

CONSTITUTION

[Name of Church]
of [City, State]
An Evangelical Free Church

Article I - Name

The name of this local body of believers shall be [Name of Church] of [City, State], an Evangelical Free Church (hereinafter referred to as “the church”). It shall be incorporated as a nonprofit organization under the laws of the State of [Name of State].

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this church shall be to bring glory to God by fulfilling the commands of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Article III - Affiliation

This church shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America (herein after referred to as “the EFCA”), an association and fellowship of autonomous but interdependent congregations of like faith and congregational government.

Article IV – Doctrinal Statement

Affirming the EFCA Statement of Faith, we believe the following:

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

This Doctrinal Statement does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to interpret and apply the Bible for purposes of this church's doctrine and practice.

Article V – Marriage and Sexuality

We believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive covenant relationship between one man and one woman. We believe that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is sinful since it is contrary to God's Word and His design for human flourishing. We believe that God created the human race male and female and that all conduct with the intent to become a different sex or adopt a gender incongruent with one's birth sex is sinful since it is contrary to God's Word and His design for human flourishing.

Article VI - Membership

A. Significance of membership

Membership in this church is a commitment to follow the commands of Christ as revealed in Scripture and the beliefs and policies of this church as set forth in this Constitution. It provides the believer with a unique sense of belonging, it grants them the right to vote in church business affairs, and it places them under the spiritual leadership and care of the Board of Elders of this church. It is also a basic qualification for leadership in the church.

B. Qualifications for membership

Membership in this church shall be open to all persons who are at least eighteen years of age, who have trusted Christ as their Savior, whose desire is to grow in Him, and who agree to be bound by the beliefs and policies of this church as set forth in this Constitution.

C. Reception of members

After reviewing the beliefs and policies of this church as set forth in this Constitution, individuals requesting membership will meet personally with an Elder or Elder designee for a formal membership interview. If the interviewer determines that a potential member has not trusted Christ as Savior or is in substantial disagreement with the beliefs and policies of this church, that individual's membership will be postponed until such issues can be resolved. If the interviewer believes and the Board of Elders affirms that an individual meets the qualifications for membership as stated above, the members of the church will be notified of that individual's candidacy for membership. Within two weeks of this notification, any objecting member may submit in writing to the Board of Elders a just cause in accordance with the Word of God and this Constitution as to why the candidate in question should not be accepted into the membership of the church. After careful consideration of any such objections, the Board of Elders will vote to accept or deny the individual's membership in the church. Those individuals whose membership is approved will be publicly presented to the congregation and welcomed into the membership of the church.

D. Duties of members

Each member of this church should strive to "conduct himself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27), to faithfully attend the corporate worship gatherings of this church (Heb. 10:24-25), to share the gospel with unbelievers and make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Pet. 3:15), to "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), to "use whatever (spiritual) gift he has received to serve others" (1 Pet. 4:10), and to support the church financially as God enables him to do so. (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7).

E. Discipline of members

Members of this church who sinfully err in doctrine (1 Tim. 1:18-20; Titus 1:10-14) or conduct (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6; Titus 3:9-11; Gal. 6:1-2) shall be subject to dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Before such dismissal, however, it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's offense to warn and correct the erring member in private. If the erring member does not heed this warning, then the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct the erring member. If the erring member refuses to heed this warning, it shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Elders who, upon confirming the legitimacy and seriousness of the charge, may choose to bring the matter before the members of the church for a congregational vote of warning. If the erring member refuses to repent and take heed to these repeated warnings, he shall be publicly dismissed from the church. The goal of this process is not to punish the erring member but to gently yet firmly restore him to a right relationship with God and His people (Gal. 6:1). When the erring member shows satisfactory evidence of repentance, he may be welcomed back into the fellowship of the church (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

F. Removal from membership

A person may be dismissed from membership who: 1) moves away from the area or desires to join another church, 2) is inactive for a year, failing to attend any of the services, 3) no longer supports the beliefs or policies of this church, or 4) continues in sin after attempts at restoration have been made following the instructions of Matthew 18:15-18 as outlined above.

G. Business Meetings

A general annual business meeting of the church members shall be held each year to approve the budget and to affirm those nominated for office for the coming year. The exact date and time of this meeting will be determined by the Board of Elders. Other business meetings may be scheduled as necessary at the discretion of the Lead Pastor or Board of Elders or by written request of fifteen or more church members presented to the Elder Board Chairman. The nature, date, time, and place of any congregational meeting must be announced in regular worship services at least two weeks prior to the meeting. A quorum consisting of twenty percent (20%) of the voting membership shall be required to conduct official church business. A simple majority vote by those present shall be required to carry a motion unless otherwise specified in this Constitution.

