

# **Terra Nova Community Church Codes of Regulations (bylaws)**

## **Article 1 – Name**

The name of this organization shall be “Terra Nova Community Church,” affiliated with Converge Worldwide and Converge MidAtlantic.

The organization was incorporated in the state of Ohio, April 1, 2006. The first Sunday service was held April 9, 2006.

## **Article 2 – Statement of Purpose**

Terra Nova exists to build a healthy, biblically functioning community passionate about loving God and their neighbors.

## **Article 3 – Statement of Faith**

### ***The Bible***

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (John 17:17, Romans 15:4, II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:19-21)

### ***The Trinity***

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. (Matthew 28:19, John 1:1-4, I John 5:7)

### ***God the Father***

We believe in God, the Father, an infinite personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each person, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (John 3:16-17, John 4:24, John 17:5)

### ***Jesus Christ***

We believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. (Isaiah 7:14, John 1:14, Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 1:2-3, I John 1:7)

### ***The Holy Spirit***

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide. (John 14:26, John 16:7-15, Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 1:13-14)

### ***Regeneration***

We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. (John 1:12-13, John 3:3, 16-17, Acts 20:21, Ephesians 2:1-9, Titus 3:5)

### ***The Church***

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible confession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world. (Matthew 16:16-18, Acts 2:38-41, Ephesians 2:19-22, Ephesians 5:25-27)

### ***Christian Conduct***

We believe that Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ. (II Corinthians 9:6-8, Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 2:14-16, Colossians 3:17-23, I Thessalonians 5:17-18)

### ***The Ordinances***

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:41-42, Romans 6:3-5, I Corinthians 11:23-32)

### ***Religious Liberty***

We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

### ***Church Cooperation***

We believe that the local church can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with inter-denominational fellowships on a voluntary basis.

### ***The Last Things***

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked. (John 5:28-29, Revelation 20:1-15, II Corinthians 5:10, Matthew 25:31-46)

## Article 4 – Ministry Partnership (Membership)

### I. Procedure for Ministry Partnership/Membership

In the New Testament, we find that once a person became a follower of Christ, they identified themselves with, and committed themselves to a particular local body of believers. In this manner, the first-century Christians held each other accountable and spurred one another on to spiritual formation (Hebrews 10:24-25).

In keeping with this model, Terra Nova Community Church recognizes the value of formally becoming a “ministry partner” (member) and the important role it can play in challenging people to take another step in their spiritual journey with God.

A person may seek to become an official ministry partner (member) of Terra Nova Community Church after they have been a part of the community of believers for an adequate time to understand salvation and Terra Nova’s philosophy and style of ministry and therefore determine if they would be able to support the leadership and direction of the church. A seminar or some other learning experience will be offered on a regular basis to instruct those seeking to become official ministry partners on the basic tenets of beliefs at Terra Nova as well as instruction on the structure and philosophy of ministry.

### II. The Ministry Partner Covenant

The Ministry Partner Covenant at Terra Nova Community Church provides opportunity for prospective partners to express their desire to unite with the Terra Nova community. Each ministry partner will covenant before God and the other partners to live as an authentic Christ follower and an active participant in the church, the bride of Christ.

#### Section A: Ministry Partner Requirements:

##### *A Terra Nova Community Church Ministry Partner is a...*

##### *1. Follower of Christ*

- a. Has made the decision to trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and baptized by immersion (Romans 6:3-4)
- b. Is seeking to become an imitator of Christ by loving people, developing character, and building Christ’s Church by making their community a better place because they, a follower of Christ, live there.

