

# **By-laws of The Gathering Sonora**

## **Article 1: Name**

Section 1.1: The name of this organization shall be The Gathering Sonora (hereby referred to as “The Church”). It shall be a California Not-for-Profit religious corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person.

## **Article 2: Purpose**

Section 2.1: The purpose of our church is to be a community of Christ-followers that is committed through grace to love God and love all people. (*Matthew 22:36-39*)

## **Article 3: Priorities**

Section 3.1: We are devoted to God’s word & prayer, to communion & community, and to one another. (*Acts 2:42,45*)

## **Article 4: Values**

Section 4.1: We are a body of people that represents various beliefs across the spectrum of Christian faith and as such, our Statement of Faith is communicated in our purpose, priorities and values as stated in our Bylaws.

Section 4.2: We believe that there is room for diversity of thought around many doctrinal issues and avoid being dogmatic, but we are uncompromising in our commitment to Jesus Christ, and believe the following statements to be an essential belief for every Christian to embrace:

- We believe that Jesus is uniquely the *Son of God*—this relationship is distinct from the human experience of being a child, emphasizing Jesus' pre-existence, co-equality with the Father, and his role in God's creation and salvation plan. (Mark 14:61-62)
- We believe that Jesus Christ is our *Redeemer*—who liberates us not through fear or condemnation, but through boundless love and radical grace which is made possible through his death, burial and resurrection. (Colossians 1:20)
- We believe that Jesus Christ is our *Savior*—not from a distant place but walking beside us through the presence of the Holy Spirit, in our pain, our questions, and our journey toward wholeness. (Matthew 1:21)
- We believe that Jesus Christ is our *Forgiver* and meets us with compassion, not shame—inviting us into healing, reconciliation, and the sacred work of forgiving ourselves and one another. (Luke 23:34)
- We believe that Jesus Christ is the *Giver of Life*—not only eternal, but abundant here and now—calling us to justice, mercy, and love in a world yearning for hope. In Christ, we see the divine made flesh, the presence of God with and among us, forever showing that no one is beyond grace, no life beyond redemption, and no heart beyond transformation. (John 10:10)

Section 4.3: We believe that being Christ-centered is essential and we strive to be known for the following values:

- Grace and Embrace (*Hebrews 12:15, Ephesians 4:32*)  
*We believe that every individual is created by God and in His image and is worthy of unconditional love and acceptance regardless of race, creed, sexual-orientation, past choices or present circumstances and we strive to demonstrate that in our relationships with one another.*
- Generosity & Service (*2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Galatians 5:13*)  
*We believe that God blesses everyone uniquely and that everyone has opportunities to give of their time, talent and resources in ways that are unique to them. We strive to have a ministry of encouragement to one another and a mission of love in our community and beyond.*
- Transparency & Unity (*Ephesians 4:25, 1 Corinthians 1:10*)  
*We believe that every member matters regardless of whether they are in leadership or not and that leaders should be fully disclosing with openness and honesty. We believe that unity in diversity is a Biblical model of how Christians should live in community with one another. We allow space for people to share their opinions and positions on all matters and intentionally strive to seek common areas of agreement instead of division.*
- Theological Humility & Spiritual Growth (*Proverbs 11:2, 2 Peter 3:18*)  
*We believe we are a community of diverse doctrinal and theological thought, and we strive to be life-long learners absent of self-righteousness and legalism. Beyond our affirmation about Jesus Christ, we believe that growing and maturing Christ-followers would benefit from developing a personal statement of faith based on study and mentorship around a multitude of doctrinal and theological issues.*
- Equality & Shared Leadership (*Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30*)  
*We believe that all people are created equal in the eyes of God and have been commissioned by him to use their gifts and abilities in the fullest expression possible, which includes women serving in leadership at all levels. We strive to lead people in the development of their gifts and expect all church members to be engaged in decision making.*
- Making Much of God (*2 Chronicles 16:23-24*)  
*We believe that the ultimate way to honor God is to love him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength which creates an overflow of love in our lives to offer others. We strive to be genuinely connected to God's best for us both as a church and as individuals, free of malice, unforgiveness and hypocrisy.*

#### **Article 5: Fiscal Year**

Section 5.1: The Church's fiscal year shall be July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Article 6: Membership**

Section 6.1: God has designed all people with spiritual gifts and strengths, and we believe the Church is strongest and healthiest when people are encouraged to use those gifts. Therefore, membership shall be open to any individual who is regularly attending and contributing to the Church.

