

FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF FULLERTON

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Revised on May 7, 2023

PREAMBLE

As members of this church, united in our Lord Jesus Christ to carry out His calling, we establish this constitution.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this church shall be First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton.

ARTICLE II. STATEMENT OF FAITH

As members of this church, we believe in the following statement of faith:

- A. The Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are 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 all Christian faith and life.
- B. There is one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- C. 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 and ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He is now our High Priest and Advocate.
- D. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and, during this age, to convict men of sin, regenerate the believing sinner and indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service.
- E. 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.
- F. The shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for the justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ by faith are born of the Holy Spirit and thus become the children of God.
- G. The personal, premillennial and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ is our “blessed hope” and has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.
- H. There will be a bodily resurrection of all the dead, of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord and of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting, conscious punishment.
- I. 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.
- J. Water baptism by immersion soon after accepting Christ as personal Savior is a testimony of death to sin and resurrection to a new life, and the Lord’s Supper is a memorial service setting forth in sacred and symbolic manner the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; all true believers and only believers should share in it.

ARTICLE III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is, and shall be, the preaching of the Word of God to the mutual edification, instruction and discipline of its members and other believers; the winning of the unsaved to Christ; helping young Christians develop their spiritual lives; instructing children in the Word of God; and furthering the cause of Christ on the mission fields at home and abroad.

ARTICLE IV. ADDITIONAL PURPOSE

As an additional purpose, this church may establish, operate, manage, maintain, administer and conduct a formal educational program consisting of a Christian preschool, a Christian elementary school, a Christian junior high school, a Christian high school and any other ancillary Christian schools and related facilities and activities required for their implementation and operation.

ARTICLE V. STAND

This church shall remain free and independent and shall not join itself to any other denomination or synod. It shall remain its own highest authority and conduct its business through its business sessions. The church shall cooperate with the Evangelical Free Church of America and its branches and with the EFCA West by sending delegates to conferences, supporting home and foreign missions and uniting in any mutual effort for the furtherance of the gospel as the church itself may officially decide.

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP

This church shall receive as members those applicants who publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ alone as their personal Savior and Lord and whose lives are evidence of a consistent biblical Christian walk. All applicants must be in agreement with the church's statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct, comply with all procedures and meet all prerequisites for admission to membership.

ARTICLE VII. FISCAL YEAR AND ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

A. Fiscal Year

The church fiscal year shall be May 1 through April 30.

B. Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of the congregation shall be held in May. At this meeting, officers shall be elected; appropriate board, committee and staff reports shall be presented; and necessary business shall be transacted.

ARTICLE VIII. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

A. Congregation

All authority in the church is vested in the congregation, consisting of all voting members. The congregation shall decide upon the calling of the senior pastor, affirmation of church elders, admission of applicants for membership, purchase or sale of church real property and such other matters as it shall determine.

B. Elder Board

In submission to the authority of Jesus Christ and under the congregation, the elder board, consisting of such persons as are specified in the bylaws, shall be the highest authority. It may review, revise or reverse the decisions of any lower boards, committees, officers or staff members as it deems appropriate.

ARTICLE IX. PROPERTY RIGHTS

The church shall have power to buy, own and sell real property in its own name. If a division occurs in the church, the name and all property shall be retained by those adhering to the constitution. If the church ceases to function and its organization is dissolved, the property shall automatically become the property of the EFCA West.

ARTICLE X. PRINCIPAL OFFICE

The principal office for the transaction of business of the church shall be initially located at 2801 Brea Boulevard, Fullerton, California. The church, by appropriate action, shall have authority to change said principal office from one location to another within Orange County.

ARTICLE XI. CORPORATE SEAL

The corporate seal shall be circular in form and shall contain the name of the corporation and the date and state of incorporation.

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this constitution may be made at any annual business meeting of the congregation by two-thirds of the votes cast when said proposed amendments have been presented in written form and discussed at a business meeting no later than the third month prior to the time of their adoption. Voting shall be by secret ballot. Articles I, II, III, V, IX and this last sentence of Article XII cannot be repealed or revised.