##### *2. Connector*

- a. Intentionally building relationships of love and trust with those outside the family of God (Philemon 6)
- b. Always seeking to invite spiritually seeking friends to the Terra Nova community

##### *3. Generous Contributor*

- a. Faithfully stewarding financial resources by generously contributing to the work of Christ at Terra Nova and sharing with those in need in practical and material ways (II Corinthians 8:7, I John 3:17-18)
- b. Serving the cause of Christ sacrificially, understanding your spiritual gift and finding an appropriate place of service in the Terra Nova Community (I Peter 4:10)

##### *4. Community Developer*

- a. Faithfully participating in the community of Terra Nova (Heb. 10:24-25)

- b. Welcoming guest at all Terra Nova gatherings
- c. Being committed to a small group of friends (“Life Group”) who are doing life together

**5. Unity-Protector**

- a. Seeking to Resolve conflicts Biblically, refusing to gossip (Matt. 18:15-17)
- b. Following the leadership of the church (Hebrews 13:17)
- c. Abiding by and supporting the Terra Nova Vision and Statement of Faith (Phil. 2:1-2)

**III. Termination of Partnership/Membership**

A request of transfer may be granted...

1. Whenever a ministry partner joins another church, his or her partnership/membership at Terra Nova shall terminate without further action. Partners may also retain their membership when they are temporarily located to another city for job or education.
2. A partner may be terminated at their own request.
3. A partner who has been inactive for more than twelve months may be removed from membership. Prior to removal, contact from the church must take place. If that partner fails to respond, the partner must be notified that his/her membership at Terra Nova Community Church shall be terminated by action of the Elders.
4. A partner may be removed if the partner is guilty of gross misconduct contrary to Biblical teaching and remains in an unrepentant state. Prior to removal from membership, reasonable efforts (consistent with Matthew 18:15-20) must be made to confront sin, bring reconciliation, and restore the partner to Christian fellowship. If all efforts fail to bring about repentance and restoration, the leaders will remove the individual from active formal membership.

**Article 5: Church Government and Church Leadership**

**I. The Congregation**

The congregation, made up of the active formal ministry partners of Terra Nova Community Church, is the governing body of this corporation. The Elder Board acts for the congregation in all matters not specifically reserved to the congregation in this Constitution or where the congregation has not taken specific action. The approval of the congregation must be received in matters pertaining to: the hiring or dismissing of the Senior Pastor, the purchase or sale of real estate over \$250,000.00, and amending this Constitution.

**II. Elder Board**

**A. The Elder Board Purpose**

The Elder Board is made up of members of Terra Nova Community Church who have been called to provide general leadership and oversight for the church body. The Elder Board is responsible to God and to the congregation for the spiritual health and strategic direction of the ministry of Terra Nova.

Some specific duties of the Elder Board are:

1. **Shepherd the flock of God.** The Elder Board will serve the needs of people with humility and love.
2. **Lead through Example.** The Elders will be scriptural role models for the rest of the church body to look up to and follow.
3. **Teach and Exhort.** The Elder Board must see that the Terra Nova community is well taught through sound Biblical instruction.
4. **Refute False Teaching.** The Elders must confront those who teach what contradicts Biblical truth and admonish those who continue in a pattern of behavior that contradicts clear Biblical principles.
5. **Pray for the Church.** The Elders will regularly intercede for the church, praying for the physical and spiritual well-being of the congregation and the advancement of the work of Christ.
6. **Oversee the Ministry of Terra Nova.** The Elder Board will regularly review and evaluate the direction of the church. The Elder Board and Staff will together establish strategies and objectives to honor God and fulfill the mission of the church. This includes the authority to establish and dissolve ministries.
7. **Oversee the Senior Pastor.** The Elder Board will annually appraise and review the character, work, ministry, and compensation of the Senior Pastor and the health of his family.
8. **Legal Representatives.** The Elder Board shall be the church's representatives in signing legal documents that are consistent with the church's budget and constitution. This includes the authority to borrow money, and to acquire, encumber, and sell real and personal property.
9. **Policy Establishment.** The Elders shall establish operating policies and procedures as are deemed appropriate and necessary for the effective operation of the church.
10. **Licensing and Ordination.** The Elder Board has the authority to act in matters of licensing and can recommend to the congregation any ordinations or commissioning.