Article VII - Church Government

A. Authority

The ultimate authority for the leadership of this church resides in the head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. For purposes of implementing our Lord's will in the life of this church, the church as a body (the congregation) shall have the responsibility to recognize and approve qualified men in the church as Elders and to submit to their leadership.

B. Elders

1. The Responsibilities of Elders

The primary responsibilities of an Elder are to govern the affairs of the church (1 Tim. 3:1 ["overseer"], 3:4-5; 5:17a; Heb. 13:17), to shepherd the people of God (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28; James 5:14), to equip them for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12), and to teach and defend the truth of God's Word (Acts 20:27-31; 1 Tim. 3:2b; 5:17b; Titus 1:5, 9). Furthermore, the Elders of this church will interpret and apply this Constitution.

2. The Qualifications of Elders

The Board of Elders of this church will be comprised of godly men who meet the following biblical qualifications:

1 Timothy 3:2-7 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own

household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9 *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you- 6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*

1 Peter 5:1-3 *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

3. The Selection of Elders

Elders, with the exception of the Lead Pastor, will be selected according to the following procedure:

- a. The existing Elders shall draft a list of potential nominees comprised of men who are members of this church, who meet the biblical qualifications for Elder, and who are in agreement with the beliefs and policies of this church.
- b. The Board of Elders or their designated representative(s) will conduct a personal interview with each potential nominee to confirm his qualifications and desire to serve as an Elder.
- c. After careful prayer and consideration, the Elders will compile an official list of Elder nominees. A two-thirds majority vote of the Elders present at a duly called meeting of the Board of Elders shall be required to nominate a man for the position of Elder.
- d. A biographical sketch of each nominee along with a list of biblical qualifications for the office of Elder will be submitted to the members of the congregation at least two weeks prior to a congregational vote. During this period, church members who have reason to believe that one or more of the proposed Elder candidates fails to meet the biblical qualifications of an Elder should submit their specific concerns in writing to the Board of Elders for their consideration.
- e. The official list of Elder nominees will be presented to the congregation for their confirmation at the general annual business meeting or at any duly-called business

meeting. In order to be confirmed, a nominee must receive a three-fourths majority vote of the voting members present at the meeting. Because of the gravity and responsibility of the office, the congregation will be encouraged to exercise special care in ascertaining a nominee's fitness for office based solely on the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:2-3.

- g. The term of office for an Elder will be three years. At the completion of three years of service, an Elder will be eligible to be renominated by the Board of Elders and reelected by the congregation for another term. After two consecutive terms, an Elder will be required to step down for at least one year, after which he will be eligible to be renominated by the Board of Elders and reelected by the congregation for another three-year term. Under extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Board of Elders, an Elder who has served two consecutive terms may be renominated by the Board of Elders and reelected by the congregation for a one-year term extension.

4. The Resignation or Removal of an Elder

With the exception of the Lead Pastor, Elders may resign or take a sabbatical from leadership at any time. Because of the biblical commands which reflect a particular respect for the office of Elder, the dismissal of an Elder should not be undertaken lightly (1 Tim. 5:19-20). However, if it is believed that an Elder no longer meets the biblical qualifications of an Elder or is no longer fulfilling the responsibilities of his office, after prayerful deliberation and discussion with the Elder in question, a majority of the other Elders present at a duly called Board meeting may ask for his resignation. If he refuses to resign, they may recommend his dismissal to the congregation and call for a vote of confidence at a duly called business meeting. If a three-fourths majority of voting members present fail to give him a vote of confidence, the Elder's term of office shall be terminated.

5. Organization of the Elders

a. Composition of the Board of Elders

The Board of Elders shall be comprised of the Lead Pastor and at least two other men.

b. Officers

The Board of Elders will select a chairman who will serve to facilitate Board meetings and congregational meetings. The chairman of the Board of Elders will work in close conjunction with the Lead Pastor in setting the agenda for these meetings. A secretary chosen by the Elders will record the minutes of their meetings.

c. Meetings

The Board of Elders shall normally meet at least once a month. For church business to be properly conducted at an Elder meeting, a meaningful attempt must have been made to notify each Elder as to the nature, time, date, and place of the meeting and a majority of the Elders must be present at the meeting.

d. Decision-making

Every effort must be made to determine the Lord's will in each decision through prayer and the careful application of scriptural principles. Though the Board of Elders will function as the governing body of this church, they will seek to be sensitive to the concerns of the congregation and will welcome their input (1 Pet. 5:3). The Board of Elders will be responsible for broad directional decisions, but day-to-day operational decisions will be the responsibility of the Lead Pastor and any staff he manages. All decisions by the Board of Elders should be made in a spirit of unity, but where there is not unanimity on a given issue, a majority vote of the Elders present at a duly called Elder meeting (as defined above) shall be recognized as binding except where prohibited elsewhere in the Constitution.

