

Riverwood Community Church
Cannon Falls, Minnesota

Constitution

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Article One: Statement of Faith

The Bible

The basis for our belief is the Bible which consists of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. God gave us all the books of the Bible and His Spirit worked through chosen writers. The Bible is God's authority and reflects the backgrounds, styles, and vocabularies of the human authors. The books of the Bible in their original versions are without error and will never let us down. The Bible is our full and final authority over all practices and beliefs. No other writings are God-given in the same way as the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21)

God

We believe there is one true, holy, perfect God. God has always existed and always will as three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Genesis 1:1; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1,3; 4:24; Acts 5:3,4; Romans 1:20; Ephesians 4:5,6; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

God is our Creator: God created, out of nothing, the world and everything in it.

God is our Provider: God continues to be actively involved sustaining all of creation.

God is our Savior: Throughout history and because of His love, God has and will continue to give the way and the means for people to return to God and escape from sin and death.

Salvation: Rescue & Renewal

In the Bible, God invites all people into a relationship with Him. People were originally created to know and love God, but we rebelled and chose our own way. As a result, we are blocked from intimacy with God and we are unable to please God since our entire self is distorted. Our sinful separation from God took place at the beginning of human history, and all individuals since have suffered the consequences of:

separation from God and
a corrupted sinful nature.

Therefore, we are all in need of God's rescue from our condition. (Genesis 1:26,27; 3:1,24; Romans 3:25; 5:12-18; 1 John 1:8)

God offers His salvation as a free gift of His love. He does not offer it as a result of our goodness or our efforts. And there is no other way back into a relationship with God except by accepting His gift of salvation by turning from sin and turning to Jesus. Once an individual has done this, God promises in the Bible that:

all sin is forgiven,
the individual is made new as a child of God,
and God will bring the work of renewal to completion.

(John 3:3,5; 1:12,13; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Ephesians 2:8,9)

Jesus Christ: Savior

Jesus Christ is fully God - the second Person of God's three persons - and fully human - through a miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and a virgin birth. (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13). He perfectly obeyed God the Father throughout His life. By His own choice, he paid for the sins of all by dying on the cross as our substitute. His death on the cross:

satisfied the just demands of God and
rescued and renewed all who trust in Him alone.

Jesus rose from the dead in the same body, though heavenly-transformed, in which He lived and died. He ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father. He serves as the only Mediator between the Father and people, pleading to the Father on behalf of His followers. He shall return to earth, personally and visibly, to bring to a close human history and to fulfill God's biblical plan. (Isaiah 53; Matthew 20:28; John 3:16; Romans 3:24-26; 5:1; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 2:2; Matthew 28:6; Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:14; Matthew 26:64; Acts 2:33-36; Hebrews 7:25)

The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life

The Holy Spirit was sent into the world by the Father and the Son to apply Christ's salvation to the world. The Holy Spirit:

brings God's ways to light in the minds of sinners,
wakes them up about their need for a Savior,
and, when they choose Jesus, He gives them a new birth in Christ.

At the point of accepting God's gift of Jesus as Savior, turning from sin, and agreeing to follow Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in each Christ-committed follower. In the Christ-follower, the Holy Spirit:

...provides spiritual assurance, strength, comfort, help, and wisdom.
...plants a unique gift for building up the church.
...guides in understanding and applying the Bible.

The natural response to God's love and a genuine life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ is the pursuit of a life of holiness and obedience to God. Christ-committed followers develop in these areas only by allowing the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of God's three persons, in their lives. Through faith, the Christ-follower accesses the Holy Spirit's power and control. Only then is it possible for the Christ-follower to lead a life of Christ-like character that achieves God's purposes. (John 16:5-15; Romans 8:16,23,26,27; 1 Corinthians 12:7-31)

Human Destiny

Death fixes the afterlife for each person. Everyone will be raised into the spiritual world in bodily form. A judgment will determine the fate of each individual. Those who have not followed Christ and accepted His gift of salvation will be separated from God forever into everlasting punishment. Christ-followers will be ushered into a heavenly kingdom and a relationship with God that lasts forever. (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Matthew 24:42-51; Matthew 25:1-13; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:4-6,11-15)

The Church

When a person agrees to accept Christ's gift of salvation and follow Him, they automatically join the ranks of all Christ-committed followers. All believers are members of Christ's body, the Church. There is one true worldwide Church made up of all those who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and as their Lord.

