



*Valley Heights*

*Community Church*

*Isaiah 41:17-20*

*Let Us*

*Introduce Ourselves*

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# WELCOME

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to introduce you to Valley Heights Community Church. This manual has been developed to assist anyone who is interested in discovering what Valley Heights is all about.

As representatives of Jesus Christ, we believe we have a responsibility, accountability and, indeed, privilege to openly reveal our beliefs and approach to ministry to those who consider worshipping with us. Paul, in Acts 17, commended the “noble” Bereans for “receiving the message with great eagerness and examining the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” We believe all ambassadors for Christ should welcome scrutiny of their ministries and gospel message.

At Valley Heights Community Church we desire to be a God centered Church. This is displayed by our commitment to the following realities.

**God is Sovereign.** We acknowledge God rules over everything and is in complete control of our lives. We exist for God - He doesn't exist for us. Therefore, everything we do is done to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).

**The Bible is Our Only Authority.** We look to no other source for truth. In the Bible we find everything we need for spiritual life and godliness. Preaching, teaching, reading, and applying the Word of God are the highest form of worship we know.

**Salvation is Wholly a Gift From God.** “My hope is in the Lord, Who gave Himself for me, and paid the price for all my sin at Calvary.”

**Pure Lives Honour God.** The greatest love we can show God is to continually turn to Him from sin and live pure lives so that people have no doubt Jesus is living in us.

**The Church is Christ's Body on Earth.** As representatives of Jesus Christ in our community, we bring Christ's message of peace with God, forgiveness of sin, and hope for the future through faith in the Lord.

From the beginning Valley Heights has been committed to the Lord Jesus Christ receiving glory in His church. Our commitment has not changed. Our prayer is that God may call you to put your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. As you consider this introduction to Valley Heights, we trust you will see that our goal is to honour Jesus alone.

Knowing and obeying Jesus is the heart of giving glory to God!

*Tim Champ*

# An Introduction to Valley Heights Community Church

## I. Our Mission

*Valley Heights Community Church is committed to excellence in communicating the truths of the Bible and to living authentic Christian lives so that we may glorify God and make Him known in our community and in our world.*

## II. Our Mandate

During the Lord Jesus' ministry on earth He gave many instructions to His disciples to prepare them for the roles they would play as He built His Church. Two statements in particular are significant in establishing the mandate God has given His followers to obey. Notice six specific commands Jesus gave in these statements.

### The Great Commandment

*“**Love the Lord your God** with **all** your heart, and with **all** your soul, and with **all** your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, “You shall **Love your neighbor** as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”* Matthew 22:36-40

### The Great Commission

*“**Go** therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe** all that I commanded you.”* Matthew 28:19-20

*Six Commands for the church:*

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” | <b><u>Exalt</u></b>      |
| 2. “Love your neighbor as yourself”             | <b><u>Encourage</u></b>  |
| 3. “Go”   | <b><u>Extend</u></b>     |
| 4. “Make disciples”                             | <b><u>Edify</u></b>      |
| 5. “Baptizing them”                             | <b><u>Evangelize</u></b> |
| 6. “Teaching them”                              | <b><u>Equip</u></b>      |

Jesus, Himself, **MODELED** these 6 commands: John 17:1-26

Vs.4 "I have brought you glory on earth."

**Exaltation**

Vs.6 "I revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world"

**Evangelism**

Vs.8 "I gave them the words You gave me"

**Equipping**

Vs.12 "While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe"

**Encouragement**

Vs.17 "Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth "

**Edification**

Vs.18 "As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world"

**Extension**

The first church **PRACTICED** these 6 commands: Acts 2:41-47

"Those who accepted his message were baptized (**Evangelism**)... They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (**Equipping**) and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (**Exaltation**) ...All the believers were together...they gave to anyone as he had need (**Edify**)...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts (**Extension**). They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (**Encourage**), praising God (**Exaltation**)...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (**Evangelism**).

Paul **EXPLAINED** these 6 commands: Ephesians 4:11-16

"God gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people (**Equip**) for works of ministry (**Extension**), so that the body of Christ may be built up (**Edify**) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God (**Evangelism**) and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (**Exaltation**) ... From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up (**Edify**) in love (**Encourage**), as each part does its work."

