

# THE BY-LAWS OF SOMA BIBLE CHURCH

Ver. 2009

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# **THE BY-LAWS OF SOMA BIBLE CHURCH, INCORPORATED**

**(A Non-Profit Religious Corporation Operating in the State of Arizona) Ver. 2009**

## **ARTICLE I – NAME**

These are the governing By-Laws of Soma Bible Church, Inc., as amended, restated, and approved unanimously by the Council of Elders and by a two-thirds vote of the Members of the church on November 17, 2009. These By-Laws are meant to supersede and replace in their entirety all prior Constitutions and/or By-Laws previously adopted or in effect, which had governed the structure and operation of Soma Bible Church, Inc., with all such previous Constitutions and/or By-Laws now being void and having no binding authority upon the continued operation of this Corporation. To the extent that there is any conflict between these By-Laws and any previously adopted or stated Articles of Incorporation of Soma Bible Church, Inc., these By-Laws shall control.

The name of this organization is Soma Bible Church, Inc. which is a nonprofit corporation, organized and operating in the State of Arizona and in accordance with Arizona law. Soma Bible Church maintains its principal place of worship at The Foothills Aquatics Center, 5600 West Union Hills Drive, Glendale, Arizona. A change in the principal place of worship may be changed only by a two-thirds vote of the Members of the church. (*See Article V*)

## **ARTICLE II – AFFILIATION**

Soma Bible Church was originally incorporated in the State of Arizona on December 26, 2007. Soma Bible Church currently has no formal denominational affiliation, but may, in the sole discretion of the Council of Elders, and in accordance with these By-Laws, choose to affiliate with a denomination or other like organization.

## **ARTICLE III – MISSION STATEMENT/PURPOSE**

Soma Bible Church exists to equip believers in Jesus Christ to reveal God as the one true God through worshipful participation in the divinely established community of believers. This community, called the church, is expressed through the worldwide church, the Phoenix City Church and the local congregation (Soma Bible Church). Believers are equipped through the ministry of the word (corporately and individually) to grow in the likeness of Christ and live a life of worship that is an expression of God's desire to redeem a dark, perverted creation and restore shalom—the way things are meant to be.

## **ARTICLE IV – STATEMENT OF FAITH**

### **The Scriptures**

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired

word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible, and God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; Matthew 5:18; John 16:12, 13).

### **The Godhead**

We believe in one God eternally existing in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and that these persons are co-equal in nature, power, and glory, having the same attributes and perfections (Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

### **The Person and Work of Christ**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man (John 1:1–2, 14; Luke 1:35). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice, and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Romans 3:24; 1 Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3–5). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry as Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate (Acts 1:9, 10; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1–2). We believe Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5; Romans 14:9; 2 Timothy 4:1).

### **The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8–11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18).

### **The Total Depravity of Man**

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that through Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; man is totally depraved and of himself utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Genesis 1:26, 27; Romans 3:22, 23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1–3, 12).

### **Salvation**

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 2:8–10; John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19).

### **Eternal Security and Assurance of Believers**

We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 8:1, 38, 39; 1 Corinthians 1:4–8; 1 Peter 1:5). We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for

the flesh (Romans 13:13, 14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11–15).

### **The Ministry and Spiritual Gifts**

We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowing of spiritual gifts. It is, however, the believer's responsibility to attempt to develop their sovereignly given spiritual gift(s). The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion and is the placing of the believer into the Body of Christ. We also believe that particular spiritual gift(s) are neither essential, nor prove the presence of the Holy Spirit, nor are an indication of deep spiritual experience (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11, 13; Ephesians 4:7–8). We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accordance with His own will, for the sick and afflicted (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14, 15). We believe that it is the privilege and responsibility of every believer to minister according to the gift(s) and grace of God that is given to him (Romans 12:1–8; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 Peter 4:10–11).

