

“WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN EFC”



This document describes foundational principles that the EFCA movement has as expectations for the individual churches within the movement. While this is not an exhaustive list, for the unity and mission fulfillment of the movement, it is important that there is alignment in the following descriptive areas:

THEOLOGY

An EFC accepts and adopts without reservation, revision, deletion or addition, the Statement of Faith of the EFCA as its Statement of Faith.

EFC Pastors and elected leaders accept and communicate without reservation the Statement of Faith, and the membership accepts and lives in harmony with the Statement of Faith.

An EFC acknowledges differences in areas of evangelical theology not specifically addressed by the Statement of Faith and embraces with grace those within their fellowship and the denomination who may hold differing views.

SENSE OF MISSION

The mission of the EFCA is to glorify God by multiplying healthy churches among all people. An EFC evidences a partnership in this mission by:

1. Annually evaluating and giving attention to increasing its Great Commission health.
2. Involvement in healthy church multiplication among all people, both at home and abroad, in obedience to Christ's call to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

ATTITUDE

The EFCA, in addition to a common theology, also has a commitment to a common attitude. This common attitude is characterized by:

1. A unity based on the essentials coupled with freedom and charity in non-essentials.
2. Being evangelical in theology and practice.
3. Cooperating with others who are advancing the cause of Christ.
4. Teaching liberty in Christ with responsibility and accountability.
5. A balanced teaching ministry that engages both the mind and the heart.
6. Interdependence through working with the larger body of the EFCA.
7. Respect, appreciation and acceptance of people from different cultural backgrounds.
8. Sensitivity to those in our congregations who suffer from social destitution, and compassionately addressing their particular needs to the best of our abilities.

POLITY

An EFC has the freedom under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to govern its own affairs in accordance with both the mind of Christ and the Word of God.

An EFC develops a local church polity that fits within the following parameters of congregationalism:

The membership includes only those who have a personal faith in Christ (a believers' church).

The collective membership in a duly-called meeting is the highest authority, under Christ, in the local church, exhibiting both a willingness to be scripturally accountable to the elected leadership and encouraging elected leadership to be mutually accountable to them as the ultimate authority in the local context. Moreover, members and leaders unitedly subscribe to a relationship covenant based on Matthew 18, giving priority to biblical patterns of conflict resolution and exercising biblical discipline within the context of Christian love and cultural sensitivity.

Congregationalism is that form of government wherein the highest authority under Christ in a local church resides in the corporate understanding of the mind of Christ and in which a realistic process and reasonable opportunity exists by which that understanding is determined and carried out, especially as it affects such matters as:

1. Determination of membership.
2. Selection or appointment of the principal governing board (elder, deacon, etc.).
3. Selection of the senior pastor or senior directional leader(s).
4. Approval or alteration of constitution/bylaws.
5. Approval of an annual church budget.
6. Approval of any major purchase or dissolution.

An EFC has as its local polity a form of congregationalism that fits the size and demographics of the congregation.

An EFC teaches that congregationalism includes the involvement of the entire body in ministry.

An EFC entrusts much of the decision-making to godly leaders who are trained, trusted and allowed to lead.

CREDENTIALING of Pastors

An EFC calls a pastor who either holds a credential with the EFCA or agrees with the EFCA Statement of Faith and ethos and makes a commitment to obtain an EFCA credential in a timely manner. If a credential is not obtained, the district will inform the local church as to why it has not been granted. This commitment acknowledges the church's alignment with the doctrine and practices of the EFCA.

COMMITMENTS

An EFC is committed to working interdependently with other local EFC's, the district, and national, intercultural and international ministries. This commitment is evidenced by:

Locally:

- Willingly cooperating with other EFC's for local ministry initiatives.

District:

- Intentionally sharing resources with other district churches.
- Being actively involved in district ministries.
- Annually sending representation to district conferences.
- Communicating district initiatives to the church.
- Receptive to interaction with district staff.

National:

- Bi-annually sending representation to the EFCA Leadership Conference.
- Endorsing and promoting Trinity International University and Trinity Western University as quality schools when recommending students and the calling of pastoral staff.

International:

- Endorsing and promoting ReachGlobal when encouraging members to serve in missions.