Valley Heights Community Church **ARTICULATES** these 6 commands:

**Mission Statement:**

Valley Heights Community Church is committed to excellence in communicating the truths of the Bible (**Edify & Equip**) and to living authentic Christian lives (**Encourage**) so that we may glorify God (**Exalt**) and make Him known (**Evangelize**) in our community and in our world (**Extension**).

### III. Our Method

We focus our attention on 3 areas

#### The “Foolishness” of Preaching the Bible

The Bible provides us with wonderful and direct counsel for determining our method of ministry. What does the Bible say about the method we are to use to reach our purposes? 1 Corinthians 1:20-25 says, *“Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, **God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.** Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but **we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.”***

The Bible says it is through the foolishness of what is preached that God saves people. An essential question to ask then is, “what is the church to preach?” The Bible answers that question for us in 2 Timothy 4:1-2. *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: **Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage- with great patience and careful instruction.**”*

At Valley Heights the focus of each worship service, Sunday School class, and Bible study, is the proclamation of God’s matchless Word. The Bible alone is the source of truth concerning the character of God, the nature of man, the way of salvation, and the hope of heaven. Declaring Biblical truth is our highest privilege as Jesus Christ’s ambassadors. (2 Timothy 3:15-17; James 1:4-5; 2 Peter 1:3-4)

#### The Joy of Praising God

Ephesians 1:3-4 says, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.”* Jesus Christ is the only One Who cleanses us of all our sin. Therefore, giving praise to Him is at the center of all we do, every time we get together. Exalting our Lord through worshipful music, sacrificial giving, and faithful preaching is our highest expression of thanks and love toward the One Who saves us.

#### The Necessity of Practicing the Truth

People who have been called away from the penalty and power of sin, to serve Jesus Christ and His church, are the greatest testimony of God’s work. And it is God’s Word lived out in the lives of God’s children, that accomplishes His work. Loving and serving one another and the world around us is our highest calling in a world in need of grace and truth.

## IV. Our Message

**The Gospel according to Jesus Christ** is the very foundation of Valley Heights Community Church. The word “gospel” means “good news” or “good message.” And the “good news” is that God has chosen to save people “from every tribe and language and people and nation” on earth (Revelation 5:9). By His grace, God has chosen to save people from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and ultimately from the presence of sin.

The Bible’s teaching concerning the gospel must be carefully defined and articulated because it is essential for true salvation. Many people today are confused as to how salvation is produced. Salvation is not produced by any act of man. It is not produced by religious activity such as baptism, confirmation, communion, church membership, church attendance, trying to keep the Ten Commandments, or by living a morally good life. It is not produced by giving to charity or by believing there is a God. Salvation is not even produced by a person professing to have faith or to be a Christian. All of these may give evidence that salvation has occurred, but they do not in themselves produce salvation. The following brief outline expresses what the Bible teaches concerning how salvation is produced.

### 1) **Salvation is a Sovereign Work of God!**

There is nothing a person can do to produce salvation. No amount of good deeds or religious activity can make a person right with God. That salvation must necessarily be a work of God is seen negatively and positively in the Bible. Negatively, it is seen in that “*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*” (Romans 3:10-12). It is also seen in the reality that we were all dead in our transgressions and sins before God made us alive (Ephesians 2:1-5). Positively, it is seen in that God is the One Who chooses us to be His children, and He is the One Who saves us (Eph. 1:4-5; Titus 3:3-5).

Consider the following: Isa. 64:6; John 1:10-13; 3:16-21; John 6:37,44-45, 65; Eph.1:3-14; 2:1-10; Luke 18:26-27; Romans 8:7-9; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Col. 2:13; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:1-3.

