

**CONSTITUTION
of
FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA**

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church shall be "First Evangelical Free Church of Lincoln, Nebraska" and it shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America.

ARTICLE II - Confession of Faith

The First Evangelical Free Church of Lincoln believes:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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. Amen.

ARTICLE III - Purpose

The purpose of First Evangelical Free Church of Lincoln, Nebraska is to glorify God through individual and corporate Worship, Edification, and Evangelism. Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; Eph. 4:11-16.

ARTICLE IV - Membership

The church shall receive as members only those who have by faith accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and who in their lives manifest the fruits of true faith in God and are willing, according to ability, to support the church by their prayers and contributions. Persons who

affiliate with the Church and are not baptized are asked to take this step at the earliest opportunity. The Church believes immersion to be the proper form of baptism. Acts 2:41, 47; Romans 6:3-4.

ARTICLE V - Congregational Government

The First Evangelical Free Church of Lincoln, Nebraska shall be governed by the members of the Church. The power to adopt and alter this Constitution and Bylaws of the Church shall be exclusively vested in the members of the Church.

ARTICLE VI - Church Property

In case of a division of the Church, from which God in His mercy preserve us, the property of the church shall belong to those who abide by this Constitution.

In case of dissolution of the Church, the property shall automatically become the property of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

ARTICLE VII - Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws may be made at any congregational business meeting, provided said proposed amendments have been presented and discussed at a prior congregational business meeting. Written or printed notice setting forth the proposed amendment shall be given to each member entitled to vote at such meeting at least thirty (30) days prior to said meeting.

The proposed amendments shall be adopted upon receiving at least two-thirds of the votes which members present at such meeting are entitled to cast.

Any number of amendments may be submitted and voted upon at any one meeting.

BYLAWS
of
First Evangelical Free Church
Lincoln, Nebraska

ARTICLE I - Membership

- Section 1.** **Eligibility** Persons who by faith have received Jesus Christ as their Savior shall be eligible candidates for membership in this Church, and are encouraged to make application for membership.
- Section 2.** **Membership Orientation** Everyone desiring to become a member shall complete a membership orientation conducted by the church. This orientation shall be designed to instruct the prospective member in the Church’s doctrine and in the rights and responsibilities of church membership as well as such other subjects deemed desirable for orientation.
- Section 3.** **Application for Membership** Upon completion of the membership orientation anyone desiring membership may then request and complete a membership application form.
- Section 4.** **Approval for Membership** The applicant shall be interviewed by at least 2 members appointed by the Elder Board who shall determine the applicant’s eligibility. The applicant shall at that time give evidence of personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, an understanding of and agreement with the Constitution and By Laws of the Church and the duties and responsibilities of membership. At least 2 weeks prior to the vote by the Elder Board, the names of the applicants shall be published to the Church membership. Through this announcement, members having information bearing on the eligibility of the applicants would be asked to personally communicate this to the Elder Board. The Elder Board, on the recommendation of the interviewing members, shall approve applicants for membership by a unanimous vote. Votes on membership may be conducted electronically.
- Section 5.** **Membership Records** Membership records shall be reviewed at least annually by the Elder Board and updated in accordance with Section 6.
- Section 6.** **Termination of Membership**
- A.** **By Request** If any member should desire to withdraw from membership, the member shall make request to a pastor or one of the Elders. If the member so

desires, and is a member in good standing, the member may request a letter of recommendation to affiliate with another church.

- B. **By Absence** Any member who does not attend or communicate with the Church within the space of one year shall no longer be considered as a member, unless other arrangements are made. Any member thus removed from membership shall be so notified, if possible.
- C. **By Discipline** Any member whose conduct is of a manner which, in the studied and prayerful opinion of the Elder Board, is not in harmony with Scriptural principles and for which the member does not show evidence of repentance, shall be interviewed and counseled by the Elder Board after the manner indicated in Matthew 18:15-17 and 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 the member chooses to continue in an unrepentant condition, the Elders shall determine whether the issue should be brought before the congregation. The member shall be deprived of membership only upon unanimous affirmative vote by the Elder Board.
- D. Any member who has thus withdrawn or otherwise been terminated from membership as described in this section loses all rights and privileges of membership in the Church.

ARTICLE II - Church Governance

Section 1. **Congregational Authority** The church shall be governed by its members. The members, at a duly called congregational business meeting, shall have the sole authority to: (a) adopt and amend the Articles of Incorporation, the Constitution, and the Bylaws of the Church; (b) call and dismiss the Lead Pastor; (c) elect the Elder Board; (d) adopt and amend an annual budget; (e) purchase and sell real property; (f) incur debt.

Section 2. **Elder Board Authority** All items not referred to in the preceding section as being under the sole authority of the members shall be entrusted to the Elder Board.

ARTICLE III - Elders of the Church

Section 1. **Qualifications** All Elders of the Church shall be members in good standing of First Evangelical Free Church and fit the qualifications of Elders as taught in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They should also be qualified for their respective duties. All elders except for pastors shall be individuals who are members and have been attending for at least two years.