### **B. The Elder Board Composition**

The Elder Board shall consist of the Senior Pastor and no fewer than three and no more than nine additional members who will serve as overseers of the church. Members of the Elder Board shall select three members to serve as Chairman, Secretary, and Financial Officer of Terra Nova Community Church.

### **C. Elder Qualifications**

An Elder at Terra Nova church must...

1. Be a formal ministry partner of Terra Nova Community Church (see partnership requirements) and an active participant in the life of the Terra Nova community
2. Meet Biblical standards of conduct and character for elders/overseers (as established in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and I Peter 5:1-4.)

### **D. Elder Term of Service**

Members of the Elder Board shall be affirmed by the congregation at its annual membership meeting. Each elder at the start shall be asked to make a one-year commitment, subject to review, re-commitment, and re-affirmation by the church membership each subsequent year.

During the period of annual review, both the individual and the other elders shall evaluate each Elder's continued service as an Elder, again considering Biblical qualifications, ministry effectiveness, and any personal factors that might affect their service. An individual's service as an elder may be discontinued by his own decision or by the unanimous decision of the other elders.

Elders who renew their commitment to serve for another year would then be presented before the membership at the annual meeting for affirmation and dedication for another year of service.

### **E. Elder Selection Process**

Scripture gives evidence of the first elders being appointed by the founders of the church. By this example it is implied that the existing spiritual leadership of the church should be intimately involved in the process of selecting members of the Elder Board to insure selection based on qualifications of character, conduct, spiritual vitality, and spiritual giftedness.

The Elder Board shall annually review the status of the members of the board and determine if any new elders are needed for the coming year. If the Elder Board determines that additional elders are needed, they shall initiate the following process for Elder selection:

1. Nominations from the Body

With the Biblical qualifications in mind, active members of Terra Nova will be encouraged to prayerfully submit names of other active Terra Nova members for consideration as elders over a period of approximately two weeks.

2. Notification of the Nominees

Those individuals whose names have been submitted shall be so informed, and they shall be urged to engage in self-appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the Scriptural qualifications and Elder role description. Any person may withdraw his name at that point because of not aspiring to the position of elder or not believing he meets the qualifications.

3. Interviews Conducted

The existing Elder Board shall review the names and nominees, and shall conduct interviews and a background check with each nominee to evaluate his readiness for the role of elder.

#### 4. Elder Selections

After prayerfully considering each nominee, the existing elders will make final selections. Nominees not selected at this point shall be given reason by the elders as to why they were not selected.

Those selected will be notified and begin Elder training.

#### **ELDER TRAINING**

Elder training will involve the following and will be overseen by the Senior Pastor:

- i. A leadership and theology training class
- ii. 6 months of apprenticeship on the Elder Board – attending meetings and actively participating but not voting.
- iii. After 6 months, the candidate will be evaluated by the Elder Board before the board votes on the candidate's readiness to serve as an Elder.

#### 5. Affirmation of the Body

The names of the prospective new Elders shall be brought before the members of Terra Nova, who will be given two weeks to show cause why any one of the prospective elders would not be qualified to serve. Consistent with Matthew 18:15 and Matthew 5:24, any member with such "cause" must first express his/her concern to the prospective elder and then must also express his/her concern to the existing Elder Board for consideration.

#### 6. Ratification of the Body

At the annual business meeting, the existing Elders will present their selections to the members of Terra Nova for a final vote of affirmation.

#### **F. Elder Meetings**

Elders will meet on a monthly basis, unless otherwise determined by the Elders. A quorum will be a simple majority of the Elders. The Elders will always seek unanimity in all decisions, but if that is unattainable, a 75% majority will be required to pass any motion.