The Bible commands Christ-followers to meet together and be committed to:

worship,
prayer,
the teaching of the Bible,
the observance of baptism and communion as established by Jesus Christ
(Acts 2:28-47; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 8:36-40; 10:47; 18:8;
Romans 6:3,4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29),

Baptism means to totally cover or immerse. Jesus directed His followers to be baptized which would show them to be totally covered with the Holy Spirit. His disciples made a conscious decision to be baptized. They displayed this by being immersed into water. We believe that this example of baptism holds the richest connection to biblical example and testifies most accurately to others that we are Christ's and have chosen to humbly identify ourselves with His death and return to life. Other methods of believer's baptism are not practiced except in rare instances where a total water immersion would be dangerous or unavailable.

Communion remembers our need for Christ, our acceptance of His sacrifice for our sins, and our unity in Him and His body, the church. We participate together as a church in sharing a communion "meal" of broken bread and juice. The broken bread reminds us of Christ's body, which was broken for our sins, and it also reminds us of our unity as we share in one loaf together. The juice reminds us of Christ's blood spilled to purify us and make us holy and acceptable to God. It also represents a victory celebration of our eternal life in Christ - forever with Him in His Kingdom.

Christ-centered community with each other,
service to the church through the development and use of talents and gifts,
the giving and sharing of material resources with each other and the church, and
outreach to the world (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Wherever Christ-committed followers meet regularly in obedience to this command, the church, the body of Christ, is represented locally. Under the guidance and care of pastors and other leadership, the church's members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of loving God and loving others in Christ. (Romans 12:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:12-16; Hebrews 10:24-25)

Article Two: Name and Affiliation

The name of this organization will be Riverwood Community Church. This church is associated with the Minnesota Iowa Baptist Conference and Converge Worldwide, the Baptist General Conference.

Article Three: Mission Statement

Riverwood Community Church is here to glorify God by reconciling lives through the love of Christ.

Article Four: Participating Membership

Conditions of Participating Membership: A Participating Member...

1. Has made a personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and evidences a desire to live a consistent Christian life.
2. Has indicated agreement with Riverwood's Faith, Purpose and Commitment, and Vision statements.
3. Has indicated a willingness to abide by this constitution and its bylaws.
4. Has successfully completed Riverwood's Participating Membership procedure – (c.f., Bylaws Article 6)
5. Has demonstrated obedience to Christ and His commands.

Article Five: Church Government

The Board of Elders and Ministry Teams, along with pastoral staff, will be responsible for the general operation of the affairs of the church in accordance with the constitution and bylaws. Major items of business will be brought before the Participating Membership to be voted upon.

Article Six: Congregational meetings

Worship

The church will meet Sundays for corporate worship.

Business meetings

The church will hold annual business meetings with special business meetings scheduled as needed.

Article Seven: Amendments

This document, known as the Riverwood Community Church Constitution, contains the principles and beliefs of the church. Amendments to this constitution will be by two-thirds vote of Participating Members present at any business meeting of this church provided each amendment will have been presented in writing, posted, and announced at least three (3) months in advance of the meeting. At no time will any amendment be adopted that would be determined to be contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

Article Eight: Acquisition, Disposition and Encumbrance of Real Property

In a case of division of the Participating Membership, church property will belong to those Participating Members who abide by this constitution. In a case of discontinuance of the church program, the church property and debt will be transferred to the Minnesota Iowa Baptist Conference.

Any action involving the construction of, financing of, or addition to the church facilities outside of budgeted expenditures must be approved by the Participating Membership at a business meeting called for such purpose and any sale, lease, transfer, or disposition of all of the church property and assets shall likewise be approved by the Participating Membership at a business meeting called for such purpose.

Once the Participating Membership has voted in favor of such action, the Elder Board has authority, by affirmative vote, to borrow money, buy, lease, acquire, own, hold, improve, use and deal in and with, real or personal property, or an interest in property, wherever located, and may sell, convey, mortgage, create a security interest in, lease, exchange, transfer or dispose of all or a part of it's real or personal property, or an interest in property, wherever located.

Riverwood Community Church Bylaws

Article 1 – Ministry Expressions

Ministry Expressions

As we live out our mission, we are committed to these six expressions of life with Christ:

Devotion: Our devotion to God is borne out of gratitude for what He has done for us.