Section 2. Elder Board Composition The Elder Board shall be comprised of at least eight and no more than twelve members of the Church, including the Lead Pastor and one other pastor. In no case should more than 25% of the Elder Board consist of pastoral staff.

Section 3. The Ministry of the Elder Board It shall be the duty of the Elders to exercise oversight of the Church, shepherding the flock without lording it over them (1 Peter 5:2). The Elder Board shall guard the purity of the doctrine, adopt position statements, and establish policy consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws. For purposes of the Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy and discipline, the Elder Board is our final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application. The Elders shall minister in teaching the Word, counseling the needy, comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick, and discipling believers. The Elder Board shall appoint board officers and committees, either standing or ad hoc, to help accomplish the work of the ministry. The Elder Board shall review and present an annual budget proposal to the congregation at the annual congregational business meeting. The Elder Board shall watch over the souls of the congregation knowing they will give an account to God (Hebrews 13:17). The ministries of all pastoral staff and the church-related ministries of the Elders are subject to the Elder Board.

Section 4. Duties of the Elders

- A. The Lead Pastor** The primary duty of the Lead Pastor shall be to study, preach and teach the Word of God and to pray for the church. He shall have the responsibility of providing spiritual leadership to the Church in conjunction with the Elders. He shall not be eligible to serve as chairman of the Elder Board.
- B. Chairman** It shall be the duty of the Chairman of the Elder Board to preside at all meetings of the congregation, the Elder Board, and to represent the Church publicly.
- C. Vice Chairman** The Vice Chairman shall perform the duties of the Chairman in the Chairman's absence.
- D. Secretary** The Secretary shall keep minutes of all meetings of the congregation and Elder Board. In the absence of the Secretary a Secretary Pro Tem, appointed by the Chairman, shall perform the Secretary's duties.
- E. Treasurer** The Treasurer shall review church financial statements and report findings to the Elder Board at least quarterly. The Treasurer shall review the biennial independent auditor's report and provide findings to the Elder Board.

These reviews are intended to ensure appropriate financial practices are being followed and that expenditures are within the limits of the approved budget. The Treasurer may act as a legal representative and signatory for the church.

- F. **Elders** Individual Elders may be assigned tasks or responsibilities as the Elder Board deems necessary to facilitate the work of the Elders in carrying out their responsibilities.

ARTICLE IV - Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall be responsible for ensuring the deposit and accurate recording of all monies received by the Church and shall be responsible to the Elder Board. The Financial Secretary shall not be a member of the Elder Board.

ARTICLE V - Elections and Appointments

Section 1. Nominating Process

- A. The nominating committee shall consist of five church members appointed by the Elder Board, including two from the Elder Board and three from the congregation. The church membership shall be informed of Elder Board positions that will be open and encouraged to recommend members for consideration by the nominating committee. Such individuals shall exhibit spiritual maturity and discernment. The nominating committee shall recommend qualified individuals from the membership to be candidates for elected positions.
- B. Nominations shall be submitted by the nominating committee to the Elder Board for their review at least 20 days before the annual congregational business meeting. The Elders are responsible to verify that each candidate meets the membership and Scriptural qualifications. A ballot shall be submitted to the congregation at least 2 weeks before the annual congregational business meeting.

Section 2. Election Process

- A. A quorum of church members must be obtained for all elections.
- B. The elections shall be by ballot.
- C. Absentee ballots for the election of Elders or the Lead Pastor may be requested by church members who are unable to attend any meeting at which an election is to be held. Absentee ballots must be signed and must be received by the Elder serving as Church Secretary prior to the meeting being called to order. Absentee ballots may be sent digitally to the Church Secretary if the name of the member

casting the vote and an affirmation of identity is included. Valid absentee ballots shall be counted towards a quorum for the purpose of the election.

Section 3. Elected Positions

- A. Elder Board** The Lead Pastor shall be deemed a permanent member of the Elder Board. One additional pastor, recommended by the Lead Pastor, may be appointed as an Elder by majority vote of the Elder Board. This appointment shall be reviewed every two years. All other Elders shall be elected by the congregation at the annual congregational business meeting by a majority vote of the eligible membership. Terms shall be two years, arranged so that approximately one-half of the members shall complete their terms each year. An Elder may not serve more than three consecutive terms. The Elder who serves as Board Chairman, shall be elected by the congregation. Pastors will not be eligible to serve as Elder Board Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary.
- B. Lead Pastor** Candidates for Lead Pastor shall be submitted to the Elder Board by a special pastoral search committee, which committee shall be appointed by the Elder Board. A candidate selected by the pastoral search committee must be presented to the Elder Board for approval, and must in turn be recommended to the congregation by the Elder Board. He shall be elected in a congregational business meeting by at least 75% vote.

The Lead Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period of time. At least two months' notice must be given by the Lead Pastor if he chooses to terminate his ministry with the church. At least two months' notice must be given by the church for the termination of the Lead Pastor, except in case of dismissal as prescribed in Section 7. Paragraph A. Termination of the Lead Pastor must be approved in a congregational business meeting by at least 75% vote.

