



# Faith Church Bylaws

## Proposed Changes for September 2022 Vote

### I. INTRODUCTION AND AUTHORITY

Faith Evangelical Free Church of Allentown, Pennsylvania, herein referred to as Church, is an independent, self-governing body, duly formed under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, whose purpose is to glorify God.

The Church will endeavor to maintain a brotherly spirit toward all doctrinally sound Bible-believing groups and will maintain filial ties with the Evangelical Free Church of America, herein referred to as EFCA. The Church is an autonomous body, claiming the right of free government, but recognizing no religious authority or control other than that of God and the Bible.

The Membership of the Church, using the congregational form of government, exercises its authority as the legislative and governing body at its annual and special meetings, herein referred to as congregational meetings. The Elders function as the board of directors under the authority of the Membership.

### II. CORE BELIEFS

The current EFCA Statement of Faith below was adopted on June 19, 2019.

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

**RESPONSE AND ETERNAL DESTINY** - 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.

### III. MEMBERSHIP

#### A. Qualifications

1. Confess faith in Christ and **show evidence of a new life**.
2. Express intent to live in obedience to Christ and His Word.

3. Express agreement with the Core Beliefs and Values and willingness to abide by the provisions of these Bylaws.
4. Submit to the authority of the Elders.
5. Be at least 18 years of age.

## **B. Expectations**

1. Regularly attend worship services and congregational meetings.
2. Participate in a discipleship experience.
3. Serve by exercising spiritual gifts.
4. Give financially to support the Church and its ministries.
5. Follow the Lord's commands by partaking of the Lord's Supper and by being baptized as a believer.
6. Inform the Elders if the member intends to leave the Church.

## **C. Procedures**

The Elders shall determine and oversee the membership process including approval of membership candidates and their introduction to the church.

## **D. Corrective Discipline**

1. The Elders shall be responsible to the Membership to oversee the corrective discipline of members as necessary. The procedures followed will be in accordance with the teaching of Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; and Galatians 6:1.
2. If an individual refuses to change, following attempts by the Elders to see the individual repent, the Elders will exercise corrective discipline to exclude the individual from the fellowship of believers, from participation in the Lord's Supper, and from membership.
3. If the individual comes to repentance, the Elders shall restore the individual to fellowship with our church family and membership.

## **E. Removal**

1. The Elders may remove, at their discretion, an individual from membership of the Church under any of the following circumstances:
  - a. At the request of the member
  - b. If the member permanently moves out of the area

- c. As a result of corrective disciplinary action described above in Article III, Section D
  - d. If the member does not participate in church life for a period of one year or more
- 2. The decision to remove an individual from membership shall be preceded by an attempt to discuss the reasons for this action with the member.

## **IV. GOVERNANCE**

### **A. Membership**

#### **1. Responsibilities**

The following responsibilities are vested in the Membership and require approval with a 75 percent majority vote of the members voting:

- a. Appointment and dismissal of the Lead Pastor and Elders
- b. Approval of the annual operating budget
- c. Revisions to these Bylaws

#### **2. Meetings**

- a. The Elders shall call a minimum of one congregational meeting per year and may call others as needed.
- b. An annual meeting shall be held within 60 days prior to the end of the fiscal year for the purposes of approving the operating budget, affirming Elders, and conducting other necessary church business requiring Membership approval.
- c. Voting by absentee ballot or electronic means shall be permitted for all members.
- d. Ten percent or more of the total Membership voting shall serve as quorum.
- e. Congregational meetings and the meeting agenda shall be announced and communicated to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.
- f. The Elders shall call a congregational meeting in response to a written request of at least 5 percent of the Membership.

### **B. Elders**

#### **1. Composition and Appointment**

- a. The composition of the Elders shall consist of at least six laymen and the Lead Pastor.

- b. Incumbent Elders shall recommend prospective Elders to be affirmed by the Membership.
- c. Elders shall begin serving following an affirmative vote by the Membership.
- d. Elder terms shall be up to three years.
- e. If the number of lay Elders falls below six, then the Elders may appoint a former elder to serve as an active elder until new elders are voted on by the membership at the next annual meeting. The individual must have maintained participation and membership in the Church since the last term of service and must have continued to meet the biblical qualities of an elder to the Elders' satisfaction.