We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Community: True community is realized when our lives are ‘reconciled’ to God and relationships ‘reconciled’ to each other. Our ‘one-another’ lifestyle-rooted in love enables us to link arms as one unified Body. (2 Corinthians 13:11)

Discipleship: Through our lives and our words we help others have a deeper and clearer understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We also help each other become more faithful and active followers of Jesus Christ every day. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Service: We are called to serve others with whatever gifts we have received. (1 Peter 4:12)

Outreach: Christ compels us to reach out. We do not seek our own benefit but that of others, that they may be saved by the grace of God through faith. (Luke 19:10)

Sending: By identifying those who will go, sending those called by the Holy Spirit, supporting those who go, and those who receive them, we will fulfill Jesus’ call to send out laborers into the harvest. (Matthew 9:37-38, Acts 13:1-3)

Article 2 - Definition of Participating Membership

All people who have chosen to accept Christ's work on the cross for their sins and now follow Him in an intimate relationship as Lord and Savior are members of the all-time, all-places church. Those Christ-committed followers who have chosen to align themselves with Riverwood in its ministry, worship, and purposes may become "Participating Members" of Riverwood as further defined in Article Four of the constitution.

Article 3 - Privileges of Participating Membership

1. It identifies a person as a Christ-committed follower (Ephesians 2:9, Romans 12:5)
2. It provides a spiritual family to support and encourage a person in a walk with Christ (Galatians 6:1-2, Hebrews 1:24-25)
3. It gives a person a place to discover and use gifts in ministry (1 Corinthians 12:4-27)
4. It places a person under the spiritual protection of Christ-centered leaders (Hebrews 13:17, Acts 20:28-29)
5. It gives a person the accountability needed to grow (Ephesians 5:21)

Article 4 - Responsibilities of Participating Membership

With the privilege of membership come certain responsibilities. As they are enabled by God to do so, members will:

1. Pray regularly for other members and the church pastor(s) and leadership;
2. Regularly participate in the ministries of Riverwood Community Church;
3. Care for others in the Body of Christ and prayerfully consider ministry within the church;
4. Seek to follow Christ and His example in attitude and activity;
5. Share the good news of forgiveness in Christ with those who do not know Him; and
6. Give regularly and intentionally of God's financial provision to support the work of the church.

Article 5 - Discipline of Participating Membership

If a Participating Member of Riverwood Community Church is found to be in persistent, unrepentant sin, action will be initiated to correct the sinning member. This will be done with a concern for redemption and reconciliation rather than punishment and ostracism.

Biblical authority for church discipline is founded upon the following two principles:

- (1) Believers are directed to not "...continue in sin..." (Romans 6:1); and
- (2) Sin in the Christian's life is to be confessed and forsaken (I John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13).

Disciplinary action toward a member who persists in sin will be initiated only after it is clear that the member has been approached:

- (A) individually (according to Matthew 18:15); and if he/she does not respond then
- (B) with one or two other mature believers (Matthew 18:16; Galatians 6:1)

If, after both of these actions, the member continues in the sin, a written complaint should be submitted by the "witnesses" of (B) to the Board of Elders. The Elder Board will carefully investigate the complaint attempting to bring about clarity and restoration. If all reasonable efforts fail to resolve the issue, the Elder Board will decide on further action.

Sins requiring discipline that may eventually result in exclusion from membership and leadership include:

- 1) Sins of human character that obscure the holiness of God (I Corinthians 5:11);
- 2) Sins of divisiveness that bring confusion to the work of the church (Romans 16:17); and
- 3) Sins that violate the truth of God by promoting false doctrine (II Peter 2:1-3)

Article 6 - Procedure for becoming a Participating Member

1. Prior to acceptance as a Participating Member, each person will complete an introductory class that will cover Riverwood's vision, values, beliefs and what it means to be a Participating Member. This class will be led by the pastor or other

person appointed by the Board of Elders.

2. A person interested in membership will meet with two or more Elder Board members to determine that he/she agrees to uphold the conditions of membership (c.f., Constitution, Article 4).
3. The Elder Board will introduce new members to the Participating Membership at an annual or special business meeting, or in a membership-wide publication.