### 2) **“The Son Gives Life to Whom He Wishes” (John 5:21)**

God is always the One to initiate a relationship with a person. In John 8:34 Jesus said that “*everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*” All people are born with a sin nature and all people sin. Therefore all people are slaves to sin and must obey their master. How can a person be set free from sin then? Jesus went on to say “*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*” There is no life apart from the Son giving it. And “*the Son gives life to whom He wishes.*” (John 5:21; 6:70; 8:34-36; 10:26-28)

### 3) **Saving Faith is a Gift from God**

The Bible talks about a kind of faith that is nothing more than intellectual acceptance of Jesus Christ but that does not save (John 2:23-25; 8:31-32; 12:42-43; James 2:14). People can bring themselves to a place where they can intellectually accept the teachings of the Bible. But the kind of faith that saves a person is the kind of faith that responds with trust in Jesus Christ

and obedience to His teaching- it is an active faith. Jesus said, *“If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:31-32). This kind of faith is a gift of God: *“For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith- and this not from yourselves, it is the free gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast”*(Ephesians 2:8-9).

(Eph. 2:1-10; Acts 13:48; Philippians 1:6, 29; Hebrews 12:2)

#### 4) **Salvation is for Sinners**

Jesus made a truly fascinating comment one day to some religious people who criticized Him for spending time with “sinners.” In Luke 5:31-32 He said, *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* From what we know in Romans 3 there are no righteous people before God, so what did Jesus mean by saying He did not come to call the righteous? Though there are no truly righteous people, many people refuse to accept that, and believe themselves to be good, righteous, and acceptable to God. Such people are blinded by pride and can see no need of having faith in Jesus Christ. They are spiritually blind yet they will not acknowledge their condition nor their need of a Saviour. Their response to Jesus Christ is sure evidence that they have not been called by God and are not His children. The mark of one in whom God is working salvation is a humble attitude that recognizes he has nothing to offer God and therefore cries out for God to have mercy on him. He knows and confesses he is a sinner in need of a Saviour. For such there is salvation.

(Matthew 5:3; Luke 5:31-32; Luke 18:9-14)

#### 5) **Salvation Produces a New Life**

It is essential to understand that salvation is a sovereign work of God. Biblically it is defined by what it produces, not by what one does to get it. Good works are not necessary to earn salvation. But true salvation produced by God will not fail to result in a new life that is characterized by good works. Salvation that is produced by God cannot prove defective. Because it is the work of God, it will go on to produce the fruit of true salvation: repentance, faith, submission, obedience, and ultimately glorification. Those who profess to believe but live lives of disobedience to God’s Word and eventually walk away from the faith demonstrate that their faith was not produced by God- they were never truly “born again.”

(John 3:1-21; 2 Cor.5:17; Romans 12:1-2; Phil. 1:6; James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:19)

## V. Our Ministry

Being a member of [Valley Heights Community Church](#) means sharing a passion for ...

*Honouring Our Saviour*  
*Extending God's Kingdom*  
*Investing Ourselves In Others*  
*Glorifying God*  
*Healing The Broken Hearted*  
*Teaching The Word*  
*Serving Our Community with a Spirit of Sacrifice*

There are an endless number of ways we can pursue these goals both personally and as a congregation. The following provides a starting place.

### 1. *Honouring Our Saviour*

1. We proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives (John 20:28; Romans 10:9).
2. We pursue personal holiness - living pure lives that honour God (1 Peter 1:13-16).
3. We practice the spiritual disciplines of worship, prayer, Bible study, and fellowship (Acts 2:42-47).

### 2. *Extending God's Kingdom*

1. We actively introduce our families, friends, and neighbors to Jesus Christ (John 1:35-45).
2. We express God's love and hope by proclaiming the message of salvation to our community (2 Cor.5:17-21).
3. We extend the Great Commission to other communities beyond our own through training people for ministry and by planting new churches (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-47).

### 3. *Investing Ourselves in Others*

1. We acknowledge that all we have is a gift from God and is available for Him to use as He pleases.
2. We use the blessings God has given us, our time, talents, and possessions to demonstrate the love of Jesus to others (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).
3. We train people in the Word, then encourage them to use their gifts for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31; Phil.4:9).