## 2. Qualifications of Lay Elders

- a. Meet the qualifications stated in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9
- b. Has been a member of the Church for a minimum of three years

## 3. Responsibilities

- a. Operate under the confines of the Elder Governance Policies
- b. Establish the vision and provide direction for the Church in conjunction with the Lead Pastor.
- c. Oversee the spiritual welfare, organizational health, fiscal soundness, and physical assets of the church.
- d. Call the annual meeting and other congregational meetings as necessary.
- e. Present an annual operating budget for Membership approval and oversee its implementation.
- f. Authorize expenditures from available funds above the operating budget and/or transfer monies between approved funds during any fiscal year.
- g. Approve the purchase, sale, lease, or encumbrance of real estate
- h. Present returning or new elder candidates to the Membership for affirmation.
- i. Appoint and dismiss executive-level staff upon the recommendation of the Lead Pastor as outlined in Governance Policy 1 - Executive Limitations.
- j. Ensure establishment and documentation of all Church and Elder policies and guidelines.
- k. Keep the Membership informed regarding major decisions, plans, and initiatives.
- l. Maintain the records of all Elder and congregational meetings

#### 4. Officers

- a. The Elders shall elect the officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary) of the Elders annually.
- b. The Chairman or his designee shall call Elder meetings, approve agendas, and chair all Elder and congregational meetings.
- c. The Chairman, or his designee, shall represent the Elders and the congregation in matters of business outside the Church.

#### 5. Meetings

- a. Elders shall meet, as necessary, to fulfill their responsibilities.
- b. At least 66 percent of the Elders must be present at Elder meetings to constitute a quorum.
- c. An item shall be approved when at least 75 percent of the Elders present vote in favor.

#### 6. Discipline

- a. Disciplinary action against an Elder should follow the steps described above in Article III, Section D for discipline of a member, except that in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19 an accusation should only be received against an Elder if there are two or more witnesses of the offense.
- b. If an elder is found by his fellow Elders to have offended in a matter worthy of church discipline and based on the account of two or three witnesses, and if he fails to repent, his case should be treated like that of any other member.

### **V. DIVISION OR DISSOLUTION**

#### **A. Division**

In case of a division of the Membership within the congregation of the Church, all rights, title, and interest in all property of the Church shall belong to those members who continue to abide by the Core Beliefs as set forth in Article II of these Bylaws and who adhere to the other provisions of these Bylaws as determined by the Superintendent of the Eastern District Association of the EFCA.

#### **B. Dissolution**

In the event of dissolution of this Church, all rights, title, and interest in all property of the Church shall be transferred to the Eastern District Association of the EFCA. The Elders holding office at the time shall act with full powers on behalf of the Church. Their terms of office shall be automatically extended if necessary, until such dissolution has been accomplished.

## **VI. AMENDMENTS**

Amendment(s) of these Bylaws requires two congregational meetings. The amendment(s) shall be introduced at a first congregational meeting, but shall not be voted on until a subsequent congregational meeting. Revisions to the amendment as a result of the first meeting will not require a second introductory meeting. The amendment(s) and/or revised amendment(s) shall then be voted upon at a second congregational meeting. Both meetings shall be announced in accordance with the provisions of Article IV, Section A., 2.

This document hereby supersedes any and all previous constitutions and Bylaws of the congregation of Faith Evangelical Free Church of Allentown.

**Faith Church Bylaws**

**Adopted: September 29, 2013**

**Amendments Approved: September 30, 2018**

## **VII. REFERENCED DOCUMENTS**

### **A. Elder Governance Policies**

1. Elder Governance Policy 1 – Executive Limitations
2. Elder Governance Policy 2 – Governance Process
3. Elder Governance Policy 3 – Elder-Lead Pastor Relationship
4. Elder Governance Policy 4 – Ends