of belonging to the local body and participation in ministry. These provisional members may attend the parent church annual meetings or special meetings but shall have no participation in voting. Provisional membership will be recorded as such.

Full parent church active Membership status can be achieved by completing the parent church Membership process. A membership conversion process may be established at the time the parent affiliated church becomes independent with terms that will be determined at that time.

The Elders have oversight and approval authority over all provisional membership processes and the acceptance of provisional members.

d. Parent Affiliated Church Membership

Members who are sent as part of a church plant or to serve a parent affiliated church, will maintain their Membership in the Parent Church until the Parent Affiliated church becomes an autonomous organization, at which time their Membership will be converted to the newly established church.

Section 4. Discipline

The church is a body of Christian believers who hold certain beliefs and standards in common. On occasion, Members of this church may conduct themselves in a manner contrary to Biblical standards and our Statement of Faith. It shall be the goal of the church to guide such persons into a process of confrontation & restoration as outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. The discipline process of the church shall be entrusted to the Elders. If Biblical discipline is

necessary, the Elders have the authority to place individuals under church discipline including, but not limited to, termination of Membership (Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 16:17,18; I Corinthians 5:11; Galatians 1:8,9; Titus 3:1-15).

Section 5. Revision of the Roster

The Elders shall be authorized to revise the Membership roll of the church no less than annually by removing all names of those who are deceased and notifying inactive Members of their inactivity and removal from the roster (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17,18; I Corinthians 5:3-5; II Thessalonians 3:6-16).

Article II DUTIES OF ELDERS, OFFICERS AND PERSONNEL

Section 1. Elders

The Elders are men who direct and oversee the affairs of the church by providing: Visionary leadership, decision making, management, stewardship of gifts and finances, authoritative and exhortative teaching, maintenance of healthy Membership, ordination of pastors, ministers and chaplains, and church discipline (Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

The Elders pray together, and seek scripture and wisdom in their decision making, and only move in unity by making decisions unanimously with a one hundred percent, “Yes, it seems good,” vote. If a vote is taken which produces a non-unanimous result, the Elders will pause on taking the action that was voted on and seek additional prayer, discussion, and wisdom on how to move forward in unity (Psalm 133; Matthew 6:33; John 17; Acts 1:13-14, 15:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).

The Elders will be made up of a minimum of 3 male Members, with no maximum number of Elders. The Elders will be composed of both paid pastors and unpaid, qualified men, who are elected by existing Elders with one hundred percent, “Yes, it seems good,” vote. If a vote is taken which produces a non-unanimous result, the Elders will pause on taking the action that was voted on and seek additional prayer, discussion, and wisdom on how to move forward in unity.

The Elders will be led by a lead-Elder elected from among the Eldership by a one hundred percent, “Yes, it seems good,” vote. If a vote is taken which produces a non-unanimous result, the Elders will pause on taking the action that was voted on and seek additional prayer, discussion, and wisdom on how to move forward in unity. The lead-Elder serves as chairman of Eldership meetings and as such, will call Elder meetings and Church Council meetings. The lead-Elder will appoint a secretary to take minutes at Eldership meetings, as well as at Church

Council meetings. The quorum for an Elders meeting will be two-thirds of the members in attendance. Members of the Eldership may attend each meeting by being physically present or may participate with use of technology, such as conference call, Zoom or similar a video conference tool.

All Elders, whether paid or unpaid, will undergo an annual review as set by the lead-Elder for the purposes of encouragement and constructive feedback.

Section 2. The Stewardship Council

The Stewardship Council is comprised of male and/or female Members who are elected by the Elders and affirmed by the Members to assist the Elders by providing transparency, accountability, counsel, and workflow in the areas of: Finance, facility, assets, investments, banking, insurance, and legal. Stewardship Council members work with Elders and staff to review annual budgets, as well as monthly and annual financial reporting.

The Elders will elect a lead-Steward from among the Stewardship Council. The lead-Steward will be able to call Stewardship Council meetings and will be responsible to report meeting minutes to the lead-Elder. The lead-Steward will appoint a secretary to take Stewardship Council meeting minutes.