#### **G. Theological Issues**

The Elders, with the Senior Pastor, will resolve issues not addressed in this code of regulations as well as theological issues not specifically addressed in the statement of faith. The Senior Pastor will lead the Elders in studying through the issue in light of Scripture, historical orthodoxy, and cultural understandings so that the leadership can come to a conclusion regarding any conflict or issue in governing this organization. The Senior Pastor will then lead the congregation in studying the issue so that they, too, can understand and embrace the direction of the leadership. Dialogue is vital to this process as well as humility in allowing God to lead through Scripture and those He has appointed as leaders.

### **III. The Senior Pastor**

#### **A. Senior Pastor Role and Purpose**

The Senior Pastor shall perform all the Scriptural duties of his office, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have freedom from the pulpit. He shall be a member of the Elder Board and the Finance Team.

Along with the Elders, the Senior Pastor is responsible to lead, shepherd, and direct the church, as well as to seek and discern God's leading for the church and provide leadership and Biblical instruction toward the fulfillment of the vision.

Along with the other pastoral staff, the Senior Pastor shall be responsible for the equipping and mobilization of the church body to do the work of ministry.

The Senior Pastor shall lead and develop the church staff, providing counsel, encouragement, and guidance to assist in the accomplishment of objectives for each staff member. All staff members are directly or indirectly responsible to the Senior Pastor.

#### **B. Senior Pastor Search Committee**

In the case of a vacancy in the role of Senior Pastor, a Pastoral Search Committee shall be formed by the Elder Board and shall be responsible to the Elder Board. The duties of the Pastoral Search Committee shall be:

1. To check background, interview, evaluate, and select possible candidates for the position. No more than one candidate shall be presented to the congregation concurrently for a vote to issue a call.
2. To make a recommendation to the congregation at a properly noticed congregational meeting; to issue a call with specific terms approved by the Elder Board.
3. To handle all communication with candidates until a call is accepted.

### **IV. Church Staff**

1. **Hiring.** New employees may be hired and added to the church staff under the authority of the Elder Team. Each staff member should receive a written job description to communicate responsibilities and expectations. Each staff member should also be reviewed annually by his/her direct supervisor.

2. **Dismissal.** A staff member's employment may be terminated by action of the Elder Board. Severance pay shall be determined by majority vote of the Elders.

### **V. Legal and Financial Affairs Team**

The Legal and Financial Affairs Team (LFAT) will be appointed and empowered by the Elder Board to perform specifically designated functions. The team members are empowered by the Elder Board to oversee the legal and financial matters of the church as well as matters pertaining to land, buildings, and rented facilities.

**A. Checks, Drafts, etc...**

All checks, drafts, or other orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences issued in the name of Terra Nova Community Church shall be signed by any signatories approved by the Elder Board.

**B. Gifts**

The Elder Board may empower the LFAT to accept on behalf of the church any contribution, gift, bequest, or device for the general purposes of the church or for any special purpose of the Terra Nova Church body.

**C. Property Rights**

Terra Nova Community Church shall have the power to buy, own, and sell real and personal property in its own name. The Elder Board shall be the church's representatives in signing legal documents that are consistent with the church's budget and constitution. This includes the authority to borrow money, and to acquire, encumber, and sell real and personal property.

**D. Employee Policies**

The LFAT shall establish appropriate policies, guidelines, and expectations pertinent to all members of the Terra Nova Church staff.

**E. Annual Audit**

To ensure integrity and the highest level of responsible stewardship, the LFAT shall appoint a qualified outside accountant to audit the financial books for Terra Nova on an annual basis.

**VI. Ministry Leaders**

Ministry leaders will be selected by the church staff with the oversight of the Elder Board. Ministry leaders will be equipped and empowered to lead ministry teams and accomplish vital tasks for the health and vision of Terra Nova. Ministry leaders shall meet the Biblical standards of character and conduct and demonstrate a commitment to the people and ministry of Terra Nova.

