

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this congregation is _____,
being chartered as a non-profit organization under the laws of the State of _____.

ARTICLE II - AFFILIATION

This church shall be affiliated with The Evangelical Free Church of America and its Great Lakes District. It shall, however, remain as its own authority in matters of purpose, governance and operation.

ARTICLE III – PURPOSE

We exist to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus that multiply healthy churches among all people.

ARTICLE IV - DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:

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 premillennial 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.

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ARTICLE V - CONGREGATIONAL AUTHORITY

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church from whom the church takes her direction. The membership of the church, at all its duly called congregational meetings, holds final authority. Any person who professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is eligible for membership.

ARTICLE VI - ELDER GOVERNANCE

The Board of Elders will be elected by and responsible to the membership. Men meeting the qualifications of an elder (Titus 1:1-10) will be our spiritual leaders. The governance of the church shall be vested in the Board of Elders according to the principles of Scripture and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE VII - PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

This church will have a Pastor who meets the qualifications of an overseer (1 Timothy 3:1-7). He is a member of and accountable to the Board of Elders and together they are accountable to the Congregation. Members of the pastoral staff are accountable to the Senior Pastor. Staff members can be called as elder but they are not automatic members of the Board of Elders. Recommendations for additions and removals to the pastoral staff are approved by the Board of Elders. The call and removal of the Senior Pastor is the responsibility of the congregation according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and our By-Laws.

ARTICLE VIII - BUSINESS MEETINGS

An annual business meeting of the congregation shall be held prior to the first quarter of the church fiscal year. Additional business meetings may be held as deemed necessary by the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE IX – PROPERTY

The membership shall have, in the corporate name, the right to own, buy, lease and sell property. In case of dissolution, the property shall be transferred to The Great Lakes District of the Evangelical Free Church of America. In case of a division of the membership, the ownership of property shall remain with those members abiding by this constitution as determined by the Board of The Great Lakes District.

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be introduced in writing at any Congregational Meetings and they cannot be voted upon by the Members until the next Congregational Meeting. Motions must receive a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Members present and voting. Members must be notified at least 30 days prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be voted upon.

ARTICLE XI - BY-LAWS

A supplement to this constitution, known as the by-laws, shall contain procedural matters not outlined herein. Should there be an inconsistency between the Articles of Incorporation, Constitution and By-Laws, the Board of Elders will have the authority to resolve the inconsistency. When a resolution is found it will be included in the minutes of the Board of Elders meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1.1 Membership Qualifications

Any person, who professes faith in Jesus Christ, who manifests a lifestyle that evidences the Lordship of Christ, who agrees with the doctrinal statement, who will work in harmony with this Constitution, and who is willing to support the church in attendance, prayers, and gifts, may become a member.

Section 1.2 Membership Applications

Persons desiring to affiliate with this church may make an application for membership. Each applicant shall give a personal testimony of Christian experience at a venue approved by the Board of Elders. The applicant shall become a member upon approval by a majority of the votes cast at an elder meeting. New members shall be publicly acknowledged at a public worship service. Pastoral staff members and spouses shall be accepted into membership concurrent with installation into the local church ministry. Membership records shall be maintained by the Elder Board.

Section 1.3 Memberships Duties and Responsibilities

The privilege of membership has certain duties and responsibilities. Members, by God's grace, should:

- Honor, love and pray for the leadership;
- Honor, love and pray for one another;
- Endeavor to preserve unity and harmony in the body;
- Serve the body by using God-given gifts and talents;
- Attend church worship services and business meetings regularly;
- Contribute, as the Lord leads and according to his Word with time, talent, tithes, and offerings.

Section 1.4 Member Rights

All members in good standing shall have equal rights, including the right to vote and hold elected office. Those under eighteen years of age shall be ineligible to vote or to hold elected office. No individual shall have rights of ownership to the church property, real or personal, since all contributions to this non-profit organization are freely given for the work of the gospel ministry.

Section 1.5 Member Discipline

Members are expected to conduct their lives according to the standards set forth in the Scriptures. Those found living or teaching contrary to the Word of God and the doctrinal statement of this church shall be counseled in love by the Pastor and Elders. If efforts to bring repentance and restoration fail, then the Pastor and the Elders will follow Biblical principles outlined in Scripture, including: Matthew 18:15-18, I Corinthians 5, II Corinthians 2:5-11 and Gal. 6:1-2.

