

BYLAWS
OF
RIVER CITY CHURCH

PREAMBLE

The New Testament teaches that local churches are the visible, organized expression of the body of Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18). The people of God who make up any local church are to live and serve under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:23-24) and in obedience to His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). These bylaws are an attempt to apply the biblical teaching about church governance, function, and organization to a specific local church in a way that honors Jesus and conforms to the demands of the state (Romans 13:1-2). As such, they serve as a secondary authority, subservient to and dependent upon the authority of the Bible as the Word of God. Items and issues of policy not addressed in these bylaws, will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Council of Elders.

ARTICLE I
NAME

The official name under which this church is incorporated is River City Church. River City Church is a member church in the Acts29 (A29) Church Planting Network & a member church of the North Central Association (NCA) of the North American Baptist Conference (NAB).

ARTICLE II
PURPOSE

Section 1. Mission: The mission of the River City Church is to make disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus through living out the Gospel.

Section 2. Vision: We desire to bring the redeeming power of Jesus Christ to the people and culture around us by contending for and contextualizing the Gospel. We desire to be known as a local church that seeks the welfare of the city. We desire to birth a movement of reproducing disciples and by extension, reproducing churches.

Section 3. Core Values: There are four values that frame our mission and vision: The Word of God, Worship, Community, and Mercy. These values are organized into two primary categories: Gospel Word and Gospel Mission. The Gospel Word motivates us to the Gospel Mission. The Gospel Mission demonstrates the power of the Gospel Word.

3.1 Word Of God. We hold the Word of God (The Bible) as our ultimate authority in all matters of life. We believe in teaching it when we gather as a large group, wrestling over it in small group community, and integrating it into the everyday. This value is based on the biblical teachings of 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 8:31-32; Acts 20:32.

3.2 Worship. Gathering together for singing, teaching, and prayer strengthens our commitment to one another and to the mission of Jesus to “seek and save the lost” by

celebrating the Glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. This value is based on the biblical teachings of Hebrews 10:23-25; Ephesians 5:19-20; Acts 2:42-47.

3.3 Community. “The Church” isn’t a building, rather it is made up of people. We are to take seriously the charge of caring for one another. This is the main place for encouragement, accountability, and discipleship. This value is based on the biblical teachings of Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:15-16; James 5:16; Galatians 5:13.

3.4 Mercy. “The Church” also isn’t a club for the “in” at the expense of the outsider. Jesus is clear that part of the Church’s job is to have compassion for “the least of these.” This value is based on the biblical teachings of James 1:22-27, Matthew 25:31-46.

ARTICLE III STATEMENT OF FAITH

Our statement of faith has two main components. As an Acts 29 member church, we affirm the Doctrinal Distinctives of The Acts 29 Church Planting Network (Sections 1-5). Acts 29 is a network of church-planting churches that stands in the tradition of historic evangelical confessionalism. While we believe it is vital that the Elders of each of our local churches determine where they stand on doctrines of second importance, we do wish to make known our convictions on the following five distinctive theological foundations. Section 6 of this article clarifies the finer points of Doctrine of River City Church and serves as our more complete Statement of Faith/Doctrinal Statement. This statement is intended to be compatible with the NAB Statement of Beliefs.

Section 1. We are passionate about Gospel centrality.

We believe the gospel is the good news of what God has graciously accomplished for sinners through the sinless life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, namely our forgiveness from sin and complete justification before God; this gospel is also the foundation for our confidence in the ultimate triumph of God’s kingdom, and the consummation of his purpose for all creation in the new heavens and new earth. This gospel is centered in Christ, is the foundation for the life of the Church, and is our only hope for eternal life; this gospel is not proclaimed if Christ’s penal substitutionary death and bodily resurrection are not central to our message.

This Gospel is not only the means by which people are saved, but also the truth and power by which people are sanctified; it is the truth of the Gospel that enables us to genuinely and joyfully do what is pleasing to God and to grow in progressive conformity to the image of Christ. The salvation offered in this gospel message is received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; no ordinance, ritual, work, or any other activity on the part of man is required in order to be saved.

(Mark 1:1; Luke 24:46-47; John 3:16-18; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:2; 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 9:13; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 1: 7-10; Colossians 1:

19-20; 2 Timothy 1:8-14; 2 Peter 3: 11-13 Jude 3-4; Revelation 21-22)

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Section 2. We enthusiastically embrace the sovereignty of God's grace in saving sinners.

We affirm that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, not on the basis of foreseen faith but unconditionally, according to his sovereign good pleasure and will. We believe that through the work of the Holy Spirit, God will draw the elect to faith in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, graciously and effectually overcoming their stubborn resistance to the gospel so that they will most assuredly and willingly believe.