ARTICLE XIII. MARRIAGE

A. Definition of Marriage

Marriage has been instituted by God. This church defines marriage as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman in which such union is a lifetime commitment. A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage found in this Article XIII.

B. Legitimate Sexual Relations

Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, sexual activities outside of marriage (referred to in the New Testament as “porneia”—πορνεία), including but not limited to adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality and pedophilia, are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the church. Further, lascivious conduct, transgender behavior and the creation and/or distribution and/or viewing of pornography are incompatible with the biblical witness.

BYLAWS

BYLAW I. MEMBERSHIP

A. Admission of Members

1. Regular Members

- a. Prospective members shall apply for membership by preparing and submitting the appropriate application form.
- b. Each applicant for membership shall complete the process approved by the elder board for becoming a member.
- c. Each applicant for membership shall participate in interviews to hear the testimonies of personal faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9–10) and to verify that the applicant meets the additional qualifications for membership stated in Bylaw I A 3.
- d. Applicants who meet requirements for membership as stated in Article VI of the constitution shall be recommended for membership at any congregational business meeting after review by the elder board.
- e. The senior pastor and ministry staff shall be considered to have fulfilled steps b and c through their hiring process.

2. Associate Members

- a. If desired, an applicant may elect associate membership, which has no voting rights. This may be appropriate for someone who desires to teach or hold some other position that requires membership, but who wishes to keep primary membership in another church.
- b. Prospective associate members shall apply for membership, meet all criteria and be accepted into membership on the same basis as regular members.
- c. Regular members may change to associate member status by requesting this change in writing to the church office.
- d. Associate members shall have the same rights and privileges as regular members, except they shall have no vote and hold no church office.

3. Qualifications

All members of this fellowship must have by faith received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (John 1:12; Rom. 10:9–10). Each member is also expected to conduct his life according to the standard set forth in the Scriptures. Such conduct includes moral purity (1 Cor. 6:18–20; 1 Thess. 4:1–7), personal honesty (Eph. 4:25) and biblical fidelity (Jude 20–21; 2 Tim. 3:14–17). Their lives are to be consistent examples of authentic Christianity as they walk in the light (1 John 1:6–9), emulating the character of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 5:15–21; 2 Pet. 1:5–8). All applicants must be in agreement with the church's statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct.

B. Discipline of Members

All members of this fellowship are expected to continue to meet the membership requirements stated in Bylaw I A 3. Should any members willfully depart from this scriptural standard and engage in conduct which conflicts with biblical principles of holiness, the procedure set forth in Matthew 18:15–16 shall be followed for the purpose of leading the erring individual to repentance and, ultimately, to full restoration. This shall be done in a spirit of humility and gentleness (Gal. 6:1) as well as loving honesty (Eph. 4:25). If after these steps of reproof are taken there is no repentance, one of the pastors, with at least one elder, shall confront, counsel and pray with the person. Should there still be no evidence of repentance, the person shall be removed from the membership and fellowship of this church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:14–15).

C. Termination of Membership

1. Any member who no longer meets the qualifications in Bylaw I A 3 and refuses to respond appropriately to discipline as outlined in Bylaw I B shall have his membership terminated. Such termination shall be decided by the elder board after due consideration. The reason for the termination shall be stated in a pastoral letter to the terminated member, sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.
2. Any member who indicates a lack of interest in the ministry of the church for a period of one year and does not respond to written inquiry from the church shall have his membership terminated by the elder board.
3. Any member may voluntarily withdraw his membership by written notice to the church office.

D. Membership Requirement for Position of Responsibility

1. Church membership shall be required for all church officers, regular teachers, adult fellowship officers or any other positions of significant responsibility within the church or its organizations as determined by the elder board.
2. With the approval of the elder board, exceptions may be made for committees requiring special (technical) expertise.

E. Membership Record

Oversight of the membership record shall be the responsibility of the elder board and maintained by the senior pastor's office.

BYLAW II. BUSINESS MEETINGS

A. Regular Business Meetings

The annual business meeting shall be held in May. Other regular business meetings shall be held quarterly. The elder board may vote to omit quarterly business meetings, but the annual business meeting must be held.

B. Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings may be called by action of the elder board.