### 4. *Glorifying God*

1. We declare the sovereignty of God in our lives and relationships, being controlled by His Spirit and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (1 Chronicles 29:11; Ps.115:1-3; Ephesians 5:18-21)
2. We encourage believers to seek often the heart of God, experiencing Him personally, finding greatest pleasure in Him alone, and consistently living a life "worthy of the calling" (Ps.37:4-6;

Ps.73:25; John 7:37; Ephesians 4:1).

3. We exalt God through worship and teaching that is centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ (Eph.3:20-21; Col.1:28).

#### 5. *Healing The Broken Hearted*

1. We teach people to commit everything to prayer, recognizing our complete dependence on God (Phil. 4:4-7).

2. We provide a place of love and acceptance, encouragement and accountability. A place where people care for one another so that needs are met in a relevant and effective way (2 Cor. 7:2-10).

3. We proclaim the sufficiency of Scripture, the power of prayer, and the love of Jesus displayed by the community of believers, as effective to heal the broken hearted (Psalm 19; Psalm 119; Gal. 6:1).

#### 6. *Teaching The Bible*

1. We continuously impart Biblical truth, preaching and teaching with authority and conviction (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 4:1-5).

2. We develop thinking Christians who are equipped with solid Biblical knowledge, able to give an answer to all who ask the reason for the hope we have (2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Peter 3:15).

3. We provide opportunities for interactive learning, where people feel comfortable to investigate Christianity - a place for people to be heard and get their objections and questions addressed (Acts 17:11).

#### 7. *Serving Our Community with a Spirit of Sacrifice*

1. We follow our Lord's example of putting others first and making their needs a priority (John 13:1-5; Phil. 2:1-11).

2. We respond to the needs of our community as a result of God's love for us, and as a demonstration of our love for Jesus Christ (1 John 4:19-21).

3. We actively look for opportunities to put our faith into action by serving those who cross our path and have a need (Luke 10:25-37; Galatians 6:7-10; James 2:14-17).

## VI. Our Measure (The standard for evaluating our ministry)

The church never measures its success according to criteria set by the world. A church's success is not determined by the number of people who attend, the size of its buildings or bank account, or the number of programs it runs.

A "successful" church is one in which everything is done for the glory of God. We believe the following passage from Ephesians 4 sets forth clear characteristics of a God-honouring church.

*"<sup>11</sup> And He [Jesus Christ] gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*

*<sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. "*

*Ephesians 4:11-16*

How does this passage apply to Valley Heights? As we continue to serve God we will evaluate our ministry according to the following questions:

- are our leaders equipping people to serve God?
- are we becoming unified in our beliefs and understanding of the Bible?
- are we growing spiritually, maturing in the faith as we become more like Jesus Christ?
- are we doctrinally stable and able to identify and refute false teaching?
- do we speak the truth to one another in a loving way so that we build one another up rather than tear each other down?
- are we interdependent - do we work together, supporting one another, growing together, loving each other, each one doing his/her own part?

# VALLEY HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CHURCH

## BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

### INTRODUCTION

A philosophy of ministry is a set of *unalterable principles* that determines how we will function in our ministry. Simply stated, our philosophy of ministry defines *why* we do what we do.

- A. It develops a *unity* of direction and encourages consistent communication of our purpose and overall direction.
- B. It defines each *aspect* of our ministry in relation to the *whole*.
- C. It forces us to determine our goals with an overall biblical understanding of ministry firmly in our minds.

### APPROACH

Everything we do must be based on a biblical foundation. This foundation (philosophy) provides the framework for measuring all that we do.

### A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION:

#### 1. A High View of God

- a. God is holy, righteous, and just (and other *perfections*).
- b. We must perceive ourselves as existing to bring glory to God rather than seeking our own glory and personal comfort. We must approach all ministry from a God-centered perspective which will practically lead to obedience of Jesus Christ and His teaching.

NOTE: A failure to have a high view of God leads to...

- A toleration of sin
- A focus on man, evidenced in teaching and programs

RESULT: The church reflects a man-centered ministry that attempts to please peers rather than glorify God.

Questions to consider:

- Do we teach with a focus on promoting God's holiness or man's comfort?
- Does our church practice biblical discipline (Matthew 18)?
- Do we have a reverence for the character of God?
- Do we compromise truth for the sake of pleasing people or maintaining the status quo?