C. The Lead Pastor

1. Duties of the Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Elders and all committees of this church. As an Elder he will be required to meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:2-3, and he will fulfill all the functions of that office, but with a special emphasis on the teaching and preaching of God's Word (1 Tim. 5:17). Given this unique role, he will function as the "first among equals" on the Board of Elders, leading the way in setting direction and casting vision, while at the same time heeding the collective wisdom of his fellow Elders, submitting to their accountability, and employing their assistance in directing the affairs of the church. The Lead Pastor or his designee will be responsible to oversee staff members in their duties and will have the authority to hire and dismiss staff members in consultation with the Board of Elders.

2. Selection of the Lead Pastor

Candidates for the position of Lead Pastor shall be recommended by the Board of Elders and confirmed by the members of this church. A two-thirds majority vote by the Board of Elders present at a duly called Board meeting shall be required to nominate a candidate for the position of Lead Pastor, and a three-fourths majority vote by the voting members present at a duly called business meeting shall be required to extend an official call to that candidate. Once employed, the Lead Pastor will automatically become a member of the church, and he shall remain in office until his resignation or removal.

3. Resignation and Removal of the Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor shall give one month's notice if he intends to resign unless a lesser time is mutually agreed upon by the Lead Pastor and the other Elders. Because of the biblical commands which reflect a particular respect for the office of Elder, the dismissal of the Lead Pastor should not be undertaken lightly (1 Tim. 5:19-20). However, if it is believed that the Lead Pastor no longer meets the biblical qualifications of an Elder or is no longer fulfilling the responsibilities of his office, after prayerful deliberation and discussion with the Lead Pastor, a majority of the other Elders present at a duly called Board meeting may ask for his resignation. If he refuses to resign, they may recommend his dismissal to the congregation and call for a vote of confidence at a duly called business meeting. If a

three-fourths majority of voting members present fail to give him a vote of confidence, the Lead Pastor's employment and term of office shall be terminated.

D. Deacons and Deaconesses (hereinafter referred to together as "Deacons")

Under the direction of the Board of Elders, Deacons will provide a second level of servant leadership for specific areas of ministry to enable the Elders to focus on prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the broader oversight of the church body (Acts 6:1-7). The Elders will establish and fill Deacon positions as ministry needs warrant. Individuals serving as Deacons may assume different titles, depending on the specific nature of their leadership roles, but because they occupy positions of spiritual influence, they must meet the qualifications required in Scripture for Deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

E. Financial Management

The Elders shall appoint a Treasurer who will provide the necessary oversight to ensure that all church funds are managed appropriately and that the church's financial records are maintained accurately. The Treasurer will disburse funds as needed to ensure that the church's financial obligations are met in a timely manner and will provide financial reports to the Elders and congregation as required by the Elders. The Elders shall also appoint a Financial Secretary who will be responsible for receiving, recording, depositing, and receipting funds in a timely manner according to the established guidelines.

Article VIII - Property & Dissolution

This church shall have the power to buy, own, and sell real property in its own name. Decisions regarding the purchase of property and the major construction of new buildings will require a majority vote of the members present at a duly called business meeting. The property of this corporation is irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes and no part of the net income or assets of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, officer or member thereof, or to the benefit of any private person.

In the event the church ceases to function or should the corporation be dissolved, the right, title, and interest in and to all of the real and personal property of the church shall accrue to the benefit of, and be vested in the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District of the Evangelical Free Church of America or the successor to said Church Body, provided, however, that the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District of the Evangelical Free Church of America or its successor organization shall at the time of designation, be exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended, or under such successor provision of the Code as may then be in effect. If the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District of the Evangelical Free Church of America is not so exempt from federal income tax at the time of dissolution of the church, then all of the real and personal property of the church shall be distributed to the Evangelical Free Church of America.

Article IX - Amendments

Amendments to the Constitution must be recommended to the congregation by the Board of Elders and approved by the members of the congregation. A three-fourths majority vote by the Elders present at a duly called Board meeting shall be required to recommend a Constitutional amendment to the congregation and a three-fourths majority vote by the voting members present at a duly called business meeting shall be required to pass such an amendment. Notice of intent to amend the Constitution shall be made public at least thirty days before such meeting by the Board of Elders. Copies of the proposed amendment(s) shall be made available to interested members during the interim period. The passed amendment shall become effective immediately unless otherwise specified.