### **The Church**

We believe that the church, which is the body and espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:25–27; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14; 2 Corinthians 11:2). We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:27; 18:22; 20:17; 1 Timothy 3:1–3; Titus 1:5–11). We believe in the autonomy of the local churches, free of any external authority and control (Acts 13:1–4; 15:19–31; 20:28; Romans 16:1,4; 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16; 1 Corinthians 5:4–7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1–4). We recognize believer's baptism and the Lord's supper as scriptural means of testimony for the church (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:41, 42; Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

## **ARTICLE V – GOVERNMENT**

*An Overview of the working together of the Members, Council of Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, Pastoral Staff and Ministry Directors*

The ultimate authority of Soma Bible Church rests in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God. The governance of the local body of believers is accomplished through a balanced blend of the Members of the church and the Council of Elders as indicated in Scripture (Acts 6, 15; 1 Timothy 3, 5; Titus 1; and 1 Peter 5).

### **Governance by the Membership**

Two-thirds (2/3) affirming vote of the Membership of the church who actually cast votes shall be required for the following:

1. Changes in these By-Laws (in addition to and subsequent to the unanimous approval of the Council of Elders)
2. Affirmation of Elders
3. Approval of the Annual Budget
4. Acquisitions or dispositions of real property
5. Changing the location of the regular place of worship or operations.

## 6. Selection and calling of Senior Pastor

A quorum is not necessary for a vote to be considered valid. Members of the church are entitled to vote, with Members being defined for the purpose of this provision as those persons designated as “Active Members” at the time any such vote is cast. (See Article VIII, for a description of an Active Member.)

### **Governance by the Council of Elders**

The Council of Elders has the responsibility of giving both spiritual and physical oversight to the ministry and congregation of Soma Bible Church. They are men, called to lead according to the instructions given in the Scriptures (see also Article VI regarding the functions and responsibilities of Elders) and will serve for a defined period of time (as determined through the guidelines in Article VI “Elder Terms of Service”). As indicated in the Word of God (Acts 15), they are given the authority to discern and determine the final decisions related to policies and practices within the church that are not specifically stated in the Scriptures. Except as otherwise stated and/or restricted in these By-Laws, the Council of Elders shall have the authority to exercise control over all affairs of the church.

### **Governance by the Legal Officers**

The Council of Elders shall appoint on an annual basis the following Legal Officers of Soma Bible Church at their first meeting following the Annual Church Meeting, or as soon thereafter as may be prudent and reasonable:

**A President**, defined to be the Chairman of the Council of Elders, responsible for presiding over the Council Meetings and Meetings of the Church.

**A Secretary**, defined to be the Secretary of the Council of Elders, responsible for keeping Soma Bible Church’s corporate records and maintaining the minutes of Council of Elders meetings and Church meetings.

**A Treasurer**, as an appointee of the Council of Elders, responsible for the administrative oversight of church funds and the accurate keeping of financial records; and

**Any other office** that the Council of Elders deems appropriate to administer the affairs of the church. All Officers shall serve under the direction of the Council of Elders, and may be removed by a majority vote of the Council of Elders at any time, with or without cause.

### **Governance by the Pastoral Staff**

The Pastoral Staff shall be comprised of a Pastor or Pastors who provide spiritual and physical oversight to the areas of ministry. The Senior Pastor shall provide vision and leadership to the church, preach and teach the Word of God, watch over the spiritual welfare of the church and guide the congregation in the pursuit of the Christian life. The Pastoral Staff shall support and assist the Senior Pastor in these ministry pursuits.

### **Governance by the Ministry Directors**

The Ministry Directors shall consist of men and/or women who accept a specific area of

ministry leadership within the scope of the programs of the church. They accept the responsibility to see that their area of ministry is able to operate effectively in the ongoing work of Christ under the guidance and leadership of the Senior Pastor and the Council of Elders. They will function as an integral part of, and in coordination with, the rest of the church leadership.

### **Governance by Deacons and Deaconesses**

The Deacons and Deaconesses are the servant leaders in the church. Their primary role is to serve and assist the Elders in carrying out the ministries of the church.