Section 4. Appointed Positions Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary shall be appointed by the Elder Board from elected members of the Board. The Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Elder Board from the membership for an indefinite period of time. The Financial Secretary shall not be a pastor. This appointment will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Elder Board.

Section 5. Filling of Elder Board Vacancies Should an elder not be able to fulfill their term, the Elder Board may appoint a member to complete the remainder of the term. Any person so appointed shall meet the same qualifications as any other Elder with regard to membership, spiritual maturity and faith.

Section 6. Financial Review The Elder Board shall ensure that a professional accounting firm examine the accounts of the Church biennially.

Section 7. Admonition/Dismissal

A. Admonition/dismissal of the Lead Pastor or one of the Pastoral Staff

Accusations against a Pastor shall not be considered unless supported by two or three witnesses, 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and only when such accusations are brought before the Elder Board. The Pastor shall then have the opportunity to answer the accusations in the presence of the accusers or their parents or legal guardian(s) before the Elder Board. Should it be proved that he has erred in doctrine or conduct, the Elder Board shall lovingly admonish him. If this does not bring the desired effect, the Elder Board may, by a 75% vote, ask for the Pastor to resign. He shall be present during discussions or balloting concerning him.

The Pastor may appeal and ask the matter to be brought before the congregation, and should the congregation, by a 75% vote by ballot deem that he is unworthy of his calling to this local congregation, he shall be dismissed.

In case unresolved difficulties arise, the Elder Board may refer the matter to the Midwest District Conference superintendent or the Ministerial Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America for their counsel.

B. Admonition/dismissal of other elected or appointed persons Accusations against an elected or appointed person shall not be considered unless supported by two or three witnesses, 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and only when such accusations are brought before the Elder Board. The person shall then have the opportunity to answer the accusations in the presence of the accusers before the Elder Board. Should it be proved that the person has erred in doctrine or conduct, the person shall be lovingly admonished and disciplined by the Elder Board.

If this does not bring the desired effect, the person may be asked to resign by a 75% vote of the Elder Board. The person shall not be present during discussions or balloting concerning the dismissal.

An elected official may appeal and ask the matter to be brought before the congregation and, should the congregation, by a 75% vote by ballot, deem that the person is unworthy of election, the person shall be dismissed.

ARTICLE VI - Congregational Business Meetings

Section 1. An annual congregational business meeting shall be held during each calendar year. At this meeting election of officers shall take place. Additional congregational business meetings may be called by the Elder Board or 25% of the membership of the church submitting a petition to the Elder Board for the purpose or purposes stated in the petition.

Section 2. Members shall be notified of all congregational business meetings at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Section 3. Robert's Rules of Order shall be accepted standard for rules governing the conduct of business.

ARTICLE VII - Quorum

Section 1. A quorum for voting at any congregational business meeting shall be 25% of members. The quorum shall include members who vote through absentee ballots.

Section 2. A majority of the Elder Board shall be necessary to constitute a quorum to conduct any Elder Board business.

Section 3. Membership records shall be reviewed at least annually by the Elder Board and updated in accordance with Article 1, Section 6. The membership record shall be used at congregational business meetings for determining the number of members.

Section 4. Absentee ballots voting on a motion that has been published in advance of a congregational business meeting may be requested by church members who are unable to attend such meeting. Absentee ballots must be signed and must be received by the Elder serving as Church Secretary prior to the meeting being called to order. Absentee ballots may be sent digitally if the name of the member casting the vote and an affirmation of identity is included. If the published motion is amended during the meeting, absentee votes will not be counted. Valid absentee ballots shall be counted towards a quorum for the purpose of the vote on the published motion.

ARTICLE VIII - Position Statements

Every member of this Church is expected to live in accordance with the revealed teachings of the Bible, to avoid and refrain from that which is in disharmony with the Word of God, destructive to the Christian life, harmful to the Church, or dishonoring God.

Because the unchanging principles of God's Word must be applied to issues of cultural relevance which change over time, the Elder Board shall maintain written position statements reflecting the decisions of First Evangelical Free Church with regard to such issues as bear on the effective functioning of the Church. Adoption of position statements shall require a unanimous vote of the Elder Board.

Members of the church may remand a position statement to the Elder Board for

reconsideration by submitting a petition to the Elder Board Chairman with the signatures of at least 25% of the members. The petition must state specifically which aspect(s) of the position statement the Elder Board is being asked to reconsider.

The original constitution/bylaws was accepted by a vote of the following, the church's charter members:

1. Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Holmberg
2. Rev. and Mrs. Melvin Jones
3. Rev. James Leonard
4. Mr. Edwin Carlson
5. Miss Ruby Weaver
6. Miss Mae Belle Haight
7. Mrs. Doyle Gustafson
8. Mr. Jim Russell

Constitution Revisions

January 16, 1974
January 18, 1978
January 3, 1979
October 10, 1979
February 11, 1990
April 28, 1991
October 13, 1996
December 10, 1998
December 11, 2022

Bylaw Revisions

01-74
01-75-R
01-79-R
10-79-R
11-90-R
04-91-R
04-95-R
12-98-R
02-04-R
12-04-R
06-16-R