A COMMITMENT TO A HIGH VIEW OF GOD leads us to view His Word as the perfect guide for our lives.

## 2. An Affirmation of God's Word

- a. Inspiration—the Bible is in total/ all/ completely the inspired Word of God. The Bible is “breathed out” by God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).
- b. Inerrancy—it contains no errors. God conveyed truth to individuals He chose, and what they wrote did not stray from the original pattern of truth as it existed in the mind of God (Psalm 19).
- c. Authority—simply stated: what it says I must do (Psa.119)! If we are to have a Biblical philosophy of ministry, it must seek its sole authority from the Word of God.
- d. Sufficiency—A belief in the sufficiency of Scripture **prohibits** any attempt to integrate it with psychology or worldly philosophies. 2 Pet. 1:3-4; Psa.19; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 4:12
- e. Relevancy—It is totally relevant for every situation. It may not give us an explicit answer to every specific problem, but it will *always* give us the principles by which we can, through obedience, glorify God. (Ps.19; 2 Tim.3:17; Psa.119:105; Isa.40:8).

NOTE: A failure to recognize the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency, and relevancy of the Word leads to:

- Pursuit of comfort, rather than obedience.
- Personal experience as your authority rather than the authority of God's Word.
- Contemporary thinking as your guide for living rather than the principles of divine truth.

RESULT: The church produces people who pursue their own desires based upon an ungodly standard. The result of this essential attitude- the right perspective of Scripture- will be a commitment to teaching sound doctrine, and then helping Christians learn how to change and grow.

Questions to consider:

- Do we humbly and willingly submit to the authority of the Word?
- Are our lives conforming to the Word?
- Are we teaching the Word in a way that people can apply it to their lives?
- Do we turn to God's Word to find the answers to people's problems?

AN AFFIRMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD is the basis of a biblical view of mankind.

## 3. An Accurate Understanding of Mankind

- a. People were created to glorify God, but because of sin, they seek to glorify themselves (Rom. 3:23).
- b. As a result of sin entering the world people are born totally depraved (Rom.5:12-21).  
Note: to be totally depraved does not mean that everyone performs every possible act of wickedness his nature is capable of, but rather it means:

- His goal in life is selfishness and only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).
- All his righteous deeds are like filthy rags because they are not the result of faith (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 14:24b).
- His heart is deceitfully wicked (Jer. 17:9-10).
- On his own he cannot and will not do good or seek God (Rom. 3:10-18).

NOTE: A sinner is separated from God, and as a result, he will seek fulfillment from the world's evil system (1 John 2:15-17). The implications are disturbing:

- Christ will not be seen as the only solution to man's needs.
- Substitutes will be provided that promise fulfillment and emphasize self-esteem rather than God's glory.
- *Felt* needs rather than *real* needs will be addressed.

RESULT: A failure to recognize this truth results in the church producing people who make choices to solve their life's problems based on what they believe will practically meet their perceived needs.

Questions to consider:

- Is the goal of our teaching to confront sin and see God change lives, or to please people and make them feel good about themselves?
- Are we more Christ-like today than we were a year ago? Can we measure spiritual progress?
- Are we living out a life that reflects total dependence on God as a model to the community?

KNOWING THIS encourages us to look for opportunities to meet real needs, not 'felt' needs. Therefore, the goal of everything we do is to direct people to a greater relationship with God through obedience to His Word. An accurate view of mankind enables us to correctly understand the purpose of the church.

#### **4. A Correct Understanding of the Purpose of the Church**

- a. The church exists to worship and glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31; Heb. 13:15).
- b. The church exists to teach the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).
- c. The church exists to provide a context of loving fellowship with one another for the purpose of building each other up in the faith (Eph. 3:16-19; 4:12-16).
- d. The church exists as a training center where people can grow through the application of teaching and the use of their spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14; Rom.12; Eph. 4).
- e. The church exists to be a light in this dark world, for the evangelization of God's elect (Mat. 5:13-16; 28:19-20; Titus 1:1-3; 2:11-15).