The quorum for a Stewardship Council meeting will be two-thirds of the members in attendance. Members of the Stewardship Council may attend each meeting by being physically present or may participate with use of technology, such as conference call, Zoom or similar a video conference tool.

Elders may participate in any Stewardship Council meeting and will not count as part of the quorum.

Accountability Function of the Stewardship Council

The Elders will utilize staff to produce monthly financial reports which will be shared with the Stewardship Council for accountability and feedback. The Elders and Stewardship Council will provide an annual report to the Members including, relevant financial and ministry statements.

In addition to the monthly financial reporting and feedback loop, the Stewards will be available for consultation with the Elders upon request throughout the year.

The Treasurer as a member of the Stewardship Council, plus one (1) other person from the Stewardship Council, will serve as bank signatories. The Treasurer will sign all checks as the authorized signatory. The Elders and Stewardship Council will set an expense threshold to establish when a second signature of a church officer is required.

Biblical examples of stewards and stewardship include: Genesis 1:28; Malachi 3:10; Psalm 24:1; Proverbs 3:9, 21:20; Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 16:1-13; Acts 2-6; Acts 11; Acts 20:35; Romans 15:22-33; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 4:10.

Section 3. Church Council

There will be a Church Council of Elders and Stewards to meet at least once per quarter for budget and business planning. The Elders will make decisions with input and counsel from the Stewards. The Elders have the right to include any staff member in any Church Council meeting.

The lead-Elder will call all Church Council meetings, and will appoint a secretary to keep minutes.

The quorum for a Church Council meeting will be two-thirds of the members in attendance. Members of the Church Council may attend each meeting by being physically present or may participate with use of technology, such as conference call, Zoom or similar a video conference tool.

Section 4. Officer: Clerk

The Elders will elect a Clerk from among the Stewardship Council to keep minutes at the Annual meeting, and work with church staff as assigned by the Elders, to maintain all records. The Clerk will have legal signing power, along with the Treasurer and President of Corporation to sign all documents as directed by the Elders.

Section 5. Officer: Treasurer

The Elders will elect a Treasurer from among the Stewardship Council to work with the bookkeeper or assigned church staff by the Elders to sign all checks as the authorized bank signatory. The Treasurer will work with the Elders and staff to create financial budgets and reports. The Treasurer will have legal signing power, along with the Clerk and President of Corporation to sign all documents as directed by the Elders.

Section 6. Officer: President of Corporation

The President of the Corporation shall be the lead-Elder and shall have the responsibility of signing all legal documents pertaining to his office, but will not be a bank signatory. The President of Corporation will have legal signing power, along with the Clerk and Treasurer to sign all documents as directed by the Elders.

Section 7. Deacons

Deacons are male and/or female Members elected by Elders to serve and strengthen the body by seeing and resolving tangible needs, maintaining unity and providing care and constructive listening.

The Deacons are unpaid servants and may be given goods, food and finances to oversee and distribute to the body. The Deacons may be involved in visiting the sick, the elderly and the shut-ins, as well as organizing transportation for those in need. Additionally, the Deacons may be assigned a variety of ministry tasks by the Elders.

The Church may view Deacons as part of the church leadership structure and may utilize Deacons as safe and appointed persons to approach for counsel and assistance. In such cases, the Deacons will work to maintain unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3), by providing constructive listening, prayer and counsel in a manner worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Deacons will use wisdom and discretion when reporting to the Eldership.

As needed, the Elders will meet with the Deacons collectively or individually for prayer, instruction, correction and feedback, and will review the Deacons' meeting minutes provided by the lead-Deacon. Additionally, the lead-Deacon will work with the Deacons to provide healthy communication, feedback and reporting to the eldership regarding all Deacon related ministry.

The Elders will elect a lead-Deacon from among the Deacons. The lead-Deacon will be able to call Deacon meetings and will be responsible to report meeting minutes to the lead-Elder. The lead-Deacon will appoint a secretary to take Deacon meeting minutes.

The quorum for a Deacons' meeting will be two-thirds of the members in attendance. Deacons may attend each meeting by being physically present or may participate with use of technology, such as conference call, Zoom or similar a video conference tool.