Section 6.2: We value transparency and collaboration in decision-making. Member meetings shall be held at least once annually or more frequently, as needed. All decisions that affect the church as a whole, beyond day to day operations, shall require a majority approval by the Church's membership in attendance at a membership meeting.

At membership meetings, members shall be responsible to vote on the following items to approve:

- Adding members to the Leadership & Shepherding Team to fill regular seats as well as to fill any vacancies that may arise
- The annual budget as recommended by the Leadership & Shepherding Team
- Any amendments to these Bylaws
- The vision, direction and goals of the Church as recommended by the Leadership & Shepherding Team
- All decisions that affect the church as a whole, beyond day to day operations.

### **Article 7: Leadership & Shepherding Team**

Section 7.1 Leadership & Shepherding Team Members: All members of leadership teams serve the Church in humility and grace and none are designed to operate independently.

The Officers of the Board of Directors (hereby referred to as "Leadership & Shepherding Team") consist of the following roles: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The members of the Leadership & Shepherding Team shall designate the officer positions among themselves annually to coincide with the fiscal year.

The members of the Leadership & Shepherding Team consist of the following roles:

Caregiving Leader (responsible for providing physical & emotional support), Children & Youth Leader (responsible for spiritual growth of children & youth), Church Operations Leader (responsible for facilities and use), Congregational Liaison (responsible to connect the congregation to the leadership team), Discipleship Leader (responsible for spiritual growth of adults), Finance & Stewardship Leader (responsible for business administration & fiscal health), Outreach Leader (responsible to provide opportunities of service locally & globally), Worship Leader (responsible for the Sunday Morning Experience).

There is no monetary compensation for serving on the Leadership & Shepherding Team.

Section 7.2 Power and Duties: The Leadership & Shepherding Team shall:

- Shepherd the spiritual needs of the church
- Oversee all day-to-day needs associated with church operations
- Track and manage church resources (financial, physical, etc.)
- Recommend an annual budget to the membership for their approval
- Make recommendations to the church membership about all decisions for the membership's approval as referenced above in Section 6.2
- Conduct long-term and strategic planning for the direction of the church, making recommendations to the general membership for their approval
- The Chair shall be responsible for developing and distributing meeting agendas after receiving input from each Leadership & Shepherding Team member as well as the general membership and also facilitate Leadership & Shepherding Team and general membership meetings
- The Vice-Chair shall be responsible for taking on the roles of the Chair in the Chair's absence or inability to carry out normal duties
- The Treasurer shall be responsible for fiscal and reporting needs of the church

- The Secretary shall be responsible for taking minutes for Leadership & Shepherding Team and general membership meetings and ensuring the minutes are distributed to the Leadership & Shepherding Team and posted on the Church website
- The Leadership & Shepherding Team Congregational Liaison shall be responsible to add any requested items from the congregation to the Leadership & Shepherding Team meeting agendas and/or the general church membership meeting agendas for discussion and possible action.

Section 7.3 Qualifications: The requirement for serving on the Leadership & Shepherding Team is to be a member of the Church with a personal commitment to follow Christ. All nominees shall be approved by the Leadership & Shepherding Team.

Section 7.4 Elections: Members of the Leadership & Shepherding Team shall be elected by a simple majority of the membership in attendance at a membership meeting. Elections shall be held once a year or more frequently, if the need arises due to a vacancy or other circumstances. Prospective members of the Leadership & Shepherding Team may be nominated by a member of the church or may volunteer their name for consideration.

