

NEW LIFE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I. NAME AND LOCATION

The name of this church shall be New Life Christian Fellowship, hereafter referred to as NLCF. The office and one principle place of worship will be located at 1101 Volvo Parkway, Chesapeake, Virginia, 23320-2814, and at such locations as the Senior Director and Executive Elders may determine. Hereafter, the Senior Director and the Executive Elders may be referred to as the Executive Board.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE

SECTION 1: EXISTENCE

The duration of NLCF will be perpetual and for the purposes so stated in Article II of this document.

SECTION 2: MISSION

NLCF is a local body of believers under the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the Head of the Church and we are His body. The mission of this church shall be in accordance with and as revealed in the New Testament. Specifically, the purposes of NLCF will be:

1. *To exalt the Lord* in worship, prayer and lifestyle;
2. *To equip believers* through the ministry of the Word and Spirit;
3. *To evangelize the world* through personal witness, the proclamation of the gospel, and personal relationships;
4. *To expand the Kingdom* through multiplying and reproducing leaders and churches.

NLCF and its ministries are organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations within the scope of section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and as amended (Or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

ARTICLE III STATEMENT OF FAITH

INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURES

We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments by the Holy Spirit as originally given; they are the final authority for our faith and life. *2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12.*

GOD

We believe in one God revealed in three coequal, distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19-20; Ephesians 2:18.*

MAN

We believe that man in his natural state is a sinner, lost, undone, without hope and without God. *Ephesians 2:1-2; Romans 3:23*

DIVINITY AND HUMANITY OF CHRIST

We believe that Jesus is the Messiah, He is God come in the flesh and is both divine and human. He lived a sinless life and became a sacrifice for the sins of the world. *Ephesians 1:3-5; Romans 5:1-11; Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19*

BODILY RESURRECTION

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Luke 24:38-43; John 20:24-29*

SALVATION

We believe that terms of salvation are repentance toward God for sin and a personal heart-felt faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which results in regeneration. This salvation is entirely by grace and not by works. *Ephesians 2:6-10; Romans 5:1; Acts 3:19-20.*

SECOND COMING

We believe in the visible, bodily return of Christ to this earth to judge the world and to claim His Bride.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 1:7

CHURCH

We believe that the church is Christ's spiritual body on earth today. It consists of born-again believers and has both universal and local expressions. *Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28.*

HEAVEN AND HELL

We believe in the doctrines of eternal punishment for the lost and eternal bliss and service for the saved; hell for the unsaved and heaven for the saved. *John 14:1-3; Revelation 20:11-15.*

HOLY SPIRIT

We believe the Holy Spirit to be the third person of the Godhead who is active in the world today. The Spirit indwells and seals the believer at new birth. We believe the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a subsequent experience and is available to all Christians to empower us to be witnesses. We believe in and encourage the use of the gifts of the Spirit. *John 14:16-17; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4.*

ORDINANCES

We believe that believers' water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the church and should be practiced regularly. *Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-10; 1 Corinthians 10:16-21.*

ARTICLE IV **GOVERNMENT STYLE**

NLCF acknowledges that Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and rules His body through His appointed and anointed leaders. NLCF further acknowledges the written word of God as its guide and final authority in all decisions. NLCF shall be governed by Christ through the Executive Board. NLCF recognizes that godly leadership calls for leaders to serve the Lord and the congregants of the church. The Executive Board should be guided by the Holy Spirit and the Bible, consider the best interest of the church, and seek their input whenever possible.

The Executive Board is charged with the spiritual and legal authority and responsibility for the oversight and direction of the church and its ministries. The Executive Board may designate and delegate individuals, committees, or boards with the responsibility to fulfill a particular function or task, but all who hold office or perform any task are accountable to the Executive Board.

The Executive Board is ultimately responsible for the supervision and management of the business affairs, the administration of the physical assets, and general oversight of the church's affairs.

The Executive Board is comprised of men with the Senior Director serving as the "first among equals." The Executive Board will consist of the Senior Director, the Senior Pastors of each hub congregation, non-staff elders (one from each of the hub congregations elder boards*), and three at-large elders.

*The Congregational Elder Board is comprised of the hub Senior Pastor and men appointed by the hub Senior Pastor to oversee the pastoral hands-on eldering of the congregations. This board has no member number designation and there are no set years for term of service.