Section 1.6 Member Terminations for Cause

Withdrawal from membership will be accepted by the Board of Elders and those in good standing may request a letter of recommendation. Any member who holds false or heretical doctrines contrary to the Word of God, or who is living a life in violation of the Scriptures may be subject to removal from membership. If judged necessary, the Board of Elders shall make a dismissal recommendation to the membership. Two-thirds of the members present and voting by secret ballot shall be required for dismissal. A member who dies or becomes a member of another church is automatically removed from membership.

ARTICLE II - ELDER GOVERNANCE *see last page for alternative church board view

Section 2.1 Board of Elders Membership

There shall not be less than two lay Elders and the Pastor. The Members will recommend every year to the Nominating Committee men to serve as Elders. The Board of Elders shall recommend to the Members a man to serve as elder for a three year term. A two-thirds majority of Members present and voting at a congregational meeting shall be necessary for approval. Qualifications shall include the following:

- Men who demonstrate the qualities set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9

- Members of this church, active in a small group, and a ministry of the church
- Mature, godly men, who apt to teach the Bible, support our constitution, by-laws and policies

Section 2.2 Board of Elders Responsibilities to the Membership

The Board of Elders shall be directly accountable to the membership. The Board of Elders shall recommend to the membership the following matters for action: election of church Elders, calling or dismissal of the Senior Pastor, matters of membership, major new ministry proposals, approval of the annual budget, purchase or disposition of property in excess of 10% of the annual budget, principal building construction in excess of 10% of the annual budget, and amending the constitution or the by-laws.

The Board of Elders will be allowed to increase/decrease the annual budget up to 10% of the approved annual budget. Congregational approval is required for increases above 10% of the annual budget.

Section 2.4 Elder Responsibilities (1 Peter 5:1-5)

- Shall **guide** as shepherds of God's flock by the ministry of prayer and the Word of God (Acts 6).
- Shall **guide** God's people by empowering ministries led by the Senior Staff (Ephesians 4:11,12).
- Shall **govern** by clear policies to empower the Senior Staff to lead and manage church ministry
- Shall **govern** by fulfilling elder responsibilities to the membership (Section 2:2)
- Shall **govern** by measurable results that the Senior Pastor is held accountable to accomplish
- Shall **guard** by the approval and dismissal of Senior Staff who are accountable to the Pastor.
- Shall **guard** the doctrine, vision, core values, strategies, and proposals approved by the Members.

Section 2.5 Elder Organization

The Board of Elders shall organize itself annually by the internal election of a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary. The Chairman shall preside over the meetings of the Board of Elders and the Church. The Vice-Chairman shall fill the role of Chairman in his absence.

- The Elder Board shall have at least one monthly meetings at a time and place set by the chairman.
- A majority of the members of the Board of Elders constitutes a quorum for transaction of business.
- A quorum being present, a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary to pass business items.
- The Elder Board has authority to empower financial, human resources, and other committees
- Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall be the parliamentary guide, except wherein they may be contrary to Scripture, the Church Constitution or By-Laws.
- Minutes of all Elder Meetings shall be recorded by the Elder Secretary or designee and be made available on a timely basis to the church membership, if requested. Decisions made in executive session will not be made available to the membership.
- Elders do not approve the hiring and dismissal of staff who are accountable to the pastoral staff.
- Elders will not receive compensation for their work, but will be eligible for expenses reimbursement.
- Elders may issue a temporary ministerial license in recognition of an individual's call to a ministry, pending denominational licensing. Temporary licenses will be evaluated annually.

Section 2.6 Elder Discipline

If an elder is found to be living in sin or is willfully neglecting his responsibility as an elder, another elder and the Senior Pastor will initiate Biblical principles such as : Matthew 18, I Corinthians 5, II Corinthians 2:5-11, Galatians 6:1-2 and I Timothy 5:19-20. Discipline may involve a recommendation to the membership for removal from office. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the membership at a business meeting will be required for removal.

Section 2.7 Church Officers

The chairman and vice-chairman of the Board of Elders will be the chairman and vice-chairman of the church. The Secretary, Financial Secretary and Treasurer of the church shall be appointed by the Board of Elders. The Secretary, Financial Secretary and Treasurer must be a member of the church for at least one year. The Board of Elders may replace Church Secretary, Church Financial Secretary, or Church Treasurer.

