

FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES



MANUAL OF FAITH,
PRACTICE, &
ORGANIZATION

VISION FOR MINISTRY
HISTORY
CONSTITUTION
ARTICLES OF FAITH
ARTICLES OF PRACTICE
ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION

FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES
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Fellowship of Evangelical Churches

Corporate Values, Mission, Vision

Anchored to Values

Corporate Core Values

- We believe the Church is to be God's primary transforming instrument in the world. (Matthew 16:18)
- We hold to Evangelical theology as expressed in our Manual of Faith, Practice, and Organization.
- We adhere to Anabaptist distinctives as reflected in our Manual of Faith, Practice and Organization.
- We demonstrate biblical stewardship by the efficient use of resources.
- We welcome cooperative efforts with like-minded organizations for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.
- We participate in Evangelical and Anabaptist endeavors to respond to global social needs.
- We encourage all churches of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches to unite as a community demonstrating love and respect for one another.

Propelled by Mission

Corporate Mission Statement

The Fellowship of Evangelical Churches exists to help the local church accomplish the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20).

Driven by Vision

Corporate Vision Statement

The Fellowship of Evangelical Churches will help the local church accomplish its mission by:

- Preserving adherence to our shared statement of faith.
- Providing and facilitating opportunities to birth new churches globally.
- Investing in and caring for present and future Church leaders.
- Providing resources to enhance local church ministries.

**Vision Statement
of the
Fellowship of Evangelical Churches**

By the grace of God, the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches will intentionally expand the visible body of Christ both nationally and internationally.

We will embrace a common vision to reach the unchurched and trust the Holy Spirit to breathe a fresh wind of spiritual vitality through our local bodies of believers.

To this end, we dedicate ourselves to our Lord Jesus Christ and to growth, obedience, and any change that results from our commitment.

- We dedicate ourselves to birthing churches nationally.**
- We dedicate ourselves to expanding international ministries.**
- We dedicate ourselves to serving our church leaders.**
- We dedicate ourselves to teaching the Bible for spiritual maturity and for equipping people for ministry.**
- We dedicate ourselves to structuring for efficiency.**

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Reformation Backgrounds

The Fellowship of Evangelical Churches has a spiritual heritage which can be traced directly to the Reformation in Europe. Even prior to the Reformation there were small groups of believers in Europe who held unswervingly to an evangelical faith in the face of continuing ritualism, formalism and power within the Roman Church.

There was a gradual, serious spiritual deterioration in the Church between the time of Jesus' life on earth and the sixteenth century. This also affected church leaders: material wealth was brutally used against the poor; spiritual rebirth became identified with church membership and baptism; clerical morality wavered; salvation became identified with purgatory; indulgences replaced holy living; and corrupt politicians attempted to control spiritual life.

The Reformation erupted in the early sixteenth century. The Lutheran branch of the Reformation recovered the centrality of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ through God's grace. The Reformed branch rediscovered the centrality of the Scriptures in defining a spiritual teaching core.

Anabaptist Concerns and Beginnings

The Anabaptist branch initially rejoiced in the Reformation. However, these reformers soon came to believe that John Calvin and Martin Luther led a "halfway" Reformation. For them other central issues were left untouched: the significance of the elements in the Lord's Supper, infant baptism, the nature of the church, and the interpretation of the Scriptures.

Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock increasingly questioned their mentor and teacher, Ulrich Zwingli, on the matter of infant baptism. On January 21, 1525, they baptized each other along with others upon their personal, public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Persecution soon erupted from the other branches of the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church. These three men, and multitudes more, were martyred for this expression of their faith. They refused to retaliate against their persecutors because they sought to practice Jesus' love. They were called peacemakers or pacifists. The number of adherents grew and spread rapidly across what is now Switzerland, southern Germany and Holland. Because of their insistence on adult baptism, they were called re-baptizers or Anabaptists. For them the evidence of Christianity was discipleship, brotherhood, and a self-giving, non-resistant love.

Evangelical Teachings with Anabaptist Roots

The evangelical church of the twentieth century is the heir of early Anabaptist teachings: Scripture alone defines a person's faith; salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ through God's grace; Christians can live in the power of the Holy Spirit; personal discipleship and discipline are crucial to spiritual growth; church and state governments should be

separate; people created in God's image have a right to freely express convictions of conscience; baptism is for believers; the church is a voluntary organization; church government is congregational; laity and clergy equally are priests before God; Christians may suffer for their faith; and Christians have a responsibility to share material goods with the poor.