ARTICLE V **OFFICES AND POSITIONS**

SECTION 1: SENIOR DIRECTOR

Qualifications: The qualifications of the Senior Director are the same as an Executive Elder and Congregational Elder as described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Candidates should also be experienced, exhibit a clear and definite call to pastoral ministry, and should be gifted as a pastor/teacher (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Appointment: The Senior Director will be appointed under the direction of the Holy Spirit by a search committee comprised of the Executive Board, and other members as designated by the Executive Board. During the search process input shall be requested

from members of the congregation. Congregational input shall be in the form of recommendations of qualified candidates to the Search Committee, input into any verifiable information regarding a candidate based upon first-hand knowledge, feedback based upon any candidates ministry during an interview ministry time.

Responsibilities: The Senior Director is responsible for the performance and supervision of the church and its ministries. As an elder, he serves as the “first among equals” of the Executive Board and directs all Executive Board meetings. We believe God focuses the overall vision for the church primarily through him and the Senior Pastors of the hub congregations. The Senior Director’s unique call shall be recognized by all the Executive Board.

The Senior Director provides coaching and mentoring to the Senior Pastors of the hub congregations and directs and manages the central church staff. The Senior Director works with all ministries of the church and works through supportive Executive Board, trained staff, and a mobilized laity to fulfill God's vision for the church. The Senior Director, in conjunction with the Senior Pastors, is responsible for the development of the vision, values, mission, purpose, and philosophy of ministry for the church as a whole. As the church grows and changes in response to the move of the Lord, the Senior Director may delegate any portion of his authority and responsibility to other staff members or group as is fitting.

Tenure: The tenure of the Senior Director is perpetual until God clearly moves him on.

Removal: The Senior Director may be removed from his office by resignation, death, or through dismissal. The Executive Board is empowered to dismiss the Senior Director without compensation with cause based on biblical grounds.

SECTION 2: EXECUTIVE ELDERS

Qualifications: Executive Elders shall be men who seek to achieve the biblical standards given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They shall have proven themselves in faithful service and demonstrated leadership ability within the body.

Appointment: Executive Elder’s appointment shall be determined by one of several factors; he shall serve the church in the position of Senior Director, serve one of the hub congregations in the position of Senior Pastor, serve one of the hub congregations as a Congregational Elder, or be appointed as a member-at-large by the Senior Director and current Executive Board. Prior to the ordination of an Elder input shall be requested from the congregations.

Responsibilities: Executive Elders shall be servant-leaders who are an example to the flock, assist the Senior Director in governing the overall affairs of the church by discerning the mind of Christ in policy-making decisions, financial decisions and moral guidance of the church body.

Tenure: The term of each Executive Elder shall be as follows: The Senior Director and hub pastors will serve indefinite terms, with their term ending upon their departure from employment with NLCF. The hub non-staff elders will serve a term of three years. The three at-large elders will serve three-year terms (with the exception of the first three men, who will serve one, two, and three year terms respectively).

Removal: An Executive Elder may be removed from office by terminating his membership from NLCF, resignation, death, or through dismissal. The Executive Board is empowered to dismiss an Executive Elder based on biblical grounds.

SECTION 3: CONGREGATIONAL ELDERS

Qualifications: Congregational Elders shall be men who seek to achieve the biblical standards given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They shall have proven themselves in faithful service and demonstrated leadership ability within the body.

Appointment: Congregational Elder's shall be men who are recognized as leaders from among the congregation and are selected by the hub Senior Pastor and affirmed by the Executive Board. Prior to the ordination of an Elder input shall be requested from the congregation.

Responsibilities: Congregational Elders shall be servant-leaders who are an example to the flock, assist the Senior Pastor in governing the congregation by discerning the mind of Christ in policy-making decisions, oversee and shepherd the flock, and counsel and advise the Senior Pastor.

Tenure: The term of each Congregational Elder shall be for an indefinite period of time.

Removal: A Congregational Elder may be removed from office by terminating his membership from NLCF, resignation, death, or through dismissal. The Executive Board and Congregational Elder Board are empowered to dismiss a Congregational Elder based on biblical grounds. A Congregational Elder Board must receive ratification of the Executive Board prior to the dismissal of a Congregational Elder.

SECTION 4: DEACONS

Qualifications: Deacons should have a heart to serve as well as meet the qualifications listed in 1 Tim 3:8-13.

Appointment: Deacons shall serve on a congregational level and are appointed by the hub Senior Pastor and Congregational Elder Board with ratification by the Executive Board.