Elders may participate in any Deacons meeting and will not count as part of the quorum.

Section 8. Ministry Staff

The Elders shall have the authority to secure all staff necessary for the carrying out of the ministry of the church.

Article III SELECTIONS AND VACANCIES**Section 1. Elders**

The Elders will be led by a lead-Elder elected from among the Eldership. The lead-Elder serves as chairman of Eldership meetings and calls all Eldership meetings. The lead-Elder will serve for a 5 year term, and at the completion of the 5 year term, the Eldership will re-elect the lead-Elder or elect a new lead-Elder from among the Eldership.

The Elders will elect additional Elders according to the following criteria:

- * The Eldership discipulates and trains prospective Elders who exhibit an aspiration and call to serve as an Elder.
- * All prospective Elders must be faithful Members and meet the biblical qualifications of character, ability to manage their household, and ability to teach.
- * All prospective Elders must show faithfulness as Members in terms of giving, serving and leading in ministry and disciple-making (Matthew 28; 1 Corinthians 11:1-2; Timothy 3; Titus 1).
- * All prospective Elders will engage in Biblical training, experiential training, discipleship and discipleship from existing Elders in order to best prepare them prior to election. Additionally, the Elders may continue to equip an Elder post-election.
- * All prospective Elders and their spouses will be interviewed by existing Elders to ensure unity and develop relationships for long-term ministry.
- * Should a prospective Elder be elected to serve, the elected Elder will be presented to the Members for affirmation.

Elected Elders are affirmed by a two-thirds “yes” vote from the Members at special meeting or at the annual meeting. Should an elected Elder not be affirmed by the congregation, such a man may be given further preparation by the Eldership and be brought forward again for affirmation by the congregation. Should the Membership not affirm an elected Elder a second time, then the non-affirmed man will be reassigned and directed to other areas of service within the church, as deemed fit by the Eldership.

Elected Elders will serve 5 years with a 3-month sabbatical following each 5 years. The sabbatical will conclude with a formal review of each Elder’s ministry and desire for continued service. An Elder may serve consecutive terms provided an Elder desires to do so, and the Eldership is in unanimous agreement.

Paid Elders or Pastors may be elected for hire by the Elders from outside of the Membership and will be presented to the Members for a two-thirds “yes” affirmation vote at a special meeting or annual meeting prior to hire.

Upon inauguration of the revised Constitution and Bylaws (March, 2023), the Pastors will be Elders and the lead-Elder will be the Senior Pastor.

Section 2. Stewardship Council

There will be a Stewardship Council with a minimum of 3 of unpaid stewards, and no maximum number, who are elected by the Elders to serve for a term of 3 years on staggered basis.

- i. Stewards are elected based on their Christian maturity, history of generous giving through tithes and offerings, focus on people and an ability to encourage, faithfulness to prior service, confidentiality, integrity, as well as gifting and expertise in areas related to the Stewardship Council.
- ii. Stewards will be elected by the Elders and affirmed by the Members at a special meeting or annual meeting.

An elected Steward will be considered “affirmed” with a two-thirds of “Yes” votes among the Members.

Should an elected Steward not be affirmed by the Members, such a man or woman, may be given further preparation by the Eldership and be brought forward again for affirmation by the congregation. Should the congregation not affirm an elected Steward a second time, then the non-affirmed man or woman will be reassigned and directed to other areas of service within the church, as deemed fit by the Eldership.

- iii. Upon inauguration of the revised Constitution and Bylaws (March, 2023), the Stewardship Council will be assigned staggered term lengths of 5, 4, and 3 years respectively to ensure consistency at the onset. Hence forth the standard term of service will be 3 years. Stewardship Council members may serve consecutive terms if elected by the Elders.

Section 3. Other Officers

The President shall be the lead-Elder. The Treasurer and Clerk shall be elected by the Elders from among the Stewardship Council members and shall fulfill their office until their term on the Stewardship Council expires or the Elders deem otherwise.