We also believe that these, the elect of God whom he gave to the Son, will persevere in belief and godly behavior and be kept secure in their salvation by grace through faith. We believe that God's sovereignty in this salvation neither diminishes the responsibility of people to believe in Christ nor marginalizes the necessity and power of prayer and evangelism, but rather reinforces and establishes them as the ordained means by which God accomplishes his ordained ends.

(John 1:12-13; 6:37-44; 10:25-30; Acts 13:48; 16:30-31; Romans 3-4; 8:1-17,31-39; 9:1-23; 10:8-10; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Titus 3:3-7; 1 John 1:7,9)

Section 3. We recognize and rest upon the necessity of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit for all of life and ministry.

The Holy Spirit is fully God, equal with the Father and Son, whose primary ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ; he also convicts unbelievers of their need for Christ and imparts spiritual life through regeneration (the new birth).

The Spirit permanently indwells, graciously sanctifies, lovingly leads, and empowers all who are brought to faith in Christ so that they might live in obedience to the inerrant Scriptures. The model for our reliance upon the Spirit and our experience of his indwelling and empowering presence is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who was filled with the Spirit and entirely dependent upon his power for the performance of miracles, the preaching of the kingdom of God, and all other dimensions of his earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit who indwelt and empowered Christ in like manner indwells and empowers us through spiritual gifts he has bestowed for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ. Although there are different understandings in our network of the nature and function of these gifts, we all recognize that they are divine provisions central to spiritual growth and effective ministry and are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised according to biblical guidelines.

(Matthew 3:11; 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14; 5:17; 10:21; John 1:12-13; 3:1-15, 34; 14:12; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 2:14-21; 4:29-30; 10:38; Romans 8:9; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-13; 12:28-31; 14:1-33; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18)

Section 4. We are deeply committed to the fundamental spiritual and moral equality of male and female and to men as responsible servant-leaders in the home and church.

Both men and women are together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, and have equal access to God through faith in Christ. Men and women are together the recipients of spiritual gifts designed to empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond. Therefore, women are to be

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encouraged, equipped, and empowered to utilize their gifting in ministry, in service to the body of Christ, and through teaching in ways that are consistent with the Word of God.

Both husbands and wives are responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality in the home, but God has given to the man primary responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant-leadership and sacrificial love characterized by Jesus Christ. This principle of male headship should not be confused with, nor give any hint of, domineering control. Rather, it is to be the loving, tender and nurturing care of a godly man who is himself under the kind and gentle authority of Jesus Christ.

The Elders/Pastors of each local church have been granted authority under the headship of Jesus Christ to provide oversight and to teach/preach the Word of God in corporate assembly for the building up of the body. The office of Elder/Pastor is restricted to men.

(Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18; Acts 18:24-26; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

Section 5. Acts 29 embraces a missionary understanding of the local church and its role as the primary means by which God chooses to establish his kingdom on earth.

The church has a clear biblical mandate to look beyond its own community to the neighborhood, the nation, and the world as a whole; thus mission is not an optional program in the church but an essential element in the identity of the church.

We are called to make Christ known through the gospel and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring his lordship to bear on every dimension of life.

The primary way we fulfill this mission is through the planting of churches that plant churches and the training of their leaders. Our aim is that Jesus Christ would be more fully formed in each person through the ministry of those churches God enables us to plant around the world. We also believe we are responsible neither to retreat from our culture nor to conform to it, but with humility, through the Spirit and the truth of the gospel, to engage it boldly as we seek its transformation and submission to the lordship of Christ.

(Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 10:5-25; 28:18-20; Luke 4:18-19; 24:46-47; Acts 28:31; Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 3:10; 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10)

Section 6. River City Church Doctrinal Statement.

While our Statement of Faith (above) articulates, in broad terms, who we are and what we believe as a local church our full Doctrinal Statement brings specificity to areas of our

theological convictions:

6.1 The Word of God

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. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31,32; John 20:31; Acts 20:32

6.2 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

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offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. Gen. 1:1,26; Isa 44:6-8; John 1:1,3; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; Rom. 1:19,20; Eph. 4:5-6

6.3 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 He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. Luke 10:21,22; Matt. 23:9; John 3:16; 6:27; Rom. 1:7; 1 Tim. 1:1,2; 2:5,6; 1 Peter 1:3; Rev. 1:6

6.4 Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1, 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 8:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:21-23; John 20:30,31; Matt. 20:28; Eph. 1:4; Acts 1:11; Rom. 5:6-8; 6:9,10; Heb. 7:25; 9:28; 1 Tim. 3:16

6.5 The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, empower, and gift all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells all who believe in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide. John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26,27; 16:9-14; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Gal. 5:22-26