Responsibility: The Deacons shall be responsible to minister to the physical needs of the congregation in which they serve. They shall be directly accountable to the hub Senior Pastor and Congregational Elder Board, and shall support, affirm, focus and exemplify

the vision of the Executive Board, the Senior Pastor and Congregational Elder Board of the ministry of NLCF.

Tenure: The term of each Deacon shall be for three years with staggered rotation. After serving a full term, there must be one year off before being eligible for reappointment.

Removal: A deacon may be removed from office by terminating his membership from NLCF, death, conclusion of term, or through dismissal by the Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board on biblical grounds. A Congregational Elder Board must receive ratification of the Executive Board prior to the dismissal of a Congregational Deacon.

SECTION 5: STAFF

The Senior Director shall be responsible for the hiring and dismissal of church staff with counsel from the Executive Board.

ARTICLE VI **MEMBERSHIP**

At NLCF we value the concept of commitment to a local church through membership. We expect the members of the church to be members in the biblical sense of the word: connecting and contributing.

SECTION 1: REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The membership of NLCF shall consist of those who are now members of the congregation, and those who shall unite with it by a confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Each person presenting himself for membership shall successfully complete new members' training as defined by the Executive Board and presented to the appropriate congregation.

SECTION 2: MEMBERSHIP STATUS

Active Members: Anyone who meets the requirements stated above and who faithfully participates in the life and work of the church will be considered an active member. Only active members may hold offices at NLCF.

SECTION 3: TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership of NLCF may be terminated through transfer of membership, withdrawal of membership, continued inactivity for one year, or by disciplinary action. The procedure for discipline shall follow the guidelines of Matthew 18:15-17. A final decision of the Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board, with ratification of the Executive Board, can result in the exclusion of an individual from church membership for biblical reasons. Membership can be reinstated by the Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board, with ratification of the Executive Board, if there is biblical cause.

ARTICLE VII
DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS UPON DISSOLUTION

Upon dissolution of this organization, all of its assets remaining after payment of all the liabilities of the organization and the costs and expenses of such dissolution, shall be distributed by the existing Executive Board exclusively for the purposes of the organization in such manner, or to such organizations that have qualified for exemption under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code; and none of the assets shall be distributed to any member, officer, or trustee of this organization.

ARTICLE VIII
FINANCIAL AND PROPERTY CONSIDERATIONS

SECTION 1: CONTRIBUTIONS

NLCF and its ministries will be supported primarily through the voluntary contributions and free-will donations of its membership and friends, including tithes, offerings, real or personal property, services, or other benefits. Offerings will be accepted by NLCF at such times and in such ways as agreed upon by the Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board, with ratification of the Executive Board, and managed with their approval, by the staff or other designated agents. Any other fundraising program must be approved by the Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board, with ratification of the Executive Board.

SECTION 2: PROPERTY

The Executive Board will act as trustees of all real or personal property of NLCF and any property accepted, held, purchased, sold, transferred, assigned, or conveyed by the Executive Board will be so accomplished in the Church's name. No real property of NLCF may be purchased, sold, leased, mortgaged, transferred, or otherwise alienated without said action having been approved by the Executive Board with input from the appropriate congregation.

ARTICLE IX
AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

Amendments to these articles shall be approved by the Executive Board.

ARTICLE X
CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Each year, a congregational meeting shall be held to review ministry effectiveness, departmental and financial reports for the past year, and the goals and budget for the coming year. The meeting shall be held anytime within the first four months of the year, and the meeting held at a time and location suitable for the purpose.

ARTICLE XI

AUTONOMY AND ASSOCIATION

SECTION 1: AUTONOMY

NLCF is and will function as an independent and sovereign assembly under the headship of Christ.

SECTION 2: ASSOCIATION

NLCF does, however, recognize the ministry gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 and believe them to be functional in the body of Christ today. It is also recognized that in order to grow and mature as a body of believers, the church must acknowledge and receive input and ministry of these gifts. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit directs the Executive Board, NLCF will recognize and seek the involvement of visiting ministers and leaders with five-fold ministry gifts to ensure growth, ministry integrity, and biblical accountability.

- a) NLCF will also seek fellowship and cooperation with other churches, ministries, fellowships, and organizations for the purposes of networking in ministry and mission as directed by the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE XII **ORDINATION POWERS**

The Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board, with ratification of the Executive Board, have the right and privilege to license and/or ordain those who are recognized as having a genuine call of God to the ministry and who have satisfied the biblical guidelines.