## **ARTICLE VI – LEADERSHIP**

*A Specific Description of the Selection, Requirements, Responsibilities and Accountability of the Council of Elders, Legal Officers, Senior Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Ministry Directors, Deacons and Deaconesses*

### **A. Leadership Structure**

The leadership structure of Soma Bible Church, collectively known as the “Ministry Team”, shall be comprised only of Members and shall be as follows:

- Council of Elders
- Legal Officers
- Senior Pastor
- Pastoral Staff
- Ministry Directors
- Deacons & Deaconesses

### **B. The Council of Elders**

The Council of Elders is intended to be the primary instrument through which God guides His Church. The Council of Elders shall carry the leadership and authority for all corporate powers and affairs of Soma Bible Church, unless otherwise stated by these By-Laws. They shall seek God’s guidance for the Church and shall strive to adopt all decisions before them unanimously. A two-thirds vote shall be required to decide all matters before the Council, unless otherwise stated in these By-Laws. Elders shall keep each other accountable and shall work in a spirit of growing relationships, cooperation and unity. The Council of Elders is defined to constitute the Board of Directors as that term is used in accordance with the governing principles of Arizona Law.

The Council of Elders shall consist of two or more men: a minimum of one of which must be from the membership and not pastoral staff, and shall include the Senior Pastor, when not vacant. The Senior Pastor shall always and automatically be an Elder because of his scriptural position as a leading and teaching Elder.

**The functions and responsibilities of Elders are as follows:**

1. Elders shall meet together regularly for prayer and to seek God's direction for Soma Bible Church.
2. Elders shall meet regularly with the Senior Pastor and Pastoral Staff to facilitate communication, vision, leadership and support.
3. Elders are to be servants of God. (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 9:35; 1 Corinthians 3:5, 4:1; 2 Corinthians 6:4; Colossians 1:7)
4. Elders are stewards of God's resources. (Acts 11:29-30; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:7)
5. Elders are teachers of God's Word. (Acts 6:2, 3; Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:13; 2 Timothy 1:11, 2:2, 4:3; Titus 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:12; James 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1)
6. Elders are interpreters of God's Word. (Acts 6:2, 4; Acts 15:2-6; Acts 16:4; Titus 1:9)
7. Elders are examples for God's people. (1 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
8. Elders are leaders of God's people. (Acts 14:23; Acts 15:22-23; Hebrews 13:17)
9. Elders are shepherds of God's people. (John 10:11-14; John 21:16; Acts 20:17, 28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
10. Elders give oversight to the affairs of the Church. (1 Timothy 5:17; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Acts 15:22-23; 1 Corinthians 5:12-6:8; 1 Peter 5:5)
11. Elders are guardians of God's people. (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17)

### **The Elder Chairman**

1. The Council of Elders will select the Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, and a Secretary at their first meeting following the Annual Church Meeting, or as soon thereafter as may be prudent and reasonable. The Chairman of the Council of Elders shall function as the President of the Corporation (See Article V). He shall also preside over all called Church Meetings (Annual Church Meeting, Special Meetings, Town Hall Meetings, etc.)
2. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman of the Council of Elders will function in the place of the absent Chairman.

### **Elder Selection**

Scriptures show us that Elders are specifically men selected to serve God and His church through recommendations by the existing Elders, recommendations of the Members of the church, and with much prayer, (Acts 1:22-26; Acts 9:1-22; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17,28; I Timothy 3:1; I Timothy 5:19; Titus 1:5-9). Elders must meet the scriptural standards outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7

and Titus 1:5-9). Unless otherwise stated in these By-Laws, all candidates to fill any vacancy on the Council of Elders shall be selected in accordance with the following:

**Step 1: Recommendations.**

Candidates to serve on the Council of Elders shall be presented to the existing Council of Elders by either:

1. Any existing Elder, or
2. Through a Nomination Committee established by the Council of Elders, or
3. Any other Members of Soma Bible Church

**Step 2: Permission and Interview.**

Members of the Council of Elders will seek the permission of the recommended candidates for eldership to pursue the selection process with them. With the willingness of the candidate to consider the role of Elder, representatives from the existing Council of Elders will meet with:

- The Candidate to discuss
  - The role and responsibilities of being an Elder,
  - The candidate's personal and spiritual life,
  - The candidate's membership at Soma Bible Church and any doctrinal concerns.
  