Early Anabaptist Developments

Anabaptist church leadership was decimated because of severe, prolonged, and widespread persecution. But in God's providence a converted Roman Catholic priest increasingly accepted Anabaptist teachings. In 1536, he finally joined the movement. His formal training and practical writing skills stabilized and codified the early Anabaptist movement. His name was Menno Simons. He was so successful in providing effective leadership that outsiders labeled the re-baptizers, "Mennonites."

Mennonites were relentlessly hounded and persecuted across much of Europe throughout most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Congregations scattered because of persecution from without and splintered from internal dissension. Because of martyrdom, trained leadership never emerged. However, persecution failed to eliminate the so-called radical reformers. As persecution persisted, there was a growing commitment of most Mennonites to a peaceful expression of New Testament teachings.

Mennonites and Amish

Strong disagreement from within the Mennonite community disrupted their peaceful way of life. In 1693, the Anabaptists faced a major challenge from Bishop Jacob Amman. He insisted that a person under church discipline experience separation not only from his church but also from his family. After intense discussion the Anabaptist movement split. The more conservative group under Bishop Amman's leadership became known as the Amish.

North American Immigration

After almost two centuries of injustice, hardship, insult, cruelty, and martyrdom, European Mennonites and Amish longed for a land where they might live in peace. They desired to live according to their interpretation of New Testament teachings and to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. This focused primarily on an attempt to literally apply Jesus' teachings to daily living. Many Amish and Mennonite communities immigrated to North America.

The first settlement in the USA began as early as 1683, at Germantown, Pennsylvania. They were welcomed by the Quaker brethren of William Penn's colony. From 1709-1754, another group of 3,000-5,000 arrived in Pennsylvania. Later, from 1815-1861, more than 3,000 additional immigrants arrived in western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa.

In their new homeland they adhered to the Dortrecht Confession of Faith, which had been adopted in Holland on April 21, 1632. They also enforced external patterns of living such as clothing style, cut of hair, separation from the world, and later, means of

transportation. They were skeptical about becoming friends with the world and other Christian groups because of a long history of persecution and martyrdom.

The Egly Amish

Into such an environment a young man named Henry Egly was elected deacon of a Berne-Geneva (Indiana) Amish church. During the next three years he experienced illness along with a call to the ministry. After much prayer and heart examination, he was thrilled with a new spiritual vitality through committing himself to preaching the biblical truth that salvation is "by grace...through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). He adopted Menno Simons' motto, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In 1858, he was elected bishop of this Amish church. Opposition arose because of his insistence on the new birth experience. He was "forced" to withdraw from being a minister and bishop in the Amish church. One-half of the congregation withdrew with him. The first "Egly-Amish" church was formed in 1866. It became the Berne EMC church. Throughout the rest of his life, he mainly attempted to reform the Amish church from within, rather than to evangelize non-Christians in the community.

Bishop Egly was invited to other Amish communities to share the message of salvation by faith in Christ through God's grace. New congregations were formed in Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, and Ohio. A very loose fraternal association of rural congregations developed throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. In addition, a Sunday School program was introduced in the churches before Bishop Egly's death in 1890.

The Defenseless Mennonites and Social Witness

On November 6, 1908, the "Egly-Amish" officially adopted the name "Defenseless Mennonite." This indicated a desire to be known more as Mennonite than Amish. During this time the Defenseless Mennonites sought to bear witness to their faith through ministering to human needs. Through their efforts, Salem Orphanage, now Salem Children's Home, was established in 1896. In 1908, Salem Gospel Mission was begun in Chicago. Eventually this mission ministry became Calvary Memorial Church. Brotherhood Aid Association, now Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company, was begun in 1917.

In cooperation with the Central Conference of Mennonites, now the Central District of the General Conference Mennonite Church, The Mennonite Old People's Home, now Meadows Mennonite Retirement Community, was inaugurated in 1919. The two groups also cooperated to found Mennonite Hospital, now BroMenn Health Care, in 1919, which is located in Bloomington, Illinois.