An EFC is committed to partnering financially in response to the needs/opportunities of the EFCA ministries. This is evidenced by:

1. Adequately paying and caring for their own pastoral staff.
2. An annual financial investment in support of district and national ministries with a yearly review of their participation of the recommended support levels for the district and national ministries through Fair Share.
3. Recognizing ReachGlobal missionaries, Trinity International University and Trinity Western University as part of our EFC family when considering support.

Adopted by NMT November 2008

PROCEDURE FOR AN EXISTING CHURCH TO AFFILIATE WITH THE GREAT LAKES DISTRICT

DEFINITION

A church, according to this definition, is one which is autonomous in terms of being self supporting and self-governing having duly elected membership and leadership and a full legal status in terms of incorporation, constitution and bylaws. This is distinct from a church plant, which is still in the developmental stages. The goal of the process is to have ample time for review, relationship building, understanding of mutual commitments and possible restructuring..

1. INITIAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING WITH DISTRICT STAFF AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP

A mutually agreeable meeting is set up between the church and a staff member of the Great Lakes District. During this meeting, several key areas need to be communicated:

- a. The Nature, Vision and Values of the GLD and EFCA
- b. The Benefits and Responsibilities of Affiliating with the GLD.
- c. The Process for Affiliation, including forms.
- d. The Review of the Pastor's Covenant with the Great Lakes District.

2. PRELIMINARY DECISION BY CHURCH LEADERSHIP TO PROCEED

The Church leadership will contact the GLD Regional Office and communicate their desire to pursue a relationship with the GLD. This request should be in writing. The leadership should begin to prepare the church for congregational interaction and eventually vote on the relationship. Materials regarding the GLD can be distributed. This preliminary decision is shared with the appropriate GLD Regional Leadership Team. Nearby Free Churches should be contacted for prayer. The church leadership should begin filling out the necessary forms at this point, being ready to hand them in following the approval of the congregation.

3. CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

A GLD Regional Superintendent will meet with the congregation to share the items listed above. An opportunity will be given for congregational interaction.

4. CONGREGATIONAL DECISION TO PROCEED WITH RELATIONSHIP

The results of the congregational meeting in terms of vote will be communicated in writing to the Regional Superintendent. The church should at this point, finalize and submit the applications forms to the Great Lakes District. The pastor will be scheduled for an interview with the Regional Leadership Team.

5. DISTRICT REVIEW OF INITIAL APPLICATION

Following the initial review of the application, the Regional Leadership Team will conduct a final review regarding compatibility of doctrine and distinctives. At this time, suggestions may be offered regarding organization and documents to better help align the church with Free Church doctrine, distinctives, and dynamics. These suggestions will be communicated to the leadership who will have the responsibility of making changes in preparation for final approval. Congregational interaction is encouraged regarding this part of the process.

6. MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES DURING AFFILIATION PROCESS

The Great Lakes District will:

- Keep the church informed of all District activities and provide materials normally sent to all District churches.
- Invite the church pastors to attend all District functions including ministerial, District conferences and fellowship activities.
- Inform neighboring Evangelical Free Churches to encourage mutual interaction.
- Assist the church with review and revision of its organization and documents including constitution and bylaws.
- Be available to assist in the ministry of the church through District Staff, including pastoral search, if the church is looking for a pastor.
- Be available to the church leadership for consultation.

The affiliating church will:

- Provide the GLD with minutes of congregational meetings during the period of affiliation.
- Inform the Regional Office of meeting they would like a GLD representative to attend.
- Include the GLD in email sends from the church to build our understanding of each other.
- Work on amending the constitution and bylaws to reflect Free Church distinctives. (See page 3, for particular areas to include in the constitution and bylaws.)
- Make sure that any pastoral candidates sought during affiliation procedure will either have EFCA credentials or be interviewed by the Regional Leadership Team prior to a call to serve.

The Pastor of the Affiliating Church will:

- Work with church and District to facilitate the relationship
- Sign the Pastoral Covenant and prepare for an interview with the Regional Leadership Team.