C. Notice of Business Meetings

Notice of all business meetings shall be by announcement in two regularly scheduled services, at least one of which is on a Sunday, or by written notice to the congregation and announcement in one regularly scheduled Sunday service.

D. Business Meeting Protocol

1. Voting Rights

Only regular members who are eighteen years of age or older may vote. Voting rights are effective immediately upon acceptance into membership.

2. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of those voting members present at any regular or special business meeting.

3. Decisions

All matters in regular and special business meetings requiring congregational approval shall be decided by majority vote, unless otherwise specified herein. Election of officers, amendments to the constitution and bylaws, the calling of a senior pastor and all sensitive issues shall be decided by secret ballot.

4. Parliamentary Procedure

Any parliamentary procedure which is not specified herein shall be in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order*.

BYLAW III. ELDER BOARD MEETINGS

A. Regular Board Meetings

The church chairman shall schedule regular meetings of the elder board.

B. Special Board Meetings

Special meetings of the elder board may be called by the church chairman or senior pastor.

C. Notice of Board Meetings

Regular board meetings shall require no special notice. Special board meetings shall be announced by notifying, or making a reasonable effort to notify, each board member.

D. Board Meeting Protocol

Elder board meetings shall follow the protocol specified in Bylaw II D.

BYLAW IV. STAFF

A. Senior Pastor

In order to fulfill its stated purpose, the congregation shall call a senior pastor. His primary responsibility shall be the teaching and preaching of God's Word, supervision of the ministry staff and oversight of the ministries of the church.

The senior pastor shall be a man of true Christian experience and established character. He shall qualify for his office according to the standards of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and operate in a manner consistent with the governance process policies as approved by the elder board.

He shall become a member of the church and be in full accord with its statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct. By virtue of his office, he shall be an ex officio member of all boards and committees of the church.

The election and calling of a senior pastor may take place at any regular or special business meeting. A senior pastor must receive two-thirds of the votes cast at such meeting and shall be called for an indefinite period of time.

Any accusation brought against the senior pastor shall be investigated by the elder board. If the accusation is not resolved by the elder board, either the elder board or the senior pastor may present the matter to the congregation for final decision. 1 Timothy 5:19-21 states that it takes two witnesses. In today's society we believe all accusations should be considered.

If the senior pastor desires to resign or the congregation desires his termination, three months' notice shall be given in writing, unless waived by mutual consent of the senior pastor and the elder board. The termination of the senior pastor's ministry shall be decided by two-thirds of the votes cast by members present at a regular or special business meeting. Normal compensation shall be continued during the three months, unless waived by mutual consent or by the senior pastor's acceptance of other employment.

B. Ministry Staff

The ministry staff shall include all pastors, directors and managers and shall be responsible to the senior pastor.

The senior pastor shall be responsible to hire or terminate members of the ministry staff. He will keep the elder board informed about actions taken and will consult the elder board in advance of any termination of pastors.

Pastors shall be in full accord with the statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct. They shall become church members as soon after joining the staff as practicable.

The non-pastor ministry staff members shall become members of the church and be in full accord with its statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct. Administrative, facilities, and preschool staff are not required to be members of the church but shall be in full accord with its statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct.

Accusations against any of the pastors or directors shall be handled by the senior pastor or the elder board depending on the situation. The elder board shall be kept fully informed of the accusation and resolution.

C. General Staff

In order to accomplish the work of the church, other staff may be employed as necessary. Procedures relating to their selection, terms of employment and termination shall be the responsibility of the senior pastor. General staff shall be in full accord with the statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct.

D. Position Descriptions

A description of duties and responsibilities shall be prepared in accordance with the governance process policies established by the elder board.

E. Elected Office

No member of the staff shall seek or hold an elected office, except that an elected officer who joins the staff during his term of office may, with the approval of the elder board, remain in office until the next annual business meeting. Elected officers shall be in full accord with the statement of faith, constitution and bylaws by both profession and conduct.

BYLAW V. OFFICERS and ELDERS

The congregation shall affirm its approval of nominated elders. The chairman and vice-chairman are nominated and affirmed by the congregation. The position of elder-at-large is not considered an officer of the corporation. Other officers such as secretary and treasurer will be appointed by the elder board for a one-year term. Elders and officers may be reelected for one successive term. After a successive term, one year must pass before an officer may be elected again for the same office.