Home and Cross-Cultural Missions

Very little was done in active home evangelism with the objective of establishing new churches. However, a zeal for cross-cultural missions has been a twentieth century hallmark. Mennonites were forerunners of the modern missionary movement. Missionaries were sent out as early as 1896. In 1912, individuals from the Defenseless

Mennonites, in cooperation with the Central Conference of Mennonites, were instrumental in forming the Congo Inland Mission, now the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission. They began a denominational missions program in 1945, first in the Dominican Republic (1945) and then in Venezuela (1980). Financial commitments to foreign missions have been very strong throughout the twentieth century.

Early Twentieth Century Developments

The Defenseless Mennonites were skeptical about pursuing higher educational degrees or strongly encouraging formal pastoral training. To them, these seemed to contribute to early twentieth century humanism, immorality, materialism, and theological liberalism. They also reflected on their historical background. Persecution and martyrdom had come from Christians with higher educational degrees and formal pastoral training. They also were the heirs of Egly's emphasis on strict separation from the world.

But some in the post-Egly generation increasingly stressed the evangelism of the lost outside the church, higher educational degrees, and formal pastoral training. Bishop Egly's successor, Rev. Joseph Ramseyer, also stressed "a distinct experience of baptism of the Holy Spirit, premillennialism, and baptism by immersion." (Stan Nussbaum, *You Must Be Born Again*, p.14) Because of these "irreconcilable" differences, Rev. Ramseyer formed a new denomination, the Missionary Church Association (1898), now known as the Missionary Church.

During World War I, communication between the Defenseless Mennonites and their German relatives was severely restricted. At the end of the war, the German language ceased being the official language of the churches. German loyalties and cultural preferences lessened. Defenseless Mennonites increasingly saw themselves as an American community and no longer as a transplanted German, European society.

Evangelical Mennonite Church and National Association of Evangelicals

The Defenseless Mennonites were charter members in the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942. Later, in 1948, their name was changed from Defenseless Mennonites to Evangelical Mennonites. Their commitments were not only Anabaptist, but also evangelical. New, positive attitudes slowly emerged toward higher education, formal pastoral training, identification with the broader evangelical community, and theological tolerance within evangelicalism. The Evangelical Mennonite Church (EMC) has walked an interesting and somewhat misunderstood tight rope between traditional Anabaptists beliefs and emerging evangelical commitments.

Post World War II

Following World War II, upward social mobility, increased personal wealth, professional success, urbanization, and high educational attainments characterized many EMCers. There continues to be an appreciation for and loyalty to her European heritage. This has given a renewed vision of the New Testament "free" church and a continuing commitment to the doctrine of the "new birth." The Lord has also given local churches a greater burden to evangelize the non-churched, including the objective of planting new

churches. New cross-cultural ministry involvements are being pursued. Local churches continue to be centers of compassionate sharing in their communities and FEC.

With a rapidly changing constituency the Evangelical Mennonite Church voted on August 2, 2003 to be known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches. In so doing, the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches (FEC) affirmed its core values anchored in Evangelical theology and Anabaptist distinctives, and its mission to help the local church accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

Reference Bibliography:

1. *An Introduction to Mennonite History* by Cornelius Dyck (ed.)
2. *A Tribute to Menno Simons* by Franklin H. Littell
3. *You Must Be Born Again* by Stan Nussbaum
4. *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later* by J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder
5. *Anabaptist Portraits* by John A. Moore

PART I – CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - NAME

This religious organization shall be known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of this organization is as follows:

- a. To foster a concerted and systematic propagation of the Gospel at home and abroad.
- b. To assure to believers the opportunity of fellowship and inspiration in the Christian faith.
- c. To lead believers by instruction and challenge into ever-widening experiences of grace and service.
- d. To afford an efficient administration of God's work and an effective utilization of all tithes and resources available.

ARTICLE III - COOPERATION

We welcome opportunities of fellowshiping in Christ with all brethren of like faith and convictions. We stand ready to join hands with any fellow believers in projects dedicated to the honor of God's name, the spreading of the Gospel, and the salvation of the lost.

ARTICLE IV - AFFILIATION

We are prepared to sympathetically study plans for closer affiliation with groups of like faith and emphasis if such relationship would open mutual opportunities of richer fellowship and wider, more effective avenues of witness and service in our age of supreme challenge.

PART II - ARTICLES OF FAITH

ARTICLE I - THE SCRIPTURES

We believe the original texts of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which the Church historically accepted as the Holy Scriptures, are God-breathed. These Scriptures are truth, written by holy men who were chosen and equipped by God for this special task.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
2 Peter 1:20-21

The primary content of the revelation is truth about God himself, about his acts in history, about man in his sinful condition, and about the relationship that can be established and maintained between God and man through the person and work of Jesus Christ who completed God's plan of salvation.