The Church Secretary shall be appointed for a term of three years and will be responsible for the accurate recording of the proceedings and decisions at all business meetings of the Church. Such records

are to be approved at the following business meeting.

The Church Financial Secretary shall be appointed for a term of three years and will be responsible for accurate recording and reporting of Church Funds.

The Church Treasurer shall be appointed for a term of three years and responsible for the accurate recording and prudent disbursements of funds.

Section 2.8 Nominating Committee

The duties of this committee shall be to present a list of candidates for affirmation for these positions:

- Board of Elders;
- Nominating Committee;
- Pulpit Committee

The Nominating Committee shall consist of six members plus the senior pastor. Four members shall be elected by the membership at the annual business meeting for a one-year term. In addition, the Board of Elders shall select two of its members to serve on this committee. The Nominating Committee contacts the candidates to determine if they are willing to serve if elected by the membership. A formal interview with the candidate and his wife will be scheduled at the candidate's home with the Senior Pastor and at least two other members of the nominating committee and following this interview, a separate interview with the candidate's wife will be conducted by the wives of at least two current elders or nominating committee members. Following the successful completion of the above, an announcement including the candidates resume will be published in the Church bulletin at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting. One candidate for each vacant position will be presented at the congregational meeting. No nominations shall be received from the floor. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for affirmation. The vote shall be by secret ballot.

Section 2.9 Pulpit Committee

- Shall be elected for the calling of the Senior Pastor.
- Shall consist of seven members, four of these shall be elected by the membership at a called business meeting by a two-thirds majority of those members present and voting.
- In addition, the Board of Elders shall select three of its members to serve on this committee.

Section 2.10 Ministries

- The Board of Elders shall be responsible to approve the formation, budgeting, and eliminate of ministries in defined areas in accordance with their priorities and policies. The management of ministry teams is the responsibility of the pastor and the pastoral staff within approved budgets, policies, and measurable results determined by the board of elders.
- Ministry teams may appoint people they deem necessary to carry out functions of ministry.

ARTICLE III – PASTOR AND STAFF

Section 3.1 Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor shall meet the qualifications as stated in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1. He shall preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, watch over the membership, promote the spiritual interests of the church and supervise staff members. The Senior Pastor shall be a man who is cooperative with The Evangelical Free Church of America. He shall also be in accord with and uphold the constitution and by-laws of this church. He shall be an ex-officio member of all commissions and ministry teams of the church.

When a vacancy occurs, the Board of Elders shall make temporary provisions for the duties of the Senior Pastor. Upon investigation, the pulpit committee shall recommend a candidate to the Board of Elders. Upon their approval, the Board of Elders shall then recommend the candidate to the membership. A call shall consist of a favorable vote by at least three-fourths of the votes cast at a meeting of the membership held two weeks after public notice has been given. The vote shall be by secret ballot.

The Senior Pastor shall be elected by the membership for an indefinite period of time.

If the Senior Pastor desires to resign, or if three-fourths of the votes cast at a meeting of the membership desire the termination of his ministry, a notice must be given in writing by either party sixty days in advance of the terminating date, unless waived by mutual consent, by both the Senior Pastor and the Board of Elders. The vote shall be by secret ballot. If the membership approves the termination of the Senior Pastor the Board of Elders, at its discretion, may remove some or all of the responsibilities of the Senior Pastor. This action will not affect pay or benefits. If the Senior Pastor is found to be living in sin or is willfully neglecting his responsibility, he shall be relieved of his pulpit responsibility by the Board of Elders. Upon termination by the members, the sixty day advance notice may not apply as determined by the Elders.

Section 3.2 Senior Staff – Leadership

The Senior Staff shall consist of people who are employees of the Church who are executive staff. The hiring process for any Senior Staff shall be approved by the Board of Elders; at the discretion of the Board of Elders, a search committee may be formed. Hiring of these positions must be approved by the Elders.

Section 3.3 Support Staff

The Support Staff shall consist of all other employees of the church that are not Senior Staff. This staff will be responsible to a manager who is responsible for their hiring, work delegation, and performance.

Section 3.4 Misconduct of Other Church Staff

If a member of the Church staff, except the Senior Pastor, commits a grievous act of misconduct he/she may be terminated immediately by vote of the Elder Board.