Article 7 - Procedure for terminating Participating Membership

1. A Participating Member requesting a letter of transfer to another church will be granted a letter stating his/her Participating Membership status at Riverwood.
2. When a Participating Member joins another church, his/her membership in Riverwood Community Church is terminated without further action. Riverwood Participating Members who are missionaries and join another church where they are serving may retain their membership in Riverwood Community Church. Participating Members may also retain their membership when they are temporarily relocated to another city for their job or education and choose to join a local church in that community.
3. A Participating Member may terminate their membership upon request.
4. A Participating Member who does not make an involved contact with the church for one year will be put on an inactive list. A staff member, or representative of Riverwood Community Church will attempt to contact him/her. If there is no response within 6 months, the membership will be terminated.
5. A Participating Member whom the Elder Board determines to be guilty of gross misconduct contrary to Article 4 of Riverwood Community Church's Constitution, will be removed from the Participating Membership by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders. That action will be taken only after reasonable efforts, as outlined in the preceding Discipline of Participating Members section (Bylaws, Article 5)

Article 8 - Church Leadership

Elder Board

A. Qualifications

1. A Participating Member of Riverwood Community Church;
2. One who has demonstrated leadership, giftedness in ministry, and a willingness to serve (I Peter 5:2-3);
3. One who is spiritually mature, i.e., not a new believer (I Timothy 3:6);
4. One who is able to communicate biblical knowledge in the leader's specific area of ministry (I Timothy 3:2);
5. One who possesses a good reputation within and outside the church (I Timothy 3:2.7; Titus 1:6);
6. One who demonstrates self-control and appropriate biblical attitudes in relationships (I Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:6-7);
7. One who demonstrates a measure of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); and
8. One who is a member of a small group and regularly participates in public

worship at Riverwood Community Church.

9. One who has followed Christ's command, and example, by being immersed after coming to faith.

B. Responsibilities of Board of Elders

The Elder Board along with the pastoral staff and Ministry Teams, will be responsible for the general operation of the affairs of the church in accordance with the constitution and bylaws.

C. Selection

New Elder Board members will be selected by the following process

(c.f. Acts 14:23, Titus 1:6)

1. The Board of Elders will welcome suggestions for potential Elder Board members from the congregation.
2. The Board of Elders will tentatively select new Elder Board members and announce them to the congregation.
3. If Participating Members of the church have an objection to a proposed leader, they may present that objection to the Board of Elders (c.f. I Timothy 5:19).
4. The Board of Elders will appoint Elder Board members by unanimous agreement.
5. Participating Membership will confirm the appointment of new Elder Board members by simple majority vote at an annual or special business meeting.
6. With God's guidance, we will strive for a minimum of five (5) and a maximum of ten (10) Elder Board members at any one time.
7. The Senior Pastor will automatically be a Elder Board member.

D. Terms of Service

1. Elder Board members will continue in their service if they are willing to serve and if they are reconfirmed in that position every year by the Board of Elders and Participating Members.
2. A Elder Board member can be removed at any time by a three-fourths vote of the remainder of the Elder Board.
3. Members of the Board of Elders may not serve for more than four (4) consecutive years (with the exception of the Senior Pastor), but may be reappointed after a one year absence.

Article 9 – Pastors

A. Qualifications

1. Senior Pastor
Same as those for the Board of Elders (Bylaws, Article 8) as well as possession of gifts, abilities, educational and professional qualifications.
2. Other pastoral staff
Same as those for the Board of Elders (Bylaws, Article 8) as well as possession of gifts and abilities which qualify them for their specified area of ministry.

B. Responsibilities

Position descriptions and titles will be presented at the time of call and will be reviewed annually by the Board of Elders. The Senior Pastor will be a member of the Board of Elders.

C. Selection

1. Senior Pastor

A Call Committee will be appointed by the Board of Elders and ratified by the Participating Membership. This committee will include two (2) current Elder Board members. A candidate will be presented to the Board of Elders and to the congregation. An affirmative vote of ninety (90) percent of Participating Members present at a special business meeting will be required to call the Senior Pastor. The vote will be by written, secret ballot.

2. Other pastoral staff

The Senior Pastor will recommend to the Board of Elders any additions to the pastoral staff. The Elder Board will consider such recommendations and extend a call if deemed appropriate.

D. Term

1. Resignation

Pastors will serve indefinitely. Resignations will be acted upon by the Elder Board. The time and terms of the resignation will be established by the Elder Board, the Senior Pastor, and the resigning Pastor (may or may not be the Senior Pastor).