- The Candidate and his wife (if he is married) to discuss
  - Their spiritual and marriage relationship,
  - The spouse's support and feelings regarding the role of Elder
  - Any specific areas of concern to be discussed.

**Step 3: Presentation of the recommended slate of Elders**

The Council of Elders will then vote upon each candidate and prepare a slate of new Elder nominees for presentation to the Members of the church. Each man interviewed will be informed of the Elders' choices. The slate of candidates will be presented to the congregation for a period of time prior to an Annual Church Meeting at which time the Members will be asked to affirm by ballot each candidate on the slate of Elders.

**Step 4: Affirmation by the Membership**

During the required notification period preceding the Annual Church Meeting, Members of the congregation will be asked to express any concerns or issues they may have regarding someone on the slate for eldership. All concerns must be presented to at least two Elders in person. Any concerns will be discussed directly with the candidate and those who have a concern (Matthew 18:15-16). At the Annual Church Meeting, affirmation shall be by Members of Soma Bible Church, using ballots that are distributed, marked, collected and tallied. A Member may, at his or her option, vote by proxy. An Elder candidate must receive at least two-thirds vote of the Members to be affirmed. In the event any Elder candidate is not affirmed by the Members, the Council of Elders shall seek to present a new

candidate to the Members for affirmation at a Special Meeting as soon as is practical. In such an event, the Council of Elders shall observe each step in the selection process as stated herein, before a Special Meeting is held to affirm a newly presented candidate.

### **Filling Unexpected Elder Vacancies**

Where there is an Elder vacancy before expiration of the departing person's term of office, the Council of Elders may appoint an interim Elder by unanimous vote. The term of office of any such Elder appointed by the Council of Elders in this fashion shall expire at the next Annual Church Meeting. The Council of Elders shall inform the congregation of all vacancies filled in this manner.

If at any time, either by death, resignation or other cause, there are no persons holding office on the Council of Elders, any Active Member of the church may call a Special Meeting for the purpose of filling any or all vacancies on the Council of Elders, except for the vacancy left by the Senior Pastor. Any Member seeking to call a Special Meeting under this paragraph must follow the notice procedures defined in these By-Laws at Article VII. In order to fill a vacancy on the Council of Elders pursuant to this paragraph, the candidate must receive two-thirds (2/3) the vote of all ballots cast (in person or by valid proxy) by the Members.

### **Elder Terms of Service**

All Elders, except for the Senior Pastor, shall normally serve two-year terms of office. When there are three or more elders, service on the Council of Elders will be staggered in such a manner where, in any given year, no less than two Elders (excluding the Sr. Pastor) will exist on the Council of Elders. The Senior Pastor's term of office shall be open and indefinite. All Elders, other than the Senior Pastor, may serve an unlimited number of consecutive two-year terms with the unanimous concurrence of the Council of Elders and a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of all ballots cast (in person or by valid proxy) by the Members.

### **C. The Legal Officers**

The Legal Officers of Soma Bible Church shall see that adequate and correct accounts, books and records of the church's operations are maintained and that such books, records and accounts are kept in good order at Soma Bible Church's principle office. They shall insure sound financial management practices are followed and fiduciary controls are in place to protect the interests of the Soma Bible Church operation and membership.

They shall see that a finance and budget management team is established to oversee the setting, supervising and coordinating of the operational budget of Soma Bible Church. They shall see that annual financial statements are made available to the Soma Bible Church membership. They shall see that accurate records are kept of all annual and special meetings of the church, as well as membership records and confidential giving records for each Soma Bible Church contributor.

