

## **Article III – Membership**

(Membership is hereinafter referenced as partnership)

(Member is hereinafter referenced as ministry partner)

### **Section 1: General**

The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to Christ, identified themselves with, and joined themselves to a local body of believers (Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Acts 11:26). At RLCC, Partnership implies something you participate in and contribute to rather than just belonging to. RLCC is not just an organization to join, but a living organism whose members or ministry partners choose to come together in support of one-another as they live out the calling of Christ in their lives. All those signing the Partner's Covenant agreeing to be bound by the Articles, Constitution and Bylaws of the new church corporation become active ministry partners of this Church. No ministry partner of this Church, nor any officer, shall by virtue of such partnership, office or position incur or be subject to personal liability to any extent for any indebtedness, obligations, acts or omissions of this Corporation.

### **Section 2: Qualifications for Partnership Consideration**

Personal faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation

### **Section 3: Requirements for Partnership**

1. Acceptance of Believers' Baptism as a public testimony of personal faith.
2. Commitment to strive towards fulfilling RLCC's Statement of Faith and Partnership Expectations.
3. Participate in a RLCC Partnership class or equivalent training provided by RLCC leadership.
4. Covenant with the body as a ministry partner, reaffirming commitment each year to the RLCC Vision and to one another.
5. Any active ministry partner unable to attend due to work assignment (including military deployments), medical condition, or educational pursuits shall be considered an active partner while the above-mentioned exceptions exist.

### **Section 4: Recognition and Affirmation of Ministry Partners**

Partnership candidates may be presented by a member of the Pastoral Staff and affirmed by the partnership at the close of any regularly scheduled worship.

### **Section 5: Partnership Expectations**

With God's help, protect the unity of the body by acting in love toward one another, avoiding gossip, resolving conflict quickly, praying for the health and growth of the body and supporting the leadership of the church. Ministry partners in RLCC should strive to exhibit the following: personal purity, relational integrity, organizational loyalty, interpersonal maturity, and an evangelistic lifestyle. Ministry partners should regularly give of their time, talents and treasures in support of the work of God's Church locally and throughout the world.

## **Section 6: Privileges and Responsibilities of Partnership**

Privileges of Partnering with RLCC include:

1. A spiritual family support and encouragement network.
2. Leadership and service opportunities in accordance with spiritual maturity and spiritual gifts.
3. Spiritual guidance and accountability.
4. Public identification with the marks of Biblical maturity present in a genuine believer.
5. The right, after prayerful consideration under guidance of the Holy Spirit, to influence key decisions of the church.

Responsibilities of Partnering with RLCC

Ministry partners of RLCC are responsible to participate in important church decisions.

Key decisions would include:

1. By approval, commit to support the church budget.
2. Addition or deletion of Ministerial Staff positions.
3. Affirm calling or revoking of a call of a member of the Pastoral Staff.
4. Approve amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, and the Partnership Covenant.
5. By approval, commit to support the acquisition of land and related indebtedness.
6. The merger or dissolution of the church should such action be necessary.
7. The disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the church in the event of dissolution of the church.
8. Other key issues as determined by the Elder Team.
9. Each ministry partner is allowed one vote. Voting by proxy is not allowed.  
Whenever possible, consensus of the RLCC partnership is to be sought. All motions require the support of 75% of the church ministry partners present in order to pass.

Note: A church ministry partner is one who strives to fulfill the partnership expectations defined in Article III, Section 5, as expressed in the signed Partnership Covenant, and covenants with the body each year as a ministry partner, reaffirming commitment to the RLCC Mission and Vision and to one another.

## **Section 7: Removal from Partnership**

RLCC is a “covenant church” with ministry partners having the opportunity to renew their covenant with the body each year. This renewal of partnership allows all ministry partners to examine and affirm their commitment to the body. Any person choosing not to renew his/her covenant partnership would no longer be eligible to influence key decisions of the church, or serve in a leadership capacity, but would be shown all the love, spiritual support and encouragement due any brother or sister in Christ.

A ministry partner will be removed from the church partnership roll and lose all partnership privileges for any of the following reasons:

1. At the request of the ministry partner.
2. A decision by the ministry partner is made not to annually reaffirm their covenant with the body.
3. Transfer to another church.
4. Scriptural church discipline, in accordance with Article III, Section 8.
5. Death.

Note: For the Biblical basis of “covenant partnership” see Deuteronomy 7:9, Joshua 24:24-25, 2 Chronicles 6:14, Isaiah 42:6, Jeremiah 11:1-5, Jeremiah 31:33, Matthew 26:26-28, Hebrews 9:15.

### **Section 8: Mutual Accountability and Church Discipline**

The goal of church discipline is always restoration. Scripture teaches believers to be concerned for one another's spiritual well-being and to speak the truth in love where there is evidence of habitual sin, essential moral failure or essential Biblical failure and/or an unrepentant spirit. Because these situations hinder the unrepentant believer's fellowship with God, threaten the unity of the body, and weaken the witness of the church in the community, the church and its ministry partners are to act in accordance with the following Biblical procedures when dealing with these situations. (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; 2 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Corinthians 11:29; Galatians 6:1; 1 John 1:7).

1. If an individual has knowledge of habitual sin/unrepentant spirit in the life of a fellow believer, he/she is to go promptly and privately to the unrepentant believer in a spirit of prayer, love, and humility for the purpose of restoring them in the Lord (Matthew 18:15).
2. If there is no evidence of repentance, the individual is then to approach the unrepentant believer with two or three other believers in the same spirit and purpose as previously stated. (Matthew 18:16).
3. If there is still no evidence of repentance, Scripture teaches that the matter should be brought before the church (Matthew 18:17). The church shall be represented in such matters by the Pastoral Staff and Elders.

If there is still no evidence of genuine repentance or resolution the Pastoral Staff and Elders shall take such action as necessary to protect the unity, safety, and spiritual health of the body, up to and including the exclusion of the unrepentant believer from

the fellowship until genuine repentance is evident. Any disciplinary action shall be handled as discretely as possible. All ministry partners and the Elder Team are bound by any disciplinary decisions. (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Titus 3:10-11).

*“While not an exhaustive list, examples of **essential moral failure**: adultery, embezzlement, inappropriate sexual contact, pornography, lying deceiving etc. Accusations of this nature require hard evidence, not suspicion or opinion. Things that do not qualify as moral failures are things such as: misunderstandings, mistakes, poor judgment, overstatements, miscommunications, showing emotions, verbal missteps and forgetfulness.”*

*While not an exhaustive list, examples of **essential Biblical failure**: this must be reserved for doctrinal issues that would directly contradict the Bible or the theological beliefs outlined in our Statement of Faith, or the Constitution and Bylaws. Areas that do not qualify as an essential Biblical failure are things such as philosophy of ministry, areas of Scripture that are open to interpretation and personal convictions.*

The Elder Team will not discuss or consider a personal conflict situation between parties that has not first been addressed according to the steps laid out here.

### **Section 9: Restoration of Fellowship**

Christ's grace and forgiveness are to be extended by the church to those repentant believers seeking restoration to the fellowship in accordance with the Scriptures (Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:31-35; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:32). The same Biblical principles for restoration apply in attempting to resolve relational conflicts within the body. (Matthew 5:23-24; Ephesians 4:26-27).

Those seeking restoration of church fellowship and partnership are to present evidence of their repentance to the Pastoral Staff and Elders of the church, in accordance with the Scriptures (2 Corinthians 2:7-8). Upon their consent, the Pastoral Staff and Elders shall restore the repentant believer to church fellowship and partnership, at which time all lost privileges and responsibilities are to be resumed by the restored believer.