To be affirmed elders must receive yes votes on at least two-thirds of the total votes cast by members for that position and a review and confirmation by the current elder board. This elder board confirmation will be based solely on the review of every election comment to ensure the candidate's character and qualifications are consistent with the church requirements and the desires of the congregation. The elder board may appoint an elder to fill an open position if a candidate is not confirmed, and an additional candidate will be presented to the congregation for election in the next regular or special business meeting.

A. Chairman (2-year term)

1. Act as president of the corporation.
2. Preside at all church business meetings and elder board meetings.
3. Work closely with the senior pastor in all matters of the church.
4. Serve as an ex officio member of all boards and committees.
5. Following approval by the congregation of the purchase or sale of church real property, the chairman shall be authorized to cosign with the treasurer any necessary legal documents.

B. Vice-Chairman (2-year term)

1. Assume the duties of the chairman in his absence.
2. Work closely on all matters with the church chairman.
3. Assume any special assignment from the elder board.

C. Elders-at-Large (2-year term)

1. Provide the support required for the elder board duties specified in Bylaw VI 2.
2. Fulfill the biblical duties and responsibilities of elders as outlined in the church governance policies.

D. Incomplete Terms

When an elder or officer fails to complete a term of office, the elder board shall appoint a replacement to serve until the next annual business meeting. If any unexpired term remains, it shall be filled by election. Eligibility for normal terms shall not be affected.

BYLAW VI. ELDER BOARD

A. Composition

It shall consist of the senior pastor and congregationally affirmed elders designated to serve respectively as church chairman, vice-chairman and elders-at-large. There shall be six to eight elder-at-large officers. The elder board may also appoint by two-thirds vote additional elders-at-large to serve one-year terms and may reappoint them for successive terms. The appointed elders shall be non-voting members of the board. All elders shall meet the scriptural qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1–7.

The elder board shall appoint an elder-at-large to serve as the church treasurer. This church treasurer shall be responsible to:

1. Act as the treasurer of the corporation.
2. Following approval by the elder board and the congregation of the purchase or sale of church real property, the church treasurer shall be authorized to cosign with the church chairman any necessary legal documents.

The elder board shall appoint an elder-at-large or another church member to serve as the church secretary. This church secretary shall be responsible to:

1. Record all business, prepare and maintain minutes and present reports, as requested, in all regular and special elder board meetings and all congregational business meetings. If the secretary is not available, minutes may be taken by someone else and provided to the secretary for follow-up and approval.
2. Prepare and distribute church business correspondence as requested by the church chairman.
3. Assume other duties as requested by the chairman or vice-chairman.
4. The secretary shall be authorized to sign any legal documents requiring the signature of the secretary of the corporation.

B. Duties

Under the authority of the congregation, the elder board shall watch over the spiritual life of the church, oversee all aspects of the ministry of the church and perform all functions necessary to fulfill these responsibilities, including the following:

1. Elders shall lead and encourage in the fulfillment of the purpose of the church (Article III).
2. Operate in a manner consistent with the church governance policies as approved by the elder board.
3. Oversee all committees under its jurisdiction.
4. Consider all matters of church discipline.
5. Develop and maintain procedures relating to the selection, terms of employment including salary and benefits and termination of the senior pastor.
6. Act as the final authority within this local church for interpretation of scripture, doctrine and theology.

BYLAW VII. COMMITTEES

The following committees, except where noted, shall consist of church members only and shall be appointed by and responsible to the elder board:

A. Senior Pastor Search Committee

1. Composition

It shall be activated as needed and shall consist of the elected elders and at least two members elected by the congregation. It shall select its own chairman.

2. Duties

It shall conduct the search for and evaluate the qualifications of senior pastoral candidates and make appropriate recommendations to the elder board. It shall perform all functions necessary to the discharge of this responsibility, including the following:

- a. Communicate with the Evangelical Free Church of America headquarters and the EFCA West superintendent for names of potential candidates.
- b. Solicit names of potential candidates from the congregation.
- c. Investigate and communicate with promising potential candidates, maintaining appropriate confidentiality.
- d. Arrange guest speaking engagements and interviews, as appropriate, for those candidates who appear to meet the desired qualifications.
- e. Recommend to the elder board one candidate for senior pastor.

