**SMCC Constitution and By-Laws (extract)**

**Article X, Practical Theology and Issue Positions** – Shades Mountain Community Church believes and teaches that our members’ behavior and campus usage should be consistent with the character and nature of our doctrine. Therefore we reserve the right to not allow, promote, or engage in activity or campus usage that is inconsistent with our doctrinal beliefs or stated positions.

A. **Marriage and Sexuality** – Shades Mountain Community Church believes and teaches the following regarding marriage and sexuality:

1. Every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of the church. Faithful proclamation of the Scripture, including the call to repentance, and the carrying out of church discipline as defined in the Scripture, does not constitute hate speech, or hateful or harassing behavior. Instead, it is a fundamental part of the church’s loving mission to the world. (Matt 18:15-17; Col 3:12-14; Col 4:5-6; Jam 5:19-20)

2. God offers redemption and forgiveness to all who confess and forsake their sin, including sexual sin, and seek His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. His forgiveness is total and complete and imputes the full righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner. The forgiven sinner has been cleansed from the guilt of sin, set apart unto God, made holy and justified before Him. Any man or woman who has received that forgiveness is “in Christ” and is a “new creation,” able to persevere in and pursue a way of life that pleases the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. (II Cor 5:17; Eph 2:4-10)

3. Marriage was given by God as part of His common grace, and it has no meaning other than as He has provided. Marriage is subject to the curse of the Fall, but neither this curse nor societal preferences changes the definition of marriage established at creation. Believers, living in obedience to the Scripture and under the control of the Holy Spirit, can experience peaceful, productive, and fulfilling marriage as intended by God. (Gen 2:18-24; Mat 19:4-6)

4. The term “marriage” has only one meaning in the context of human relationships. It is a covenant relationship that is sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union as defined in Scripture. (Mat 19:4-6)

5. Marriages of believers are to illustrate the loving relationship of Christ and His church, with the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the church and the wife responding to her husband’s loving leadership as the church responds to Christ. Therefore, believers should choose to marry only those who share their faith and regenerated life. (Eph 5:22-33)

6. Prolonged conjugal cohabitation, which may include a legally recognized “common law marriage” does not establish, and is not equivalent to a biblical marriage. Biblically, such a relationship is fornication, requiring repentance of such behavior. Where no such covenant exists (see paragraphs 4 and 5 above), between a cohabiting couple, prior to coming to faith in Christ, family units should be preserved to the extent possible and, if otherwise appropriate, marriage encouraged. (John 4:18)

7. God intends sexual activity to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage. (Gal 5:19; I Thes 4:3)

8. Any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, the creation or use of pornography, and any attempt to change one’s biological gender either bodily or through cross behavior or dressing, is sinful and offensive to God. (Deut 22:5; Gal 5:19; Rom 1:26-27; I Cor 6:9; I Tim 1:10)

B. **Employees and Volunteers** – In order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ and to provide a biblical role model to the church and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity or who serve as volunteers agree and abide by our Statement on Marriage and Sexuality.

**Article XI, Amendments** – Revisions, additions or amendments of this Constitution and By-Laws must be approved by three-fourths of the Council of Elders, made available to active members in written form prior to or along with notification of an upcoming business meeting, and approved by at least three-fourths of the active members present and voting at said business meeting.