Areas to be addressed when formulating new constitution and bylaws of the church

- If part of the church's name reflects a denominational affiliation, that part of your name changes. For example, if you were a Baptist church, Baptist would no longer appear in your name.
- Adopt the Doctrinal Statement of the Evangelical Free Church as your statement of faith.
- Agree with the Free Church's guidelines as listed in "What it means to be an EFCA church."
- Add a statement of affiliation in the constitution that your church "is in affiliation with the Great Lakes District of the Evangelical Free Church of America."
- Add a statement in the section of pastoral call that requires pastor/pastoral staff to secure an EFCA Credential within eighteen (18) months of the commencement of ministry.
- Add church property rights, division and dissolution statements to your constitution as follows:

"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 _____ 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 in the name of the Church.

"In order to maintain the integrity of _____ church, when an irreconcilable division occurs within the body which threatens its unity and/or existence, District Leadership, along with other members of the Great Lakes District Board of Directors, has the prerogative of taking the initiative to mediate the situation."

"In case of dissolution of the church organization, the assets shall be assigned to the Great Lakes District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church 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 church, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain."

Make a copy of your application forms and send one copy to your Regional Superintendent.
If there are any questions, please call him.

APPLICATION FOR AFFILIATION
GREAT LAKES DISTRICT
EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Name of Church _____

Church Address _____ City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Mailing address (if different than location) _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

E-Mail _____ Website: _____

When did the church begin and what were the circumstances under which it began?

What is your church's mission statement, core values, and vision?

Please provide a list of all current pastoral staff

Has the church been affiliated with another denomination or local church?

If yes, what are the reasons for desiring to leave that denomination or local church?

Why does your church desire to be a part of the Evangelical Free Church?

Is your church incorporated? _____ Date of incorporation: _____

Please attach a copy of your incorporation papers, constitution and bylaws and the last two years of annual reports.

STATISTICS:

Average Morning Worship Attendance _____ Church Membership _____

CHURCH PROPERTIES:

Church Building _____

Parsonage _____

Other Assets _____

Present Indebtedness _____

TOTAL INCOME LAST TWO YEARS:

Last Year \$ _____ Previous Year \$ _____

Member churches are requested to give each year, 1.25% of the previous year's total revenue for Great Lakes District Ministries. Please fill out the following Partnership Commitment as part of your church's application.

Our Commitment: \$ _____

CONGREGATIONAL ACTION REGARDING AFFILIATION

Date of meeting _____ Votes favoring affiliation _____ opposed _____

Signatures:

Pastor _____ Date _____

Church Chairman _____ Date _____

Church Secretary _____ Date _____

PASTOR'S COVENANT
Great Lakes District

Recognizing that there exists a healthy interdependency among churches affiliated with the Great Lakes District (GLD) of the Evangelical Free Church of America and that the pastors of these churches must exhibit a spirit of humility, mutual support and accountability, I wish to openly state my commitment to work within the following guidelines:

1. I am unreservedly in agreement with the EFCA Statement of Faith.
2. I have read the "Distinctives of the EFCA" and will minister in the local church within this framework of philosophy of ministry.
3. I am fully committed to pastoring this church which is affiliated with the GLD of the EFCA and will cooperate with its leadership in the ministry of the local church, and equip the workers.
4. I am willing to secure a ministry credential (license and/or ordination) within eighteen months of the commencement of my ministry in this church.
5. I am in agreement with a congregational form of government and will foster healthy relationships between the church leadership and the congregation with integrity and trustworthiness.
6. I am willing to participate in the GLD area Ministerials, Conferences, and Ministries.
7. I will demonstrate a spirit of harmony and accountability with the GLD Board, District Superintendent, Regional Superintendents, and Executive Staff.
8. I will be supportive of the ministries of the EFCA and the GLD and will seek to continue to involve this church in the financial support of these ministries and missions.

Signed _____ Date _____

Church Name _____

Church Address _____

(Copies of this document are to be filed with the Regional Superintendent and local church.)

CHURCH PLANT AFFILIATION WITH THE GREAT LAKES DISTRICT-EFCA (FOR NEW CHURCHES)

DEFINITION A church plant in the Great Lakes District is a church that participated in the GLD church planting systems of Assessment, Coaching, Training, and Support. The church plant is ready to become a member church in the GLD-EFCA when the church is autonomous in terms of being self supporting and self-governed having duly elected membership and leadership and approved constitution and bylaws.