ARTICLE XIII **FINANCIAL GUIDELINES FOR DEBT MANAGEMENT**

The following guidelines address several areas of debt management in order to protect the church from overly aggressive borrowing. Some of the ratios, like the cash flow restriction, may be more effective with a smaller budget than a larger budget. Depending upon the structure of the overall church, the progress of capital campaigns, the size of the budget, and unique opportunities, the following ratios may be adjusted. For instance the cash flow restriction of 35% is reasonable for a medium sized church, but may be too restrictive for a small church that would spend a higher percentage of it's budget on facilities, and a very large budget would allow too much debt at the 35% ratio.

Because of multi-campus model the debt load restriction may prevent the church from financing several congregational sites during the same time period. So these guidelines are intended to aid the Executive Board in making prudent and conservative financial decisions.

In no circumstance should the Executive Board presume upon the future. Presumption occurs when a borrower can only meet debt service requirements if income increases unrealistically over time, or when the sale of assets in difficult economic conditions would not be sufficient to pay off all debt.

Section 1: Debt Restrictions.

Before the Executive Board may authorize the church to borrow money or incur a lease obligation, the following conditions must first be met:

a) Approval Process.

The Executive Board, serving as trustees or allowing designated members of the Executive Board to serve as trustees, may encumber real estate assets with debt only by unanimous approval of the Executive Board. Other transactions involving debt, not involving real estate, may be approved by the staff according to resolution if the amount is no more than 5% of the unrestricted budget or \$100,000 dollars, whichever is less; otherwise the transaction must be approved by the Executive Board.

b) **Asset to Debt Ratio of 25%.**

Any congregation entering a project, which requires financing must have accumulated assets of 25% of the total debt about to be incurred, prior to obtaining the loan or indebtedness.

c) **Cash Flow Restriction.**

The combined totals of all monthly debt service and real estate lease payments, following the incurring of the indebtedness or lease obligation under consideration, will not exceed thirty-five percent (35%) of the average monthly total income. The percentages shall be based on, but not be limited to, tithes, offerings, investment income and unrestricted gifts of the church, but will not be based upon restricted fund income.

1) **Lease to purchase allowance.**

If indebtedness is being secured to build a structure that will relieve the church of it's need for a leased facility that will be vacated when the new building is completed, then the current lease commitment need not be calculated into the 35% expenditure limitation for 18 months. Thus, the church is allowed 18 months for both construction and lease payments that combined, exceed the 35% limit, only if there is compelling assurance that by the end of the 18-month period it is reasonable to expect relief from the burden of the lease payment.

d) **Debt Load restriction.**

The amount of combined debt for real estate shall not exceed three hundred and fifty percent (350%) of the annual operating budget.

e) **Special Provisions for multiple sites.**

In normal circumstances the debt related to a particular congregational site should be consistent with the debt restriction ratios as related to the unrestricted income of that particular congregation. Exceptions to this guideline would include sites that provide certain unique facilities that are used by more than one congregation (hub-specific equipping facilities), or are used church-wide, and facilities that serve areas of unique economic circumstances. If a particular congregational site meets one of these exceptions, the shortfall of the individual congregation will be shared pro-rata among the other congregations. In any case the exceptions cannot cause the church as a whole to violate the debt restrictions when figured on a consolidated basis.

Section 2: Income Projections.

The church may not set budgets, meet conditions for borrowing, or make any financial commitments based on projections of income that exceed the average per capita unrestricted income for the last complete fiscal year.

Section 3: Audit or Review of NLCF Financials.

The church will perform a Review of its financial records for three consecutive years with the results being reviewed by an independent public accounting firm in accordance with Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS). Every fourth year the Executive Board shall obtain an audit performed by an independent public accounting firm in accordance with Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS), with financial statements prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

Section 4: Conflict of Interest.

In order to avoid any conflict of interest, all of the following criteria must be met for any business transaction to be made between an Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board member and the organization:

- a) The Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board member with whom the transaction is being considered is excluded from any discussions for approving the transaction,
- b) The Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board members shall consider competitive bids or comparable valuations,
- c) The Executive Board or Congregational Elder Board members act upon and demonstrate that the transaction is in the best interest of the organization.
- d) The transaction must be fully disclosed in the end-of-year reviewed or audited financial statements of the organization.