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
Psalm 119:105

...from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
2 Timothy 3:15

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me!"
John 14:6

We believe the Scriptures, errorless in the original documents, are divine authority in all matters which they address. Their truthfulness is not negated by the occurrences of such things as irregularities of grammar or spelling, intended and conventional generalizations or approximations, various literary devices, observational descriptions of nature, or reports of false statements made by evil persons. Since God the Holy Spirit is the source of the message as well as the mover and supervisor of those who recorded it, the Bible is reliable in what it communicates and is the supreme authority for faith and practice. Nothing may be taken from it and nothing may be added.

I warn everyone who hears the words of prophecy of this book. If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
Revelation 22:18-19

ARTICLE II - GOD

We believe in the one and only true God who is spirit. He is self-existent, infinite, personal, unchangeable, and eternal in his being. He is perfect in holiness, righteousness, love, justice, goodness, wisdom and truth. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is the creator and sustainer of all things both visible and invisible. He is both immanent in and transcendent to the creation. The one triune God exists and reveals himself as three persons, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We acknowledge that all we know about God is by revelation. Now we know only in part, but we look for the day when we will know as we are known.

A. God the Father

1. His nature

We believe in God as our Father. In his nature and in his relationships, we understand him best as Father. While a human father imperfectly loves and cares, the heavenly Father perfectly loves and cares. He is good in all he does and in everything he gives, including his discipline.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 2 Corinthians 1:3

...one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. For to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it
Ephesians 4:6-7

Also see: Matthew 7:11; Hebrews 12:7-11

2. His unity with Christ

The Son came into the world to make the Father known. Jesus affirmed that he and the Father are one.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."
John 14:6-7

3. His relationship to believers

The Father loved the world enough to send the Son, Jesus Christ, as the Savior of the world. Anyone who knows the Father also knows the Son. Through a personal relationship with Christ, we come to know God as our Father and can

say, “Abba, Father.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,... Galatians 3:26

B. God the Son (Jesus Christ)

1. His nature

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was made in the likeness of men. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, thus blending organically and permanently his divine nature with human nature in one, unique person without a third nature being formed.

The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory the glory of the one and only Son, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

...being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man,... Philippians 2:7c-8a

Also see: Matthew 1:18-25; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14a

2. His mission

The purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God and to redeem man. This redemption was accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,...

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:18-19

Also see: 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; 1 John 2:2

3. His glorification and continuing ministry

He ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God interceding for us.

While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.
Luke 24:51

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,...
Hebrews 8:1

Also see: Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; 1 John 2:1; 1 Peter 3:22

4. His position in the Church

He is the head of the Church which is his body.

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.
Colossians 1:18

5. His lordship

He has an exalted position. Ultimately every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:9-11

C. God the Holy Spirit

1. His nature

We believe the Holy Spirit is God, eternal in existence.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit...? You have not lied to men but to God."
Acts 5:3, 4

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!
Hebrews 9:14

2. His ministry

His ministry, since his coming on the day of Pentecost, is broad and varied. At some time every person in the world is touched by his work.

a. His work for unbelievers

- (1) He convicts and convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment.
- (2) He restrains the progress of evil until God's purposes are accomplished.

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father; where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

John 16:8-11

Also see: 2 Thessalonians 2:7

b. His work in salvation

- (1) He regenerates, giving new life to those who repent of their sins and exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

John 3:5-8

- (2) He comes to live in all believers at the moment of their regeneration.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;...

1 Corinthians 6:19

Also see: Romans 8:9

- (3) He baptizes all believers into the body of Christ.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

I Corinthians 12:13

c. His work in believers

- (1) He instructs, comforts, helps and guides all believers.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. John 16:13

In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. Romans 8:26

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither seeks him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:16-18, 26

- (2) He sanctifies and produces Christ-like qualities in believers as they yield to his control.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:16, 22-23

- (3) He equips and empowers all believers for witness and service.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

Also see: Matthew 28:19-20

- (4) He will graciously and ultimately give immortality to our resurrected bodies.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Romans 8:11

d. His work in the Church

- (1) He indwells the Church.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?
1 Corinthians 3:16

- (2) He produces unity in the Church.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called--one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
Ephesians 4:3-6

- (3) He enables believers to love each other.

All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.
John 13:35

Also see: 1 Corinthians 13

- (4) He equips the Church for ministry by giving spiritual gifts to each believer.

Spiritual gifts are special endowments or abilities given by the Holy Spirit to each believer, enabling the believer to participate actively in the church's ministry.

Properly exercised, every gift brings honor to Jesus Christ, produces unity, develops spiritual maturity within the body, and helps to complete the mission of the Church.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10-11

Also see: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:11-16

Also see Part II, Article V, E

ARTICLE III - MAN

A. His creation

We believe that man was created by an immediate act of God.

And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. Genesis 2:7

He was created in the image and likeness of God. He was without sin, enjoyed fellowship with God and was capable of full obedience to his will.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

He was created in order that he might glorify God and enjoy him forever. In so doing, man finds his greatest measure of blessedness and true enjoyment.

...He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the One he loves. Ephesians 1:5-6

Also see: Ephesians 1:18

B. His fall

We believe that man was confronted with a moral choice in the garden.

And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:15-17

By voluntarily transgressing God's command and yielding to the enticement of Satan, man lost his original condition, became physically, morally, intellectually and spiritually depraved and was alienated from God.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. Romans 5:12, 18

Also see: Genesis 3:1-6

In consequence of this act of disobedience, the entire human race became guilty before God with the result that each one of us possesses a sin nature. Both our sin nature and our acts of sin make us deserving of the righteous judgment of God.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Romans 3:10-12

Also see: Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:19-32; 1 Corinthians 2:14;
1 John 1:8-10

Therefore all men are sinners and guilty before God, are dead in their sins, and unable to save themselves.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

Also see: Ephesians 2:1

C. His eternal destiny

We believe that there are two eternal, conscious destinies for man; heaven for the righteous and hell for the unrighteous.

Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. John 5:28-29

Also see: Psalm 9:17; John 14:1-3

After the great White Throne Judgment, and after all the enemies of God are consigned to their place of eternal punishment, the present order of things will be dissolved, and the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, shall be revealed as the eternal abiding place in which the righteous shall dwell.

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. Isaiah 65:17

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13

Also see: Revelation 21:1-22:7

ARTICLE IV - SALVATION

We believe that God must and will punish sin because he is holy and cannot tolerate it. This punishment must come either to the guilty person or to a satisfactory substitute. Because it is not God's will that any should perish, he has provided the way of salvation. Jesus Christ voluntarily offered himself on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin so that all who believe in him may be redeemed. Initially salvation requires repentance and faith which results in justification, regeneration and sanctification and culminates in resurrection and glorification. Some of these are at times simultaneous in man's experience but are hereafter described separately for the sake of clarity.

A. Repentance

We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance must accompany regeneration as well as be an ongoing act that accompanies sanctification.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
Isaiah 55:7

"The time has come," he said, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
Mark 1:15

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9

Genuine repentance is a necessary attitude of man as a condition for a holy and just God to forgive man's sins. It is produced in man by the kindness of God. It involves godly sorrow for sin and a proper reverence for God's holiness. It results in confessing and forsaking sin and whenever possible and appropriate, making restitution to those sinned against.

I tell you no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.
Luke 13:3

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?
Romans 2:4

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them find mercy.
Proverbs 28:13

B. Faith

We believe that faith is essential to salvation. It is the means by which the Word of God is received as true. It is both the gift of God and the response of man.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God. Ephesians 2:8

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

Faith is confidence based upon good evidence. It is an assurance born of complete trust in God as revealed through Christ. By faith one trusts in the death of Christ as the only efficacious sacrifice for his sin.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31

Also see: Romans 10:10

C. Justification

We believe that justification is a judicial act of God in which he declares the sinner free from condemnation and punishment and restores him to divine favor and privilege. It takes place when the sinner repents and trusts Christ for salvation.

...and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:24-26

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,... Romans 5:1

D. Regeneration

We believe that regeneration is wholly of grace and free to all but must include repentance toward God and faith in Christ as Savior.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Regeneration is the impartation of divine life. By the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word, the believer is given a disposition to love and obey God. What was destroyed in Adam is renewed in Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Corinthians 5:17

Also see: Romans 5:17; Titus 3:4-6

Other terms used in Scripture to describe regeneration are “born again,” “converted” and “saved.”

See John 3:7; Acts 4:12

Some evidences of regeneration are: the witness of the Holy Spirit, a personal knowledge of the forgiveness of sin, peace with God, love for God’s Word, newness of life, and reconciliation with any against whom sin has been committed.

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
Romans 8:16

E. Sanctification

God has always required that his people should be holy because he is holy.

See Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16

Sanctification is that action whereby God sets apart his people from sin. It has its source in what Christ has done through his blood, making believers a people of his own possession and calling them holy ones (saints). This holy position is granted when the Christian first believes in Christ. It is neither earned nor achieved by good works but is followed by good works.

See 1 Corinthians 1:2,30, 6:9-11; Hebrews 10:14, 13:12

Sanctification is also a process in the Christian life and involves the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, setting one apart from a sinful walk and producing a Christ-like character. This process is experienced through faith and obedience which includes consciously yielding the whole life to God and continually letting the Holy Spirit be in control. The results include a manifestation of spiritual fruit and progress in Christian growth, which are the will of God for every Christian.

See John 17:17; Romans 6:13b, 8:29,12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 1:2

The process of sanctification will be completed upon entering the presence of Christ when the Christian will enjoy a perfectly holy state.

See 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 John 3:2

F. Believer's assurance

We believe that every Christian can have a valid sense of assurance concerning his salvation, his relationship with God and his destiny. Through faith in Jesus Christ, a knowledge of the Scriptures and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, such assurance becomes real and personal.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:13

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Romans 8:16

Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: we know it by the Spirit he gave us. 1 John 3:24

There is no need for any believer to be anxious about God's ability or his gracious purpose to keep the believer for himself.

See Romans 8:37-39

However, the Scriptures have ample warning for anyone who might be inclined to presume upon the love of God by careless or sinful living.

See Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:26-31

Therefore, it is necessary to examine ourselves to see whether our faith is genuine, a faith that is expressed in attitude and actions by obedient works. Without that kind of faith, there is no Scriptural assurance. The most complete basis for the believer's assurance is found in 1 John.

See 2 Corinthians 13:5

G. Resurrection and glorification

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, and because he lives, we too shall live.

He is not here, he has risen! Luke 24:6a

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 2 Corinthians 15:22

Also see: 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:20-21

At the return of Christ, the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised and will, with the living believers, be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We will be changed so as to have immortal bodies like unto Christ's own glorious body.

...the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17a

Also see: 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:20-31

Our glorification is the culminating act of God's redeeming and sanctifying believers and will be realized when we see him as he is.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

ARTICLE V - THE CHURCH

A. The nature of the Church

We believe the Church, in its universal context as the body of Christ, is composed of all believers regardless of name, race, nation or generation.

The local church, as a part of that body, is composed of a group of believers in Christ who have voluntarily joined together and are devoted to one another in love, so that the church can fulfill its purpose and mission.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27

Also see: Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22; Colossians 1:18-20; Revelation 5:9

B. The purpose of the Church

The purpose of the Church is to glorify God. The Church glorifies God through worship and faithful participation in its God-given mission.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.
Ephesians 1:11-14

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.
1 Peter 4:11

Also see: 1 Chronicles 16:24; Psalm 34:3, 96:8; Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 4:13-15; Galatians 1:4-5; Ephesians 3:20-21; Philippians 1:9-11, 4:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 1:25; Revelation 1:6, 19:7

C. The mission of the Church

The mission of the Church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Central to this mission is the proclamation of the Word of God for the equipping of each believer to become an effective witness so that the Church will grow to the glory of God.

The local church seeks to accomplish its mission by gathering together to participate in worship, instruction, fellowship and service, so that each believer will grow into the full measure of the stature of Christ and, in obedience to him, will reach out in witness to unbelievers. As the Church makes disciples, it becomes a force for restraining evil and producing righteousness in the world.

To help accomplish this mission worldwide, local churches may unite as a denomination. The denomination may cooperate with inter-denominational groups of like faith and convictions.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:18-20

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
Act 1:8

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47

Also see: Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21-23; Acts 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Peter 2:9

D. The role of the pastor

The pastor is called by God to serve the Lord Jesus Christ through leading the congregation to achieve its purpose and mission.

This leadership is best expressed as the pastor lovingly leads, feeds, equips and protects the flock under his care.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;... 1 Peter 5:2

Also see: John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 4:3-5; 1 Peter 5:1, 3-4

E. The role of the people

1. