

# **First Evangelical Free Church of St. Louis County**

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We, the members of the First Evangelical Free Church of St. Louis County, in order to carry out more efficiently the commission given by Jesus Christ to His Church, do ordain and establish the following constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves:

### **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this organization shall be "The First Evangelical Free Church of St. Louis County."

### **ARTICLE II: AUTHORITY AND AFFILIATION**

The congregation, at its business meetings, is the legislative and governing body of this organization. This Church shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America and with the district to which it is assigned by the Evangelical Free Church of America. It shall send delegates to denominational conferences, support its mission, and unite in all mutual efforts for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ in the measure that the church itself may officially decide.

### **ARTICLE III: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this organization shall be to glorify God by making disciples who know God personally and worship Him sincerely; who apply Biblical truth to daily living; who generously share their lives and resources with their brothers and sisters in Christ; and who are burdened and equipped to reach the world for Christ.

### **ARTICLE IV: STATEMENT OF FAITH**

The Statement of Faith of this organization shall be the same as the Statement of Faith of The Evangelical Free Church of America, which reads as follows:

1. We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for Christian faith and life.
2. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He is now our High Priest and Advocate.
4. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service.
5. We believe that man was created in the image of God, but fell into sin and is, therefore, lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.
6. We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit and, thus, become children of God.
7. We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church during this present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as means of salvation.
8. We believe that the true Church is composed of all such persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the Body of Christ, of which He is the Head.
9. We believe that only those who are, thus, members of the true Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church.
10. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church and that every local church has the right under Christ to decide and govern its own affairs.
11. We believe in the personal, premillennial, and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and that this "Blessed Hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.
12. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead; of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord; of the unbeliever to

judgment and everlasting conscious punishment.

#### **ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP**

The membership of this church shall be composed only of those individuals who have been accepted into membership by the Elder Board in accordance with the By-Laws.

#### **ARTICLE VI: PROPERTY**

This church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Missouri and as is deemed necessary for the business of the church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed, or otherwise. All such property shall be held in the name of the church. In case of a division of the church (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us), the property of the church shall belong to those who abide by its Constitution and By-Laws. In case of dissolution of the church organization, the property shall be assigned to the District of The Evangelical Free Church of America to which it belongs, to enable said conference to renew the work or use the values thereof for further Gospel enterprises. The church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the organization, or when less than twenty-five members remain.

#### **ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to the members in writing and approved by a two-thirds vote at a regular business meeting of the church at least three months prior to the annual meeting. At the annual meeting they must be adopted, without further amendment, by two-thirds of the membership present and voting. Rev. 2/13/00

#### **BY-LAWS**

##### **ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP**

###### **Section 1 - ELIGIBILITY**

Membership in this organization is open to any person who professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and whose character, conduct, and reputation are in accord with his confession. Members are expected to subscribe to the Evangelical Free Church Statement of Faith, to abide by the Constitution and By-Laws of this organization, and to support the Church in attendance, prayer, and giving. Voting is limited to members 18 years of age and older.

###### **Section 2 - APPLICATION**

**A.** Application for membership shall be made to any member of the Elder Board or pastoral staff. Applicants shall be given a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Church and be invited to attend a class in Church history, doctrine, and polity, taught by a pastor or someone designated by the Elder Board. A membership interview shall be held with no fewer than three elders, former elders, or pastors present (and at least two of the three must be current elders), to hear applicants give personal testimony of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and evidence of their understanding of and harmony with the Statement of Faith.

**B.** Applications shall then be submitted to the full Elder Board and must be approved by unanimous vote. Any dissenting votes must be accompanied by Scriptural reason. Applicants shall be notified by the Elder Board of the action taken, and those approved shall be presented to the congregation for public welcome at a subsequent worship service.

**C.** Membership records shall be maintained at the church office and the membership list shall be reported to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting.

**D.** Pastors and their spouse become members when called.

###### **Section 3 - REMOVAL**

**A.** By Absence. Any member who is absent for six months or longer, consecutively, shall be listed as "inactive" by the Elder Board, resulting in non-voting status. Any person absent more than twelve consecutive months, from whom no communication has been received, may be dropped from the membership by a majority vote of the Elder Board.

**B.** By request for withdrawal. Any member who wishes to withdraw from the Church shall provide such notification in writing to a member of the Elder Board and shall receive a letter of dismissal, if requested.

**C.** By discipline. If any member shall conduct himself in a manner which, in the studied and prayerful opinion of the Elder Board, is not in harmony with Scriptural principles and for which he does not show evidence of repentance, he shall be interviewed and counseled by the Elder Board after the manner clearly indicated in the Word of God (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1). The restoration of the erring member and the protection of the spiritual life of the Church shall be the purpose, and love the motivating force, in these interviews. If, however, the member refuses to meet with the Elders or chooses to continue in his unrepentant condition, he shall be deprived of his membership. This shall be done only after prayerful consideration and upon a unanimous vote of the Elder Board. No Elder, however, is entitled to a vote regarding his own discipline. The Elders may choose to enact discipline short of removal from membership, such as excluding an erring

member from the Lord's Table, from service, or from voting or speaking at congregational meetings.

**D.** All membership changes shall be reported to the Congregation at the next Annual Congregational Meeting. The membership total reported, less members listed as out of town, inactive, or underage, shall be the basis for quorum requirements until the next Annual Congregational Meeting.

**E.** Any member who has withdrawn or who has been excluded from the Church loses all rights of membership in the Church.

## **ARTICLE II - OFFICERS**

### **Section 1 - QUALIFICATIONS**

All officers of the First Evangelical Free Church of St. Louis County, except for the Senior Pastor, shall be individuals who have been members for at least one year prior to their election. All officers shall be persons of irreproachable Christian character, whose moral and spiritual standards are well recognized as fitting the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Senior Pastor and the Elders must be men at least 25 years of age. All other officers must be persons at least 21 years of age.

### **Section 2 - LIST OF OFFICERS**

The officers of the First Evangelical Free Church of St. Louis County shall consist of the Chairman of the Church, the Elder Board, the Deacon Board, the Senior Pastor, the Financial Secretary, the Church Treasurer, the Church Clerk, and such other officers as the Church may vote to establish.

### **Section 3 - DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

**A.** Chairman of the Church. It shall be the duty of the Chairman of the Church to preside at all meetings of the Congregation and to oversee administrative functions of the Church. He shall have the right to attend all board and committee meetings as an ex officio member. He shall also preside whenever there is a joint meeting of all Church officers.

**B.** Elder Board. The management and government of the Church between congregational meetings shall be vested in the Elder Board as representatives of the Congregation, under the Lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It shall be the duty of the Elders to exercise oversight over the Church, shepherding the flock without lording it over them (I Peter 5:2), to guard the purity of doctrine, and to establish policy consistent with the Constitution and By-Laws. The Elders shall act for the Church in the reception, discipline, and dismissal of members. They shall minister in teaching the Word, counseling the needy, comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick, and discipling believers. They may appoint committees, either standing or ad hoc, to help accomplish the work of the ministry. In addition, the ministries of all pastoral staff and the church-related ministries of the Elders are subject to the Elder Board. The Elders shall inform the Congregation of major decisions affecting the Body within thirty days.

**C.** Deacon Board. It shall be the duty of the Deacons to have administrative oversight of the finances of the Church, to prepare the annual budget in consultation with the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer, to provide an annual financial audit, and to keep the facilities and physical property of the Church in good repair. The Deacons shall have responsibility for administering the benevolence functions of the Church. They shall also oversee such service functions as shall be assigned to them by the Elder Board. All major actions of the Deacon Board are subject to review and approval by the Elder Board.

**D.** Senior Pastor. The chief and most important duty of the Senior Pastor shall be to study, preach, and teach the Word of God. He shall have the responsibility of guiding the spiritual life of the Church in conjunction with the Elders. He shall have the right to attend all board and committee meetings as an ex officio member. He shall not be eligible for any other elected office, nor may he serve as chairman of any board or committee.

**E.** Financial Secretary. It shall be the duty of the Financial Secretary to keep accurate, auditable records of all income for the Church. The Financial Secretary shall make sure that at least two persons authorized by the Deacon Board are present when offerings are counted, and shall deposit all funds as quickly as practical. The Financial Secretary shall provide regular reports of Church income to the Deacon Board, the Elder Board and the Congregation. The giving record of individuals shall be kept completely confidential.

**F.** Church Treasurer. It shall be the duty of the Church Treasurer to keep accurate and auditable records of all disbursements of funds for the Church. The Treasurer shall provide regular reports on the state of Church finances to the Deacon Board, the Elder Board and the Congregation.

**G.** Church Clerk. It shall be the duty of the Church Clerk to take minutes of all congregational meetings and to act in behalf of the church in signing legal papers, as required.

### **Section 4 - ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

#### **A. Lay Officers**

**1.** The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for recommending candidates for the offices of Elder and Deacon to the congregation. The Nominating Committee shall consist of five members, including two appointed by the Elder Board and three elected by the Congregation. (Any member may nominate these three, who shall be persons of spiritual maturity and discernment, by contacting any Elder at least two

weeks prior to the congregational meeting at which elections to the Nominating Committee are held. The names of nominees shall be published no later than seven days prior to the congregational meeting. Voting on the candidates shall be by secret ballot. The three candidates with the highest number of votes shall be elected). The Nominating Committee shall have the duty to provide a job description for each office and to recruit spiritually mature individuals from the membership to be candidates for office. Their recruiting should begin no later than September 1 and should be completed by November 30. Suggestions of nominations may be made in writing by any member of the Church to the Nominating Committee for their consideration. Nominations for Elder or Deacon shall be submitted by the Nominating Committee to the Elder Board for their approval at least thirty days before the Annual Congregational Meeting. The Elders are responsible to verify that each candidate meets the Scriptural qualifications for church office. The approved slate must be submitted in writing to the Congregation at least three weeks before the Annual Congregational Meeting. In general, the number of candidates for any church office shall be no more than the number of vacancies. If any candidate does not receive the necessary vote from the Congregation, the Nominating Committee must present a new candidate within sixty days.

**2. Elder Board.** The number of Elders shall be according to the number who have been appointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) and recognized by the Church. If at any time the number should fall below four, the normal authority of the Elder Board will revert to the Congregation. Elders shall be elected by the Church at the Annual Congregational Meeting by a three-fourths' vote of the eligible membership present and voting. Terms shall be for three years, arranged so that approximately one-third of the members shall complete their terms each year. An Elder may not serve more than two consecutive terms; he may, however, be elected to some other board or office. The Senior Pastor shall be deemed a member of the Elder Board. Other pastoral staff may be elected to the Elder Board in the normal manner. The Elders shall meet within thirty days after the Annual Congregational Meeting to select their own officers, including at least a chairman and a secretary.

**3. Deacon Board.** The number of Deacons shall be such as deemed necessary by the Elders and Deacons to carry out the responsibilities. Deacons shall be elected by the Church at the Annual Congregational Meeting by a three-fourths' vote of the eligible membership present and voting, for a term of three years. Terms shall be for three years, arranged so that approximately one-third of the members shall complete their terms each year. A Deacon may not serve more than two consecutive terms; he may, however, be elected to some other board or office. The Deacons shall meet within thirty days after the Annual Congregational Meeting to select their own officers, including at least a chairman and a secretary.

**4. Chairman of the Church.** The Church Chairman shall be appointed by the Elder Board for a term of one year and may not serve more than three consecutive terms.

**5. Financial Secretary.** The Elder Board shall appoint the Financial Secretary with advice from the Deacon Board, for a term of one year, and may serve a maximum of four years consecutively. The Financial Secretary shall be an ex officio member of the Deacon Board, with voting privileges. The Financial Secretary shall hold no other office.

**6. Church Treasurer.** The Church Treasurer shall be appointed by the Elder Board, with advice from the Deacon Board, for a term of one year, and may serve a maximum of four years consecutively. The Treasurer shall be an ex officio member of the Deacon Board, with voting privileges. The Church Treasurer shall hold no other office.

**7. Church Clerk.** The Elder Board shall appoint the Church Clerk annually. There shall be no specific limitation on terms.

#### **B. The Senior Pastor**

A Pastoral Search Committee shall be responsible for choosing candidates for Senior Pastor. This Committee shall be appointed by the Elder Board and confirmed by the Congregation. A candidate selected by the Pastoral Search Committee must be presented to the Elder Board for unanimous approval, and must in turn be recommended to the Congregation by the Elder Board. He shall be elected in a congregational meeting by at least a three-fourths' vote of the eligible membership present and voting.

**C. The election of all officers shall be by secret ballot.**

### **Section 5 - SELECTION OF OTHER STAFF**

**A. Pastoral staff.** These are full-time pastors and department heads.

**1.** The addition of new pastoral staff positions must be approved in advance by the congregation through the budgetary process at the Annual Meeting or, in case of an emergency, at any congregational meeting.

**2.** Candidates shall be nominated by the Human Resources Committee, approved by the Elder Board, and elected by a two-thirds majority of the congregation. A search committee may be utilized when deemed appropriate by the Elder Board. The Human Resources Committee will be expected to expose any candidate to the primary constituency to be served in order to facilitate feedback. The Human Resources Committee shall consist of two Elders, three members from the congregation selected by the Elder Board, and the pastor responsible for pastoral and ministry staffing. This committee shall develop a long-term staffing strategy, make new staff recommendations to the Board of Elders, work with the church administrator to evaluate and update staff benefit packages, review staff evaluations and make salary recommendations, and, under the direction of the Elder Board, give direction and recommendations on special staffing issues.

**B. Ministry staff.** These are program directors, assistants, and interns, part-time or full-time, who administratively report to the pastoral staff.

**1.** The addition of new ministry staff positions must fit within the budgetary guidelines approved by the congregation.

**2.** Candidates shall be selected by the pastoral staff, and must be approved by the Human Resources Committee and the Elder Board.

C. Service staff. These are support service personnel (administrative, secretarial, clerical, bookkeeping, food service, maintenance, engineering, custodial, etc.) The positions must fit within budgetary guidelines and must be approved by the Human Resources Committee. The pastor responsible for administration shall employ the personnel.

#### **Section 6 - TERMINATION OF TENURE OF OFFICERS AND STAFF**

A. An office shall be declared vacant when any of the following conditions occur:

1. Death or disability
2. Resignation
3. Removal by a three-fourths vote in a secret ballot of the membership present and voting.

In any action taken under item 3, the Elder Board will first advise the officer in question of the charges against him in writing. The officer shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers. He shall not be present during discussions concerning him or during any voting. If the Elders are unsuccessful in bringing the matter to a satisfactory conclusion, it shall be presented to the Congregation in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17, along with a recommendation to remove the individual from office.

B. Whenever a vacancy occurs in any office except that of Senior Pastor, the Elder Board may appoint someone to fill that vacancy until the next Annual Congregational Meeting, at which time the one chosen to fill the vacancy must be presented to the Congregation for approval.

C. The Senior Pastor and all pastoral staff shall be called for an indefinite period of time and two months notice must be given by either the staff member or by the Church, for the termination of ministry.

D. Dismissal of Senior Pastor and pastoral staff. The Elders may, by a three-fourths' majority vote, recommend the dismissal of the Senior Pastor or pastoral staff to the congregation. Termination requires a majority vote of the congregation.

E. Dismissal of ministry staff. The Elders may, by a three-fourths' majority vote, dismiss ministry staff.

#### **Section 7 - LIMITATION OF POWER**

A. No officer, board, or committee of this Church shall assume any of the following prerogatives without express congregational consent:

1. To amend this Constitution and By-Laws.
2. To call pastoral staff.
3. To purchase, sell or mortgage real property in behalf of the Church.

B. In addition, no officer shall authorize the non-budgeted expenditure of more than three-tenths' percent (.3%) of the annual operating budget without Elder Board approval, nor shall any board authorize the non-budgeted expenditure of more than three percent (3%) of the annual expense budget without congregational consent.

### **ARTICLE III - MEETINGS**

#### **Section 1 - CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

A. The Annual Congregational Meeting of the Church shall be held during the month of January or February each year. At this meeting annual reports shall be received, officers elected, and other necessary business transacted. The fiscal year shall end December 31.

B. Two additional regular congregational meetings may be held at approximately four-month intervals during the year.

C. Special congregational meetings may be called by the Chairman, by any two Elders, by majority vote of the Deacon Board, or by a written petition of a quorum of the active membership. Notice of such special meetings shall be given by announcement at two regular Sunday worship services prior to the meeting.

#### **Section 2 - RULES OF ORDER**

The rules of order contained in Roberts' Rules of Order (latest revision) shall govern this organization when it is not inconsistent with its Constitution and By-Laws. "Ex officio" in this document shall be defined as "non-voting."

#### **Section 3 - QUORUM**

Fifteen percent (15%) of the active membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at congregational meetings. However, the quorum shall be twenty-five percent (25%) for the Annual Meeting or any meeting at which the Constitution or By-Laws are amended. All matters shall be determined by majority vote (one more than one-half of all the votes cast), except as otherwise specified in these By-Laws. A quorum of all boards and committees shall be a majority of the members.

### **ARTICLE IV - MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **Section 1 - ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH**

A. No organization shall be formed within or considered to be a part of the Church activities before the sponsors have submitted their plans to the Elder Board for their approval and sanction.

B. The various organizations are requested to confer with the Chairman of the Church from time to time regarding their plans and activities,

and to submit copies of their minutes to the Elder Board regularly. All matters of importance which affect the Church shall be submitted to the Elder Board for approval in advance.

C. No organization shall be permitted to function under the name of the Church whose chairman or supervisor is not a member of the Church.

**Section 2 - FUND RAISING**

Methods of raising funds by any and all organizations operating as part of the Church shall be subject to the approval of the Elder Board in advance.

**ARTICLE V - AMENDMENTS**

These By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any regular or special congregational meeting of the Church, providing written notification of the proposed alteration or amendment has been made to the membership at least ten days prior to such meeting. Rev. 2/13/00