### **D. The Senior Pastor**

The Senior Pastor shall become a Member of Soma Bible Church. He shall serve as an

Elder on the Council of Elders giving primary leadership and oversight to the entire ministry of Soma Bible Church. He shall qualify for his office according to the standards of an Elder, being a man of true Christian experience, mature in moral and spiritual character, accepting spiritual accountability to Christ (1 Timothy 3:2-7), and mutual accountability with those who serve with him on the Council of Elders.

He is uniquely called to be the Shepherd/Leader of the Soma Bible Church family, responsible for the vision, direction, leadership and general operational oversight of Soma Bible Church. He is to be a communicator of God's Word, teaching the Soma Bible Church family in their spiritual walk, using the unique spiritual gifts and abilities given him by the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Selection of the Senior Pastor**

When the position of Senior Pastor is vacant, or is expected to be, the Council of Elders shall appoint a Pastor Search Committee, with representatives from the Council of Elders and Members of the Church. They shall be commissioned with the task of defining a Profile of Soma Bible Church; a Profile of the needed qualities of the next Senior Pastor; securing appropriate referrals, and inviting resumes from interested candidates.

From these responses, a select number will be asked to submit a more extensive survey for the Committee's consideration. From this group, choice candidates will be selected and more thoroughly interviewed and researched. From these candidates, the primary candidate shall be chosen and asked to come to the church for a period of extensive interviews, meetings with the Soma Bible Church congregation, and will participate in a morning worship service.

At the Annual Church Meeting, or at a Special Meeting called by the Council of Elders, the Members will convene for the purpose of deciding whether or not to call the pastoral candidate into full-time service to Soma Bible Church. A unanimous approval of the Council of Elders followed by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Active Members of Soma Bible Church shall be required for final approval. When called, the Senior Pastor shall serve for an open, indefinite period of time. He will be dedicated to full-time vocational service to Soma Bible Church.

### **E. The Pastoral Staff**

The Pastoral Staff is comprised of the men who serve as Pastors responsible for assisting the Senior Pastor in fulfilling his duties of shepherding/leading Soma Bible Church. Each person who serves as a Pastor must be recommended to that position by the Senior Pastor and receive unanimous approval of the Council of Elders. All who serve as Pastors must qualify for their position according to the standards of an Elder, being a man of true Christian experience, mature in moral and spiritual character, accepting spiritual accountability to Christ (1 Timothy 3:2-7), direct accountability to the Senior Pastor, and mutual accountability with those who serve on the Council of Elders.

The Pastoral Staff is assisted in their ministries by others serving as Ministry Directors (See Subsection G below). Unless otherwise determined by the Council of Elders, when these positions become full or part-time paid positions, the Senior Pastor shall take responsibility for the general oversight and management of these positions. Those Ministry Directors serving in this capacity shall report to the Senior Pastor or other member of the Pastoral Staff, at the discretion of the

Senior Pastor.

#### **F. The Non-Pastoral and Unpaid Staff**

Additional paid positions may exist in the church that are not a part of the Pastoral Staff. Such positions may include Ministry Directors, clerical, childcare, custodial or other positions. These positions are created and filled as needed, under the direction and delegation of the Council of Elders. The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Council of Elders, will determine the reporting structure for those positions.

#### **G. Deacons, Deaconesses and Ministry Directors**

Deacons and Deaconesses are the servant leaders in the church. They will meet the scriptural requirements delineated in I Timothy 3:8-13. Their primary role is to serve and assist the Elders in carrying out the ministries of the church. (Acts 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:10, 13; Romans 16:1, 2).

Ministry Directors are Deacons and Deaconesses that accept the oversight of specific ministries within the church. This care for their ministry may include, but is not limited to the recruitment of workers, coordinating schedules, procurement of supplies, giving personal and spiritual leadership and service to their particular ministry.