NOTE: A failure to correctly understand the purpose of the church leads to superficial and counterfeit ministry, resulting in disunity. "Program success" is glorified rather than God. People become passive spectators rather than active participants.

RESULT: The church becomes an organization, run by men and programs, rather than an organism of committed believers empowered by the Spirit of God.

Questions to consider:

- How do we define “ministry success”?
- Are people being equipped and motivated to exercise their spiritual giftedness?
- Does our ministry structure revolve around maintaining programs or building character into the lives of people?

A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSES OF THE CHURCH helps us to recognize the importance of biblical leadership.

### **5. Godly, Qualified Leadership.**

- a. Leaders must reflect the character of Christ to be models for the congregation (1 Thess. 2:4-12; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-5).
- b. Leaders must adequately equip people to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12).
- c. Leaders must provide ample opportunity for people to do this work (Heb.10:24-25).

NOTE:

- A failure to correctly understand biblical leadership leads to unbiblical discipleship and modeling.
- Unqualified leadership leads to ministry with a focus on skills or ability rather than godly character. This can lead to disqualifying sins.
- Lack of adequate equipping for the task leads to frustration, which can produce a high turnover of leadership.
- Unqualified leadership brings great harm and discouragement to the very ones the leaders seek to love and protect.

## **CONCLUSION**

A well-articulated philosophy of ministry that is biblical is essential to “doing ministry God’s way.” It’s crucial that this biblical philosophy of ministry be the grid through which all our ministry decisions are passed.

## Membership at Valley Heights Community Church

We believe that all those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and whose lives thus give ongoing evidence of true saving faith are members of the body of Christ. All such individuals are welcome at Valley Heights Community Church to enjoy the privileges and responsibilities of Christian fellowship, to worship God, to be ministered to through the preaching and teaching of the Word, and to participate in the ordinances commanded by the Lord, which are Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper.

### I. Why Have a Membership?

As one studies the New Testament it becomes very apparent that new believers in Jesus Christ associated themselves with other believers forming local congregations called churches. In Acts 2:41-47, those who received the message of the gospel were baptized and were added to the congregation of believers. The believers "*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread (communion) and to prayer*" ... "*All the believers were together and had everything in common.*" According to Acts 13:1, 'the church at Antioch' recognized specific individuals as leaders and teachers in the congregation. Acts 20 recounts how the apostle Paul, upon arrival in Miletus (vs. 17), "*sent for the elders of the Ephesian church.*" At the end of the book of Romans, Paul includes a lengthy list of individuals he wishes to send greetings to (Rom. 16), and he acknowledges their association with specific churches. When Paul writes the letter to the Philippians he addresses it, "*To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.*" Nearing the close of Paul's life and ministry, he writes Titus and says, "*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you*" (Titus 1:5).

Clearly, the New Testament demonstrates the practice of believers identifying themselves with, and committing themselves to, specific local congregations. We acknowledge that the Scriptures contain neither a mandate for nor a command against an official "membership roll." Valley Heights Community Church does have a membership roll for the purposes of encouraging unity and stability in doctrine, aiding in conducting business in an orderly manner, and providing legal protection in important church decisions. An individual's decision to be placed on the membership roll should flow from his/her commitment to the church and its doctrinal position.

### II. How to Become a Member

Any individual 18 years of age or older who confesses Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord, who is supportive of our Statement of Faith, Constitution, and Bylaws, and who exhibits a desire to continue to grow and mature in his/her walk with Christ, is qualified and eligible for membership in Valley Heights Community Church. Anyone who desires to become a member should contact one of the Elders and request membership. If the individual meets the qualifications for membership, he/she will be placed on the roll and will be acknowledged before the congregation as a new member. Members are encouraged to attend and participate fully in all official meetings of the membership.