2. Termination

Senior Pastor -

The matter of dismissal of the Senior Pastor will be handled with the same spirit as discussed in guidelines for discipline of church members (c.f. Bylaws, Articles 5). A recommendation for the dismissal may be initiated by the Elder Board. The Board of Elders will make reasonable effort to resolve grievances before any termination occurs. The Participating Membership may dissolve the pastoral relationship by a majority vote at any business meeting with the terms of dismissal determined by the Board of Elders, including a minimum of three months salary and benefits.

Other pastoral staff-

Termination will be acted upon by the Elder Board after careful consideration and consultation. The Board of Elders will make a reasonable effort to resolve grievances before any termination occurs.

Article 10 – Staff

A. Ministry staff

1. Qualifications

The same as for other pastoral staff (c.f. Bylaws, Article 9.A.2).

2. Responsibilities

Position descriptions will be presented at the time of hiring and reviewed annually.

3. Selection

The pastor(s) will work closely with the Board of Elders to determine the best available candidate(s). The Elder Board and will hire all ministry staff within budgetary appropriations.

4. Term

Ministry staff will serve indefinitely. Resignations will be acted upon by the Board of Elders. The time and terms of the resignation will be established by the Elder Board. The Elder Board will make a reasonable effort to resolve grievances before any termination occurs. Termination will be acted upon by the Board of Elders after careful consideration and consultation.

B. Administrative staff

Other staff members will be hired within budgetary appropriations by the Senior Pastor to carry out the church's ministry. Position descriptions will be presented at the time of hiring and reviewed annually. Termination will be acted upon by the Senior Pastor after careful consideration and consultation with the Board of Elders. The Senior Pastor will make a reasonable effort to resolve grievances before any termination occurs.

Article 11 - Ministry Teams

Ministry teams shall be formed as required to implement the varied ministries of Riverwood Community Church and shall be chartered by the Senior Pastor to carry out those ministries. The Senior Pastor will determine (on an annual basis) which ministry teams will function at Riverwood Community Church. This determination will be made based upon the recommendation of church staff in accord with Riverwood Community Church's purpose, strategies, and objectives.

Ministry Team Leaders

Ministry team leaders shall be appointed annually and are subject to approval by the Elder Board.

Article 12 - Business Meetings

Fiscal and Appointment Year Designation

The fiscal year of the church will be from July 1 to June 30. The appointment year of Riverwood Community Church will be from August 1 to July 31.

Annual meeting

At the annual meeting held every July, the budget and other major items of business will be presented. In preparation for the meeting, the Board of Elders will provide church members with written reports from key ministries, together with a financial report, budget, and a report from the Senior Pastor at least two

weeks prior to the annual meeting. In addition, the newly selected Board of Elders will be announced and commissioned for service at the annual meeting.

Special meetings

Special meeting of the members of the church may be called by the Board of Elders, the Senior Pastor, or by fifteen (15) percent of the Participating Members submitting a petition to the Elder Board for the purpose of the stated call of the meeting. All meetings of the church will be conducted in an orderly and gracious manner.

Notice of meetings

Notice of date, hour, and reason for special meeting will be publicized two (2) consecutive Sundays in advance of the meeting. Exceptions to this include mortgaging, conveying, or encumbering of real property of the church that require written and verbal announcements for four (4) consecutive Sundays and changes to the constitution (which can only be changed at annual meetings following three (3) months notification).

Quorum

Twenty-five (25) percent of the Participating Membership of the church will constitute a quorum of any duly called meeting for the purpose of transacting business.

Voting

Each Participating Member, eighteen years of age and older present at the meeting, will be entitled to one vote in each matter. The vote of the majority of the members present and those voting by absentee ballot will constitute the act of all members unless otherwise specified in the constitution or bylaws. Absentee ballots are valid if received by the Board of Elders prior to the meeting at which the vote occurs, accompanied by a valid reason for absence.

A written ballot vote will be required for:

- Senior Pastor Call Committee
- Calling of a Senior Pastor
- Acquiring, selling, or building upon real property
- Borrowing money
- Changes in the constitution/bylaws

Article 13 – Amendments

Changes to the bylaws must be presented to the church by the Board of Elders and then passed by a simple majority vote of the Participating Members present at any business meeting. A copy of the proposed change(s) will be presented in writing, posted, and announced two (2) consecutive Sundays in advance of the meeting. No bylaw may alter any part of the constitution.