The Council of Elders may from time to time approve the creation of Ministry Director positions and/or appoint Deacons and Deaconesses. The Senior Pastor, other Pastors, or any Elder may recommend a person who is to serve in one of these positions. Approval of the Council of Elders is required for a person to serve as a Ministry Leader, Deacon, or Deaconess.

Upon appointment, Ministry Directors, Deacons and Deaconesses will be presented to the congregation for a time of dedication to their position of service. Ministry Directors, Deacons and Deaconesses shall serve for an indefinite term, subject to the right to discharge, oversight, accountability and direction of the Council of Elders.

### **ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS**

**Annual Church Meeting:** The Council of Elders shall call an Annual Church Meeting in the last quarter of each fiscal year, at which time the affirmation of Elders shall take place, the annual budget will be presented and affirmed, and the church leadership will present a review of the prior year's accomplishments and the coming year's plans.

**Elders' Meetings:** The Council of Elders will hold regular meetings as they deem appropriate. These meetings are for the bonding of relationships, prayer for the ministry of the church, and overseeing the affairs of Soma Bible Church. They will also make themselves available to meet regularly with the Ministry Directors and others in the church as they deem necessary to provide leadership and support.

**Ministry Team Meetings:** The Ministry Directors and Council of Elders shall meet, in part and/or in whole, as often as is needed to coordinate the work of the total ministry of Soma Bible Church.

**Special Meetings:** Unless otherwise stated in these By-Laws, a Special Meeting of the church may be called by a simple majority of the Council of Elders. Any Active Member of the church (as defined in Article VIII) may request that the Council of Elders call a Special Meeting of the church for a defined purpose or purposes. The Council of Elders will consider the request.

**Notice and Procedures:** The Council of Elders is required to provide notice of all Annual or Special Church Meetings by public announcement to the Members. An announcement will be made available to Members at least fourteen (14) consecutive days in advance of the called meeting, and publicly announced during each Sunday church service during that time period. This same notice procedure must be followed for each Special Meeting called in accordance with these By-Laws.

## **ARTICLE VIII – MEMBERSHIP**

### **The “Soma Bible Church Family”**

Those who attend Soma Bible Church on a regular basis are considered to be a part of the “Soma Bible Church Family.” This includes everyone from those beginning their spiritual journey to those who have known Jesus Christ in a personal way as their Lord and Savior for many years. The “Soma Bible Church Family” includes those just beginning to make Soma Bible Church their church home to those who are actively involved in serving the Lord through the Soma Bible Church ministry.

### **Membership Process**

Becoming a “Member” is not joining an elite group in the church. Rather, Membership at Soma Bible Church is seen as an added step of commitment to the Lord and to the ministry of Soma Bible Church. It is a heart’s covenant with the Lord and a visible statement to the Soma Bible Church Family that 1) “This is the church family God wants me to be a part of at this time,” 2) “This is the church where the Lord wants to use my life,” 3) “I now enter into a covenant with the Lord that I, an imperfect person, will join myself to this church, also imperfect. Together, through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, we can have an impact on each other’s lives and those we want to reach in our local community and to others around the world.”

This is a step that adds strength to the individual and to the church family as a whole. Those who serve as Pastors, Elders, Ministry Directors, Deacons and Deaconesses, are asked to demonstrate their commitment to serving the Lord through Soma Bible Church by taking this added step of membership.

### **Becoming a Member**

1. Those ready to enter into this “covenantal relationship” with the Lord and the Soma Bible Church Family are asked to complete the Membership process as defined by the Council of Elders to understand the doctrines, history, heart and focus of the Soma Bible Church ministry.
2. Those who are ready to take this added step of commitment are asked to share
  - a. the experience of their conversion,

- b. when they followed the Lord in baptism\* as a believer and
- c. the area of ministry they believe the Lord would have them serve in at Soma Bible Church.