Section 4. Deacons

The Elders will elect qualified male and/or female Deacons to assist the Elders in serving the church. As such, the Deacons must be full of the Spirit and Wisdom and have a good reputation among their peers (Acts 6:1-6). There is no minimum or maximum number of Deacons required, and the Deacons do not need affirmation from the Members to serve.

A Deacon will serve a 3 year term with a yearly annual review by the Elders for the purposes of encouragement and constructive feedback. After the 3 year term a Deacon will take a 2 month sabbatical and engage in a formal review by the Elders. A Deacon may serve consecutive terms provided a Deacon desire to do so, and the Eldership is in unanimous agreement.

Article IV Church Discipline

Section 1. Elders

On occasion, an Elder(s) may require discipline due to behavior not in accordance with Scripture and the high calling and character required of Elders or due to doctrinal error. Such behavior may include: Continued and unrepentant sin, consistent underperformance, dereliction of duty, divisiveness, and insubordination. Scripture outlines specific instructions in dealing with such situations and provides examples. The ultimate goal of all such situations is to call the individual(s) to repentance from sin and to encourage restoration to the Lord and to His body.

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20)

However, the restoration process does not necessarily include restoration to the position of Elder as that could have a negative impact on the Gospel witness of the Church and cause confusion and harm to the local church body. Should a member bring a charge against an Elder's character, behavior and doctrine the charge must be accompanied by 2 or 3 witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

Process:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to

them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17)

- (1) Jesus provides instruction on how to address sin and offenses in the church in Matthew 18:15-17. In his statement “If your brother sins against you”, Jesus emphasizes the personal nature of the offense and the duty of the offended individual to seek correction and reconciliation. As fallen human beings who are being steadfastly conformed to the full stature of Christ, personal offenses in the church are bound to occur, including between Elders and other Members of the flock. As it applies to church Elders, if an Elder sins against a brother or sister in Christ that person is first responsible for coming and bringing their charge personally to the Elder. If the Elder remains unrepentant then the progression that Jesus outlines is to be followed, making every effort to call the Elder to repentance and reconciliation.

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 20 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. 21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. (1 Timothy 5:19 -21)

- (2) If the personal confrontation between a member and an Elder does not produce fruit, then Matthew 18:16 and 1 Timothy 5:19 state that charges against Elders must not be brought forward hastily but must be corroborated by witnesses and evidence. In this case, the next step is for the witnesses and the one making the charge to meet with the Elder in question. This allows for the evidence to be presented in a non-public way, but a verifiable way. Should the charges be warranted and the Elder repent, and show forth the fruits of repentance, we have won our brother. Should the Elder in question be properly charged and found un-repentant, than the next step ensues. In such a case, the person making the charge and the witnesses must report the matter to the lead-Elder in writing. Should the lead-Elder be the un-repentant offender, the charge must be reported to another Elder in writing. In all cases, the written charge must be responded to in writing by the corresponding Elder to verify receipt. Additionally, all steps taken by the Eldership towards confrontation and restoration will be documented in writing.
- (3) As Matthew 18:17 and 1 Timothy 5:20 state those who do not repent and persist in sin/error must be publicly rebuked, implying a public communication of the charges and the process that has ensued. Should the Elder in question be proven guilty by the Eldership, then a process of repentance and restoration will be invoked, which may involve temporary or permanent removal from the office of Elder. The process will be publicly reported to the

church body as a whole to stress to the entire congregation the severity of unrepentance.

For Elders who are found to be in sin but who are repentant, a process will be outlined to promote restoration. The restoration process is designed to restore a person to a right relationship with God and the Church, but not necessarily to the role of Elder. For instance, the grievous sins of marital infidelity, crime or abuse warrant the removal of such a person from the position of Elder. The restoration process for an Elder could include: Counseling from a Christian counselor or minister outside of the local congregation, participation at a Christian restoration retreat, additional prayer and follow up from the Elders of Living Word Church of Worcester, as well as recuperation for any losses suffered by Living Word Church of Worcester or individuals within. Should a paid Elder or Pastor remain unrepentant and/or unwilling to engage in a process of restoration, such a man will be terminated from employment.