6.6 Regeneration

We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation and spiritually dead. We believe that the Holy Spirit awakens to new life and regenerates the sinner, causing repentance from sin, and saving faith in Christ. Gen. 1:26; 5:2; Gen. 3; 2:17; 3:19; Eccl. 2:11; John 3:14; 5:24; 5:30; 7:13; 8:12; 10:26; Rom. 9:22; 2 Thes. 1:9; Rev. 19:3, 20; 20:10; 14:15; 21:18; Psalms 51:7; Jer. 17:9; James 1:14; Rom. 3:19; 5:19; Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9; 3:16; John 1:13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:1

6.7 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 tasks of living a life of worship, nurturing the body of believers and giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world. Eph. 2:19-22; Acts 1:8; Eph. 5:19-21; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:23-25

6.8 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. 1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 12:1-3; Heb. 12:1-2; John 14:15, 23-24; I John 2:3-6; 2 Cor. 9:6-9; 1 Cor. 4:2; Col. 1:9-10

6.9 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 the public declaration of a believer's faith in Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins. We believe that immersion of the believer in water in the name of the triune God is the richest expression of the New Testament example. 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. Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

6.10 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

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interference by an ecclesiastical 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. 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 14: 7-9, 12

6.11 Church Cooperation

We believe that local churches can effectively 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 interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary basis. Acts 15:36, 41; 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:1; Gal. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:4, 10, 11

6.12 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. Matt. 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts. 1:11; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thes. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Thes. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15

ARTICLE IV COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. General. Membership in this Church Community shall consist of all persons who have met the qualifications for Covenant Membership. Such persons will hereafter be referred to as "members" or "Covenant Members."

Section 2. Qualifications for Covenant Membership.

1. Profession of faith in Jesus Christ and evidence of regeneration.
2. A lifestyle of obedience to the teachings of Scripture.
3. Membership Interview with and Elder and/or Deacon of River City Church & completion of any Covenant Membership Classes.
4. A signed Member Covenant, signifying full support of the mission, values, doctrine, and expectations of the River City Church community.

5. Age twelve or older.

Section 3. Rights of Covenant Members.

A participating member of the community as defined by this Article:

1. May participate in Covenant Member meetings.
2. May be eligible for formal positions of leadership including Elder, Deacon, Missional Community Leader and others.
 - 3.2(a) - Covenant Members who would serve in teaching-level areas of leadership (preaching, leading Missional Communities, lead teachers for Children's Ministry, worship leader, etc.) would have to also adhere to the belief of Credo-baptism and be willing to be Baptized publicly by immersion.
3. Will have a voice in (opportunity to speak into) the operation of the church under the leadership of the Council of Elders and other appointed leadership within the church.

Section 4. Responsibilities of Covenant Members.

While the Elders make the final decision, they are mandated to take into careful consideration the input and will of the Covenant Members. Members are free to interact with any elders on any pertinent issue and are responsible to give approval to some specific areas of church life via participation and corporate affirmation at a Covenant Members meeting.

Members shall have responsibility to give approval and consent in the following areas:

4.1 The hiring/dismissal of a lead pastor.

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Under the recommendation and leadership of the council of Elders the church members would approve the hiring or firing of the lead pastor.

4.2 The purchasing/owning of property as a church body.

The members shall have, in the corporate name, the right to own, buy, and sell property. In case of dissolution, the property shall be handled in accordance with River City Church's Articles of Incorporation and the laws of North Dakota.

4.3 The addition or removal of Articles of this set of bylaws (Amendments).

See Article IX - AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

Section 5. Resignation of Covenant Members. Any member may resign by filing a written resignation with an elder or Missional Community Leader.

Section 6. Transfer of Covenant Membership. Membership is not transferable or assignable.

Section 7. Termination of Membership. Any member who persists in sin or heresy will be subject to church discipline according to the biblical guidelines given in Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, and Galatians 6:1. If such discipline does not bring about repentance, the elders may terminate the individual's membership in the community.

ARTICLE V COUNCIL OF ELDERS

Section 1. General Powers. The Council of Elders (hereafter referred to as the "Elders") is to oversee all of the affairs of the River City Church Community and is the final authority within

said Community. The primary responsibility of the Elders is the spiritual leadership of the community, and therefore it may delegate certain organizational or administrative responsibilities to other individuals or teams as it sees fit. No elder shall have any right, title, or interest in or to any property of the Corporation. No elder shall be personally liable for the debts or obligations of the Corporation of any nature whatsoever, nor shall any of the property of the elders be subject to the payment of the debts or obligations of the Corporation.

Section 2. Meetings. Elders shall meet regularly for prayer, discussions of matters related to spiritual leadership, and the transaction of such business as may come before the meeting.

Section 3. Qualification For Elders. Elders shall be male members of the community who meet the biblical requirements for eldership set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and who personify the mission, vision, and values of the Community. Elders would be faithful members of River City who uphold her Mission, Vision, and Values and adhere to her Statement of Faith. Elders would also have to adhere to the position of Credo Baptism (Be baptized as an adult, making a profession of faith and willing to be publicly immersed).