Section 7.5 Terms: Terms for members of the Leadership & Shepherding Team shall be for two years- For continuity of leadership, the Chair is required to have served one year on the Leadership & Shepherding Team but can only serve two consecutive years as Chair.

Section 7.6 Vacancies: To fill any vacancies that may arise on the Leadership & Shepherding Team, nominees will be approved by the Leadership & Shepherding Team and voted on by the membership of the Church as soon as the need arises.

Section 7.7 Quorum: In order to conduct business, including approving day to day operations, a quorum shall consist of 50% + 1 of the Leadership & Shepherding Team.

Section 7.8 Leadership & Shepherding Team Recommendations: The Leadership & Shepherding Team shall make recommendations to the Church on all decisions beyond day to day operations.

Section 7.9 Meetings: The Leadership & Shepherding Team shall meet monthly but more frequently as needed.

Notices of Leadership & Shepherding Team meetings, including meeting documents and backup material, shall be distributed to the Leadership & Shepherding Team and posted on the church website a week in advance of the meeting. Should emergency or urgent matters present themselves after the agenda has been posted, amendments to the agenda will be permitted up to the time of the meeting. An amended agenda shall be posted on the church website. Minutes of the Leadership & Shepherding Team meetings shall be distributed to the Leadership & Shepherding Team and posted on the church website after the meeting has taken place.

Any interested member of the church may attend the entirety of the Leadership & Shepherding Team meetings except for those items specified on the agenda that are related to paid and volunteer personnel decisions or other legal matters that require confidentiality by law.

Section 7.10 Resignations and Dismissals: A Leadership & Shepherdding Team member may resign by submitting written notice to the Chair, with an effective date. If all Leadership & Shepherdding Team members resign, the congregation will elect new members.

The Leadership & Shepherdding Team can recommend to the church for their approval the dismissal of a Team member who has stopped attending meetings or is no longer operating in unity with the other Leadership & Shepherdding Team members.

#### **Article 8: Other Teams and Committees**

Section 8.1 – Committee formation: At any time, the church may create other teams or committees to perform functions relevant to the organization as needed.

#### **Article 9: Amendments**

Section 9.1 – Amendments: As the church changes, it may become necessary to make amendments to these bylaws for the continued health of the church. Bylaws may be amended only by approval of the majority of the membership of the Church in attendance at a member meeting. Amendment recommendations may be brought to the Church membership either through a recommendation of the Leadership & Shepherdding Team or a member of the church requesting a bylaw amendment.

If a member of the church would like an amendment to the bylaws to be considered, they should work through the Congregational Liaison of the Leadership & Shepherdding Team to have the item added to a membership meeting agenda. Bylaw amendment recommendations should be submitted in writing two weeks prior to the member meeting so that they may be distributed to the church for review before a vote is taken. Approved bylaws amendments shall be posted on the Church website.

#### **Article 10 Dissolution**

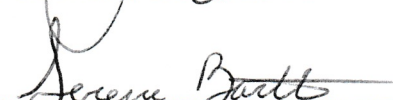
Article 10.1 – Dissolutions: In the event dissolution of the church is necessary, the Leadership & Shepherdding Team will make a recommendation to the church, which will include a plan of dissolution detailing how the church intends to distribute its remaining assets and address its remaining liabilities. If the church dissolves for any reason, the assets net of debts owed will be donated to another local 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, per California law.

**Ratification:**

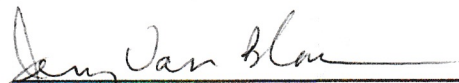
These bylaws were approved by the congregation, ratified and signed by the following officers of the Leadership Team:

  
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Joe Skaff, Chairperson

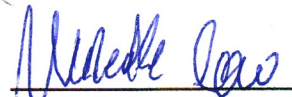
5/23/25  
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Date

  
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Serena Barth, Vice-Chairperson

5/23/25  
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Date

  
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Jenny Van Blaricom, Treasurer

5/28/25  
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Date

  
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Michelle Low, Secretary

6/1/25  
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Date

Approved April 3, 2020  
Revised June 13, 2021  
Revised February 27, 2022  
Revised May 18, 2025