ARTICLE IV - MEETINGS

Section 4.1 Annual business meeting

The annual business meeting shall be held in the quarter prior to the beginning of the church fiscal year, upon the time and date set by the Board of Elders. The purpose of the meeting shall be for the election of church officers, approval of the church budget, reception of annual reports and transaction of other business as may be necessary. The fiscal year of the church shall be set by the Board of Elders.

Section 4.2 Special business meetings

Special business meetings may be called by the Board of Elders as deemed necessary. A special business meeting may be called within two weeks by the membership by presenting to the Board of Elders a petition signed by ten percent of the voting membership.

Section 4.3 Notice of called business meetings

Notice of a business meeting shall be announced at least eight days prior to a business meeting and at two Sunday services. Members present and voting at any business meeting shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of transacting business. A simple majority of the members present and voting shall be necessary to pass all items of business unless stated otherwise in the constitution or the by-laws. The chairman of the Board of Elders will preside at business meetings, the vice-chairman in his absence.

ARTICLE V - PROPERTY

Section 5.1 Authority

The Board of Elders shall have the authority to determine the use of church property.

Section 5.2 Conveyance or encumbrance of Property

Conveyance or encumbrance of real or personal property in excess of 10% of the annual budget must be made at a business meeting. Any action involving property in excess of 10% of the annual budget must receive at least two-thirds of the votes cast by the membership at a business meeting. Instruments of conveyance or encumbrance shall be executed in the name of the church by the officers of the church. The Board of Elders shall have the authority to acquire and dispose of other property not in excess of 10% of the annual budget.

ARTICLE VI - CONFERENCE DELEGATES

Section 6.1 Delegates to the Conference of the Evangelical Free Church of America

Shall be appointed by the Board of Elders in accordance with the constitution of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

Shall attend the conference as representatives of the church and shall be prepared to report to the church if called upon.

Section 6.2 Delegates to the Conference of the Great Lakes District

Shall be appointed by the Elders in accordance with the constitution of the Great Lakes District.

Shall attend the annual and/or semi-annual conference(s) as representatives of the church and shall be prepared to report to the church if called upon.

ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to these by-laws may be recommended to the membership by the Board of Elders at a business meeting, and shall require a two-thirds majority of the votes cast to pass. It shall become effective immediately. Such a motion shall be introduced in writing by the Board of Elders at least thirty days prior to the business meeting.

ARTICLE VIII - OPERATIONS MANUAL

A supplement to these by-laws, known as an operations manual, shall contain job descriptions, financial policies, employment policies, other general policies, and other matters not outlined herein.

*Alternative view to an Elder Board-a Church Board with at-large members who could be women (Trinity EFC-South Bend, IN)

- A. The Church Board shall include the Senior Pastor, a minimum of six elders and three at large members from the congregation. The elders and at-large members shall be called by the congregation and serve non-consecutive three year terms.
- B. The responsibility of the Church Board is to establish and be the guardian of the ministry policies of the church under which all pastors and volunteers serve. This “ministry framework” can be envisioned as four sides around the “playing field” or “ministry field” bounded by:
 - 1. Trinity's foundations: theology, Constitution, Bylaws, discipline process, etc.;
 - 2. Our resources: finances, buildings and property (capital), volunteers, missions dollars and salaries;
 - 3. Guidelines: church-wide ministry policies;
 - 4. Goals: mission, vision long-term, culture of the church emphasis on core-values, etc. The Church Board has oversight over the four sides and the pastors have oversight over the actual ministry.
- C. The Church Board may overrule the Senior Pastor if they believe a decision or ministry is inconsistent with our Trinity foundations (Scripture, statement of faith, Constitution, Bylaws and policies).
- D. The Church Board shall also conduct annual reviews of the Senior Pastor’s ministry and work in conjunction with the Compensation Committee to determine appropriate compensation.
- E. A Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be selected by the Church Board from among the elders on the board to serve for one year, which runs concurrent with their three year term. A Secretary and Finance Chairman shall also be designated from among the Church Board. The chairman shall be an ex-officio member of all church committees.
- F. Any action of the Church Board may be addressed by the membership at any Constitutionally called business meeting. Any unexpired term on the Church Board will be filled by the Church Board.