Section 4. Selection and Dismissal.

1. The Lead Pastor may temporarily serve as the sole elder, delegating administrative and financial oversight to the other officers and Deacons until additional qualified elder candidates are raised up. The Lead Pastor is responsible to move the Community toward plural eldership as soon as possible, and shall inform the Membership regularly of progress toward this goal.

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2. The Elders shall specify the number of positions, if any, to be filled each year.
3. Members of the Community may bring eldership candidates to the attention of the Elders.
4. The Elders shall review all candidates and select the most qualified men.
5. Prospective Elders will be presented for confirmation at a meeting of the Covenant Members.
6. All Elders shall be subject to re-affirmation annually by the Covenant Membership.
7. An Elder may be dismissed if he persists in sin or heresy or if he fails to meet Elder criteria.

Section 5. Delegated Responsibility. The Elders may delegate certain duties and responsibilities to various teams and leaders within the church to further the mission of the church. Of particular importance are:

5.1 Deacons. As outlined in Article VI, Deacons will be installed to carry out the mission of the church in various teams and areas of ministry responsibility under the leadership of the Elders.

5.1(a) While not required for operation, the intention would be to have elder oversight and deacon leadership over areas of ministry such as, Children's ministry, nursery, Missional Communities, etc.

5.2 The Financial Team. This team shall be responsible for oversight of the financial and administrative matters of the Community, as delegated by the Elders. The Financial team shall be appointed annually by the Elders. All Financial Team members shall meet the requirements of the biblical office of deacon/deaconess as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

The Financial Team shall keep written minutes of its meetings and shall maintain adequate records of all financial decisions and transactions as required for honorable and transparent accounting and according to any and all local, state, and federal laws.

5.2(a) The Finance team would have a minimum of three (3) members and no more than five (5).

5.2(b) The Finance team would be responsible for keeping accurate accounts of all financial dealings for River City Church. They would also be responsible for assessing, and proposing the compensation and benefits offered to the paid Elders (Pastors) and other staff of the church.

5.2(c) One of the Financial team members will be an Elder from the council of Elders and will give general oversight to the Financial Team.

5.2(d) Each Financial team member would serve a term of one (1) year with a yearly affirmation given by the Council of Elders. There would be no term limits.

5.2(e) Regular Meetings. The Financial Team shall meet as needed for the transaction of such business as may come before the meeting.

ARTICLE VI DEACONS

Section 1. General Powers. The Deacons are those individuals who meet the biblical qualifications for the office of deacon/deaconess as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and serve as delegates of the Council of Elders for the purpose of carrying out the vision and mission of River

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City Church and giving leadership and oversight to different areas of ministry within the church under the delegated authority of the Council of Elders.

Section 2. Qualification For Deacons. Deacons shall be male or female members of the community who meet the biblical requirements for the office of deacon set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and who personify the mission, vision, and values of the Community.

Section 3. Selection and Dismissal.

3.1 The Elders shall specify the number of deacons to appoint and teams to commission as needed to accomplish the ministry of River City Church.

3.2 Members of the Community may bring Deacon candidates to the attention of the Elders.

3.3 Prospective Deacons will be observed, tested, and approved in the context of ministry at River City Church.

3.4 A Deacon may be dismissed, by the Council of Elders, if he/she persists in sin or heresy or if he/she fails to meet Deacon criteria.

ARTICLE VII OFFICERS

The officers of the Corporation shall be the Council of Elders and should be made up of at least,

a Lead Pastor, a Treasurer, and may have any other such officers as may be designated under North Dakota state law.

ARTICLE VIII PROPERTY AND RECORDS

Section 1. Property. The Church (River City Church) may acquire, own, dispose of, encumber, and convey property, real and personal, for church purposes, in conformity with the laws of the state where the property is situated.

Section 2. Records. The Church (River City Church) shall maintain the following records and reports:

1. Adequate and correct books and records of accounts (financial records).
2. Written minutes of the proceedings of its Financial team.
3. A record of the members of the Church, setting forth the members' names and addresses.
4. Contribution statements for contributors.

All such records shall be kept at the Church's (River City Church) principal office.

ARTICLE IX AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

The power to alter, amend, repeal, or adopt new bylaws shall be in the Council of Elders. The Elders shall seek and value the input of the members in such amendments and shall inform the Covenant Members of proposed amendments as per Article 4, Section 4. The Elders shall receive

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the input and approval of the Covenant Membership pursuant unto the proposed amendment(s). The Elders shall be the ones introduce any and all amendments in writing to the members at least thirty days prior to the date of the meeting. Upon approval any changes will take effect immediately. Any amendments to the bylaws shall not be inconsistent with the laws of the State of North Dakota or the Articles of Incorporation.

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