\*Baptism at Soma Bible Church is by immersion in water. Those who were baptized as believers by some other method are accepted at Soma Bible Church as having been baptized. Member candidates who have not been baptized as a believer are encouraged to be baptized at a future Soma Bible Church service.

- 3. In entering into this covenantal relationship, each individual recognizes and accepts the value of:
  - a. Regular attendance at Soma Bible Church and its ministries.
  - b. Having a place of service for Christ through the ministry of the Church.
  - c. Demonstrating faithful stewardship to Christ through their generous, sacrificial giving to the ministry at Soma Bible Church.
  - d. Supporting the mission and ministry of Soma Bible Church in the bond of Christ's love with the other Soma Bible Church members by willingly placing themselves under the authority and leadership of the Council of Elders.
- 4. Commitments to this covenantal relationship are given to the Council of Elders for their acceptance and subsequent announcement to the Soma Bible Church Family.
- 5. A Member shall be an individual who is 18 years of age or older and shall be recommended for membership by an elder or ministry director.
- 6. All those who enter into this commitment as Members, and not otherwise failing to participate in the functioning of the Church (as described in "Ending Membership" subsection 4 immediately below), are considered "Active Members" and so designated on the Church roll. Only Active Members are eligible to vote on matters before the Church Membership as described in these By-Laws.

### **Ending Membership**

Membership in this Church may be terminated in one of the ways listed below:

- 1. Written request from the Member to be released from this covenantal relationship with Soma Bible Church.
- 2. Written request from the Member to transfer to another church.
- 3. If a Member indicates no interest in the Church for a period of six months through lack of attendance, contribution, and communication, his/her name may be -placed on an inactive list. If needed, they shall be contacted to see if there is a special need or concern that has kept them from attending. The inactive Member will not be eligible to vote on Church matters. If the Member continues to show no interest for an additional six months, the Council of Elders will remove his/her name from Membership after investigation.
- 4. A Membership status may be terminated due to disciplinary action (see Article IX below).

5. At Death.

## **ARTICLE IX – CONCERNS, GRIEVANCES, AND/OR CONFLICTS IN THE CHURCH**

### **A. Dealing with concerns, grievances and/or conflicts between Members of the Church**

1. Jesus taught His followers to resolve conflicts and concerns by:
  - a. Going directly, one on one, to the person with whom the individual has a problem in order to bring about reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-17).
  - b. If the person approached is unreceptive to the concern shared, the believer is instructed by Jesus to bring one or two others to another meeting with the person with whom the conflict still exists to help in reconciliation.
  - c. If the conflict still exists, the concerned individual is to go “to the church” (meaning church leadership) who either help bring resolution to the situation or if deemed needed, bring censure of the person before the Church.
  - d. The ultimate goal for this whole process is repentance of sin where applicable, forgiveness, affirmation of love between believers and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).
2. This pattern from the teachings of Jesus is to be followed when any Member of the Church has a difficulty with another Member of the Church.
  - a. They are to go directly to that person, one on one, and share their concerns, seeking understanding, asking forgiveness, and/or reconciliation.
  - b. If the person approached is unreceptive to the meeting, the concerned person is to ask two others to meet with them and the person who has been unreceptive. If that person continues to be unreceptive, the concerned person is to bring their concerns to two Elders. They are to meet with the concerned person and the person who has been unreceptive. Again, the goal is to gain understanding, harmony, confession, forgiveness and/or reconciliation.
  - c. If the person approached is still unreceptive, the entire Council of Elders should seek to meet with the person who initially brought up the concern and the person who was approached for the purpose of reconciliation. If resolution is not possible, and the Council of Elders conclude the person approached is guilty and unresponsive to addressing the specific sin in their life, they shall:
    - i. Remove that person from the Membership of the church.
    - ii. Share with the Members of the church the results of the matter in a public meeting and in writing.
    - iii. Pray for ultimate restoration and renewal with the person who has been unreceptive and unrepentant.
  - d. The scriptural example of this process is seen in 1 Corinthians 5:1-12, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, and Matthew 18:15-17.