B. Nominating Committee

1. Composition

It shall be appointed annually by the elder board and shall consist of a chairman, a vice-chairman and at least five total members, including representatives from the elder board, the ministry staff and the congregation at large.

2. Duties

It shall prepare a recommended ballot for the affirmation of church elders and officers and perform all functions necessary to the discharge of this responsibility, including the following:

- a. Prepare and distribute to the congregation nominating ballots for all positions to be affirmed.
- b. Evaluate nominating ballot results and consider qualified candidates for each office.
- c. Prepare a recommended ballot for the elder board's approval listing a qualified candidate for each vacancy and providing the ability for the congregation to vote yes or no per candidate and to provide appropriate comments for any no votes.
- d. Present the approved ballot to the congregation prior to the annual business meeting.

C. Finance Committee

The finance committee is a committee of the elder board and reports to the elder board.

1. Composition

It shall consist of the church treasurer, the executive pastor (note: executive pastor and senior associate pastor are used interchangeably in this document) and a chairman (who may or may not be the treasurer) and other members who need not be elders appointed annually by the elder board.

2. Duties

It shall assist the elder board to oversee the financial, business and administrative affairs and facilities of the church and perform all functions necessary to the discharge of this responsibility, including the following:

- a. Provide input for adequate physical, financial and legal protection for church property, equipment and documentation. This includes the assistance with policies for and the oversight of the receipt, disbursement, investment or borrowing of funds, subject to the approval of the elder board.
- b. Review income and expenses regularly and report financial status periodically to the elder board and congregation.
- c. Evaluate giving patterns and expectations and establish budget guidelines. In conjunction with the appropriate staff personnel, jointly develop the annual budget to be recommended to the elder board for final approval.
- d. Assist the elder board and appropriate staff personnel in the establishment of compensation and human resource policies for all staff. Note: compensation of senior pastor is determined by the compensation committee mentioned below.
- e. Review and monitor the performance of the apartments and how they impact the overall finances of the church.

D. Audit Committee

1. Composition

It shall be appointed annually by the elder board. Members of this committee shall not be employees or staff members of the church.

2. Duties

It shall engage an outside certified public accounting firm to conduct an annual audit of the church's financial records in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. The accounting firm shall also prepare financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

E. Compensation Committee

1. Composition

It shall consist of three members: the church chairman, the church vice-chairman and the chairman of the finance committee.

2. Duties

It shall annually set the salary and benefits for the senior pastor and provide counsel to the senior pastor for the executive pastor's salary.

F. Other Committees

Additional committees shall be appointed by and be responsible to the elder board, as needed, to investigate, report or act upon ongoing or special matters. A committee shall consist of not less than three voting members and a chairman who is a member of the elder board. The committee may recommend the addition of non-church members to be appointed by the elder board to help in the workload or to provide technical expertise required to fulfill the committee's charter. A non-church member will not be a voting member of the committee.

BYLAW VIII. MINISTRY TEAMS

The ministry staff shall form ministry teams as needed by appointing a leader and ministry team members to serve the church and support the ministry activities of the church. The intent of these teams is to engage congregation members with a passion and gifting for a particular ministry. These ministry teams are not committees of the elder board but teams to assist staff in planning and carrying out the ministries of the church. Examples of these ministry teams include deacons/deaconesses, missions, student ministries, children's ministries, music and other support teams for our church and community.

BYLAW IX. ORGANIZATIONS

Before any subsidiary or separate legal organization may be formed within the church, an outline of its purpose, organizational structure and plan of operation shall be presented in writing to the elder board for approval. The elder board shall designate the board, committee, ministry team or ministry staff to which the organization shall report.

Methods of raising funds by any group or organization within the church shall be subject to the approval of the elder board.

BYLAW X. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting by two-thirds of the votes cast after said proposed amendments have been presented in written form and discussed at a business meeting no later than the third month prior to the time of their adoption.