### III. What is Church Discipline?

"Church Discipline" is a term that has been used to describe the Church's loving involvement in the personal lives of believers who are struggling with sin. On occasion a Christian will wander away from the fellowship of other believers and become involved in sin through ignorance or willful disobedience. One means by which the church seeks to lovingly restore wandering believers is the process of church discipline. This always should be done with an attitude of deep humility and gentleness with a goal that the person would repent and be restored to fellowship. Though church discipline is often on a private level between two believers, the elders in a local church have the responsibility and authority to ensure that the biblical guidelines are followed. As shepherds of the flock, the elders love the sheep and are also held accountable by God for their spiritual welfare, including that of those who wander away. As in Jesus' parable in Luke 15:3-8, it is a time of joy, both in heaven and within the church, when a wandering Christian truly repents and is restored to his family.

Prayer and the person and work of the Holy Spirit are crucial in the church discipline process. It is only through God's working that anyone will turn from their sin, which is always the goal of church discipline.

#### Situations in which church discipline applies

##### *Matters of personal conduct & lifestyle:*

- Lying to and testing the Holy Spirit; hypocrisy (Acts 5:1-11)
- Sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, swindling (1 Cor. 5:1-13)
- Idleness, busybodies (1 Thess. 5:14, 2 Thess. 3:6, 11-13)

##### *Unresolved interpersonal issues (Matt. 18:17).*

##### *Matters of church conduct:*

- Divisiveness, upsetting the faith of others (Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:9-11)
- Hypocrisy, leading others astray (Galatians 2:11-14).
- False teaching (Titus 1:10-16, Rev. 2:14-16; 2 John 9-11).
- Blasphemy (1 Timothy 1:20).

##### *Matters of belief, doctrine (James 5:19-20, Rev. 2:2,20)*

##### *Sin in general: disobedience to Scripture (Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Thess.3:6, 11-15, James 5:19-20).*

The primary goal in any church discipline is to "turn him back" (James 5:19-20) and bring the person to repentance so that he/she can be restored to the body. *Principle:* The kind, length and severity of the discipline depend on the nature and circumstances of the sin. The process of church discipline is more fully explained in our By-laws which are available upon request.

# What is an Independent Bible Church?

Local churches have been in existence since the time of Christ. Groups of believers gathered together to form local congregations. Through the years some churches have identified with various denominational groups. However, there have been independent churches during each period of church history. Such churches continue to flourish throughout many parts of the world today, effectively communicating God's Word. What are the distinctives of an Independent Bible Church? Here are the biblical criteria for such a church.

## I. A Church that is Independent

The churches established by the first century apostles of Christ began as independent churches. They were free from outside control over the affairs of the local church. Each local church was a self-governing body, appointed its own officers (Titus 1:5), and exercised its own discipline (1 Corinthians 5:13). Internal problems were handled by the individual congregation (1 Corinthians 6:1-5). Preservation of pure doctrine was the responsibility of the local assembly (1 Timothy 3:15; Revelation 2:14-16). Following this pattern, today's Independent Bible Church depends upon the Holy Spirit's direction (Acts 13:1-4), in order to accomplish what God has called her to do. It is free to call its own pastor, invite into the pulpit any speakers it deems sound in the faith, and establish God-centered and Biblically based ministries.

Another important characteristic is the freedom enjoyed in the matter of missionary support. Independent Bible Churches are free to seek God's direction in supporting those ministries they find acceptable. The primary aim of all missionary and evangelistic efforts is the faithful proclamation of the true gospel and discipleship in Christ of God's elect.

*The independence of a church simply enhances its dependence upon the Lord.* Each church looks to Him for the provision of its every need. This encourages prayer, faith and spiritual growth among its members.

An Independent Bible Church is not only self-governing, it also strives to be self-supporting through the free-will offerings of its attendees (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

## II. A Church that is Bible Centered

An Independent Bible Church is one that stands for the historic fundamentals of the faith, upholding biblical authority versus human theories. To be biblical means to believe in and proclaim beliefs such as:

- *The God-breathed Bible's infallibility, inerrancy, authority, relevancy & sufficiency.*
- *The virgin birth, absolute deity and sinless life of Jesus Christ.*
- *The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ to provide salvation for all who believe.*
- *The Person and work of the Holy Spirit.*
- *The reality of satan and his destructive work today.*
- *The personal and bodily return of Jesus Christ.*
- *The bodily resurrection of all men: some to eternal life and some to eternal punishment.*

An Independent Bible Church emphasizes the use of the Bible in the regular church services. The Bible is revered as the guide for daily Christian faith and living. The pastor preaches and teaches directly from the Bible. The educational program of the church is centered in the Bible and is designed to develop biblical values and standards to live by. Sunday school teachers instruct from it. Teaching materials are developed with it. Youth programs are based on it.