1. DECISIONS BY THE CHURCH AND THE GLD

The local church is responsible to communicate in writing their decision to affiliate with the GLD by completing the Document for Affiliation with the GLD. The GLD Staff is responsible to inform the Superintendent who will give the documents to the Executive Committee. After all concerns are answered, the GLD Board will vote to recommend the church to the annual GLD Conference for the acceptance of this new church.

Areas to be addressed by the local church seeking affiliation with the GLD-EFCA

- The present doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America is the doctrinal statement of the church and any additions are in the By-Laws.
- The constitution and by-laws conform with the EFCA's "What is an EFCA church?"
- Add a statement of affiliation in the constitution that your church "is in affiliation with the Great Lakes District of the Evangelical Free Church of America.
- Add a statement in section on Pastoral Call that requires pastor/pastoral staff to secure EFCA credentials within eighteen (18) months of commencement of ministry.
- Add church property rights, division and dissolution statements to your constitution as follows:
 - "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 _____ 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 in the name of the Church."
 - "In order to maintain the integrity of _____ church, when an irreconcilable division occurs within the body which threatens its unity and/or existence, the Superintendent, along with other members of the Great Lakes District Board of Directors, has the prerogative of taking the initiative to mediate the situation."
 - "In case of dissolution of the church organization, the assets shall be assigned to the Great Lakes District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church 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 church, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain."

CHURCH AFFILIATION WITH THE GREAT LAKES DISTRICT-EFCA

Name of the Church, Mailing Address, Website, and Emails of the Pastoral Staff (and position)

When did the church begin and what were the circumstances.

What is your church's mission statement, core values, and vision?

Why do you desire to be part of the Evangelical Free Church? How can we serve you?

What are the present attendance and membership figures?

Does your congregation understand "Fair Share" and are you committed to moving toward contributing 1.25% of your regular offerings to the GLD and 1% to the EFCA?

Is your church incorporated? _____ Date of incorporation: _____

Please attach a copy of your constitution and bylaws and the most recent annual report.

Date of the Meeting for Congregational action regarding affiliation _____

Number of members present ___ Votes in favor _____ Against _ Abstain ___

SIGNED _____ Date _____
Pastor

SIGNED _____ Date _____
Elder or Church Board Chairman

SIGNED _____ Date _____
Church Secretary

BENEFITS OF BELONGING GREAT LAKES DISTRICT & EFCA

PASTORAL BENEFITS

- Credentialing
- Placement – MinisterConnection.net
- Ministerial Association
- Long Term Disability
- Pension Plan
- Theological Dialogue (Mid-winter Ministerial-National)
- Advocacy/consultation in times of
 - Growth
 - Transition
 - Conflict
 - Ministry Plateau
- Participation in
 - Strategic alliances --- e.g., Church Planting, Learning Community
 - Area Ministerials/Barnabas Groups – affirmation, advocacy, accountability
 - Conferences – District and National
 - Mentoring Groups

CHURCH BENEFITS

- EFCA Camping Program
 - In Pursuit
 - Spring Hill
 - Timber-lee
- Retirement Communities
 - Fair Haven
- Christian Investors
- Short-term Loans
- Building/Renovation Loans
- Ministry Campaign Services
 - Master Plan
 - Stewardship Plan
 - Design/Construct
- Ethnic Church Development
 - Intercultural
 - African-American (Director)
 - Latino (Hispanic Leadership Team)
 - Other Groups
- Minister to
 - Students – Annual festival (talent, quizzing), Annual Retreat “Souled Out”, Biannual Challenge Conference (EFCA- National)
 - Men – consultation, annual regional retreat
 - Women - Consultation, annual retreat
- ReachGlobal Short-term Ministry Experiences
- Urban/Intercultural Church Development
- Church Planting
 - Boot Camp
 - Assessment
 - Partnership
- Conferences – Relationship building/networking
 - Large Church
 - National Annually
 - District – Annually
- Consultation – Resourcing
 - Missions Consultant (evangelism/global planning)
 - National Church Development
 - Ministry Campaign
 - Men’s & Women’s Ministries
- Pastoral Vacancy
 - Search Committee Orientation/guidance throughout the process
 - Training in use of MinisterConnection.net
 - Interim Pastor Ministries
 - Pulpit Supply
- Kingdom Partnership
 - Relation to Regional Superintendent
 - Staff Availability
 - Ministry Integrity
 - Affiliate Organization (list at www.gld-efca.org)