In the case that an Elder requires discipline, we do well to remember:

“We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9)

Additional Scriptures: Galatians 2:11-14; Titus 1:9-13; Hebrews 12:7-11

Section 2. Stewardship Council Members, Officers, Staff, Members
General church discipline will function in order with Jesus’ instructions from Matthew 18:15-17 under the guidance of the Elders.

Section 3. Resignations
A person who resigns an office or Stewardship Council position shall sign and/or author a letter addressed to the Elders. The Elders shall accept or reject this letter. If the resignation is accepted, the Elders shall take steps to fill that office.

Article V **FINANCES**

Section 1. Annual Budget
The Elders set the annual budget and present to the Stewardship Council for accountability. After the Elders approve the annual budget, the assigned funds may be raised and expensed under the Eldership’s direction, and reported by staff administrator, bookkeeper or equivalent.

Section 2. Salary Raises

The Elders will allocate funds for staff and pastor raises within the annual budget. But the pastors, who are also Elders, will not be able to set their own salary raises; rather they will adhere to the merit increase policy which is:

1. The staff and pastors are eligible for merit increases according to a schedule, which at current time is every 3 years.
 - a. The lead-Elder or senior pastor's salary review requires that he recuse himself from the review, and the review committee will be composed of 3 non-paid Elders.
 - i. Until 3 non-paid Elders are raised up and appointed, members of the Stewardship Council will be provisionally called upon to perform the lead-elder or senior pastor's review.
 - b. The lead-Elder or senior pastor selects a review committee to conduct a pastor's merit review, which will include the senior pastor, and 2 non-paid Elders.
 - c. The lead-Elder or senior pastor selects a review committee to conduct a staff member's merit review, which will include 3 people selected from the Eldership, the Stewardship Council or appropriate Staff.
2. During the 2 years when the Staff and Pastors are not eligible for a merit increase, they still undergo an annual review conducted by appropriate committees selected by the lead-Elder or senior pastor. In the case of the lead-Elder or senior pastor's review, a minimum of 3 non-paid Elders will comprise the review committee. Until 3 non-paid Elders are raised up and appointed, members of the Stewardship Council will be provisionally called upon to perform the lead-Elder or senior Pastor's annual review.

The performance reviews involve a self-evaluation from the employee, and qualitative and quantitative feedback. Financial bonuses are given when the quantitative feedback meets the threshold as outlined by the Elders and recorded in the staff policy manual.

3. The Annual Pastor Appreciation Sunday provides opportunity for the church Members to bless individual members of the pastoral team, and/or contribute financially to bless all the members of the pastoral team.

4. The Elders in consultation with the Stewardship Council can change the merit-based raise schedule and performance review bonuses as deemed appropriate, such as during times of inflation.

Section 3. Disbursements

The Elders shall be empowered to authorize the Treasurer to make any, and all disbursements.

Article VI **PROPERTY RIGHTS**

Section 1. All property shall be taken, held, sold, transferred, or conveyed in the corporate name of the church.

Section 2: The President of the Corporation or Treasurer of the church shall certify that any purchase, sale or financing has been duly affirmed such certificates shall be held as conclusive evidence thereof.

Section 3. In the event that the church herein mentioned ceases to function as a church body, the said property shall be sold and funds distributed to various churches and ministries as unanimously agreed upon by the Elders and Stewardship Council at time of closure.

Article VII **ORDER OF ANNUAL MEETING**

The Elders will set the agenda for any annual meeting or special meeting that is called. The Elders will work with the Stewardships Council to produce an annual report that consists of minutes from the prior meeting, as well as financial and ministry reports from the year prior. The Members will be given opportunity to ask questions pertaining to agenda items and to participate in voting, by way of affirming or not-affirming new Elders and Stewardship Council members.

Article VIII **AMENDMENTS**

The By-Laws may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the church by a majority affirmation of the Membership present, provided the proposed amendment has been announced publicly two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting, announcement to be made by the Elders.

Note: Use of masculine terms in the Constitution and By-Laws shall be deemed to include the corresponding feminine terms if equally appropriate in the context.