### **III. A Church that Has Distinctive Emphases**

In addition to the things already mentioned, there are three additional distinctives.

- ***A Unique Church Membership***- A personal experience of the new birth is a prerequisite to church membership. Independent Bible Churches require testimony of one's salvation before membership.
- ***Observance of Two Ordinances***- All who are truly born-again are invited to remember the Lord at the communion table regardless of church membership. All who receive Christ are commanded in Scripture to follow the biblical teaching regarding water baptism as a testimony to their faith in Christ.
- ***Independent But Not Isolated*** - Independence does not mean isolation. Independent Bible Churches try to obey the "one anothers" of the Bible to develop a spirit of interdependence. According to the Scriptures, all who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior belong to the "body of Christ" (Ephesians 1:22-23). In a spirit of unity, many Independent Bible Churches cooperate, particularly through prayer, encouragement, and shared resources with other congregations who faithfully teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

\*\*\*\*\* **VHCC** is a part of [\*The Shepherd's Fellowship\*](#), a growing association of more than 400 churches committed to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, the importance of expository preaching, and the centrality of a Biblical philosophy of ministry. The fellowship serves as both a resource and an encouragement for churches, Pastors, and Christian leaders around the globe.

### **IV. Spiritual Unity of All Believers**

The body of Christ transcends all earthly denominations and organizations. It is composed of all who have trusted Jesus as Saviour, regardless of organizational affiliation. Independent Bible Churches strive to be loyal to Jesus and His Word rather than to any organization. They seek to establish, preserve, and expand local churches according to the New Testament pattern (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 13:3-4).

*This concludes our introduction to Valley Heights Community Church. We trust that this information has answered many of your questions concerning who we are and how we function. We want to remain available to you to address any further questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to speak freely with our Pastor or a member of our leadership. In addition to these pages, we have complete copies of our statement of faith available, which explain our position on a variety of doctrinal issues. It is our desire to be faithful to God's Word and to the mission He has called us to. We appreciate your willingness to consider this introduction.*

*God bless you as you serve Jesus Christ,*

*The Leadership of Valley Heights Community Church*

## Practices For Church Discipline And Restoration

The primary goal in any church discipline is to "turn him back" (James 5:19-20) and bring the person to repentance so that he/she can be restored to the body. *Principle:* The kind, length and severity of the discipline depends on the nature and circumstances of the sin.

### Level 1

**Sin:** A momentary, uncharacteristic lapse into sin where there is genuine grief and repentance.

**Response:** Gentle restoration at the point of repentance.

**Gal. 6:1** *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."*

### Level 2

**Sin:** More blatant sin (willful disobedience) or sin repeated over a longer duration, or unclear repentance.

**Response:** Warning, rebuke, correction

Reprove in private. . . if no repentance proceed with step two (Matt.18:15).

Bring along a witness . . . if no repentance proceed with step three (Matt. 18:16).

Tell it to the church . . . if no repentance proceed with step four (Matt. 18:17).

Deal with the person as though he/she were an unbeliever (Matt. 18:17).

### Level 3

**Sin:** Severe sin on a long-term basis and no repentance

**Response:**

Judgment (1 Cor. 5:3).

Corporate grief (1 Cor. 5:1-2).

Expulsion, excommunication from fellowship (Matt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:2-5, 11-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 11-15; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10-11, 2 John 9-11).

Forgiveness, comfort, love when repentance is demonstrated (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

Restoration to appropriate ministry after a significant pattern of obedience has been established (Luke 16:10).

## Discipline of an Elder

The whole church must be made aware of an elder's blatant sin because he has been disqualified from being an overseer.

**1 Tim. 5:19-20** *"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all..."*