### **B. Dealing with concerns, grievances and/or conflicts between a Member of the Church and an Elder, Senior Pastor, Pastoral Staff member, Ministry Leader, Deacon or Deaconess, i.e. “Ministry Team” Members**

1. This pattern is to be followed when any Member of the church has a difficulty with an

Elder, the Senior Pastor, a Pastoral Staff member, Ministry Leader, or a Deacon or Deaconess.

- a. They are to go directly to the person with whom they have a concern, one on one, and share their concern, seeking understanding, asking forgiveness, and/or reconciliation.
- b. If the person approached is unreceptive at the meeting, the concerned person is to ask two or more Elders to meet with them and the person who has been unreceptive. Again, the goal is to gain understanding, harmony, confession, forgiveness and/or reconciliation.
- c. If the person approached is still unreceptive, the entire Council of Elders, for the purpose of reconciliation, should seek to meet with the person who initially brought up the concern and the person who was approached.
- d. No accusation shall be brought to the full Council of Elders except on the witness of at least two Members of Soma Bible Church (1 Timothy 5:19-21).
- e. If resolution is not possible, and the Council of Elders conclude that the Ministry Team Member is guilty and unresponsive to addressing the specific sin in their life, they shall:
  - i. Remove that person from their position and from the Membership of the church.
  - ii. Share with the Members of the church the results of the matter in a public meeting and in writing.
  - iii. Pray for ultimate restoration and renewal with the person who has been unreceptive and unrepentant.
- f. If the Senior Pastor is the person in question and he reaches a point of impasse with the Elders, an impartial Christian mediator from outside Soma Bible Church, agreeable to both parties, shall be brought into the situation for resolution.
- g. In the event of the termination of the Senior Pastor, the Council of Elders will determine the remaining compensation benefits package, termination date and other pertinent details.

## **C. Discipline of Members by Council of Elders**

### **1. Misconduct**

The Council of Elders shall meet with any Member whose life and conduct are not in harmony with the Church and not in accordance with biblical principles. All appropriate effort should be pursued to restore the Member to the path of fellowship. If the Member fails to show satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation, the Council of Elders will determine the appropriate level of discipline up to and including termination of Membership and/or removal from the Church. The Council of Elders will notify the Member personally and in writing of its decision before reporting to the Church (1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-17).

### **2. Concerns, Grievances, and/Conflicts with Members**

In all cases of concerns, grievances and/or conflicts with Members, the offenders shall be dealt with in accordance with the rules laid out in Matthew 18 and no public complaint shall be made until this course has been pursued. All charges shall be made in writing and submitted to the Council of Elders (Matthew 18:15-17).

## **ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS**

Any new By-Laws or amendments to these By-Laws may be adopted only upon unanimous consent of the Council of Elders *and* two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Members of the Church.

## **ARTICLE XI – PROPERTY**

Soma Bible Church may buy, own and operate any real property as is essential to carry out its Mission Statement/Purpose, as stated in Article III. Any decision to sell real property or otherwise sell substantially all of the assets of Soma Bible Church must be approved by unanimous vote of the Council of Elders *and* require two-thirds (2/3) voting approval of the Members, with such a vote to occur at a Special Meeting, properly noticed in accordance with the procedures set forth in these By-Laws.

## **ARTICLE XII – DISSOLUTION**

Soma Bible Church may be dissolved as a corporate entity and cease operations upon the unanimous vote of the Council of Elders *and* requires a two-thirds (2/3) voting approval of the Members. In such an event, any remaining assets after all expenses and debts have been paid shall be transferred to one or more agreed upon and qualified Christian organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1984 or amendments thereto. The Council of Elders shall appoint a committee for this purpose consisting of (as available) Elders, the Senior Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Ministry Directors, Members, and such other individuals the Council of Elders in their discretion and judgment believe are necessary and needed for such a committee.