*A Ministry Leader at Terra Nova shall...*

1. Be a formal ministry partner of Terra Nova Community Church (see membership requirements) and an active participant in the life of the Terra Nova community.
2. Meet Biblical standards of conduct and character for deacons as described in I Timothy 3:8-13.
3. Demonstrate appropriate gifts and knowledge to his/her specific area of ministry leadership.

## **Article 6 - Congregational Meetings**

An annual congregational (business) meeting of the church shall be held within six weeks of the new fiscal year. The agenda of the annual meeting shall include ratification of new elders and the affirmation of existing elders, notification of objectives for the current year, and other matters determined by the Elders. In preparation for the meeting, the Elders shall supply church members with a financial report and a written report from the Senior Pastor. A quorum must be present or able to vote in abstention. A quorum is defined as all members who attend a congregational meeting officially called by the Elders with due notice of at least 2 weeks of public announcements and notification. A 75% majority of that quorum will be required to approve any action. (Members must be at least 16 years old to cast a vote at a congregational meeting.)

Special congregational meetings, in addition to the Annual Meeting, may be convened by the Elder Board as it deems necessary. A congregational meeting may also be convened by written petition signed by 10% of all members or 10 members, whichever is greater.

## **Article 7 - Books and Records**

The church shall keep correct and complete books and records of accounts and shall also keep minutes of the proceedings of its Elder Board, Legal and Financial Affairs Team, and any committees having any of the authority of the Elder Board, and shall keep at the registered or principle office a record giving the names and addresses of the members entitled to vote. All books and records of the church may be inspected by any members of the Elder Board or Legal and Financial Affairs Team member. To ensure integrity and the highest level of responsible stewardship, a qualified outside accountant shall audit the financial books for Terra Nova Community Church on an annual basis.

## **Article 8 - Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of the corporation shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December each year.

## **Article 9 - Limitations of Liability and Indemnification**

Terra Nova Community Church will indemnify any and all persons who may serve or who have served at any time as a Pastor, Associate Pastor, or in another executive level staff position in the church, as a church officer or member of a church board or committee, as a youth leader for a church youth organization, or as a teacher or counselor of the church elected or appointed by the church of any board or committee of the church, against any and all expenses, including amounts paid in judgments, counsel fees, and amounts paid in settlements (before or after suit is commenced) actually and necessarily incurred by such persons in connection with the defense or settlement of any claim, action, suit or proceeding in which they, or any of them are made parties, or a party, or which may be asserted against any such person be adjudged in any action, suit or proceeding to be liable for duties. Such indemnification will be in addition to any other rights to which those indemnified may be entitled under any law, bylaw, agreement, or otherwise.

## **Article 10 – Dissolution, Division, and Dis-Affiliation**

**Dissolution.** The church is affiliated with Converge MidAtlantic, a region of Converge Worldwide. Should this church cease to exist as a corporate body, then all of its property, appurtenances, and effects then owned or held by it shall inure to the benefit of and become the property of the district corporation of Converge MidAtlantic within which jurisdiction this church is located and with which it is affiliated by law.

**Division.** In case of organic division of the church membership, the church property shall belong to those members who abide by this constitution. Should any controversy arise as to who is abiding by this constitution, the question shall be submitted to the Executive Board of Converge MidAtlantic, and their decision shall be final.

**Dis-Affiliation.** Should the church decide to dissolve its affiliation with Converge MidAtlantic or Converge Worldwide, Converge MidAtlantic has the right to request and receive full reimbursement for any district monies and services dispensed during the first three years of the church.

## **Article 11 - Amendments to the Codes of Regulation**

The power to alter, amend, or repeal the Codes of Regulation or the Articles of Incorporation shall be vested in the congregation. Proposed amendments must be submitted through the Elder Board and approved by the members of Terra Nova Community Church. Written copies of the proposed amendment must be made available to the congregation at least 30 days prior to a congregation meeting to approve an amendment. Only church members may vote to amend this constitution or the Articles of Incorporation. A two-thirds vote of the quorum shall be required to amend the Constitution or the Articles of Incorporation.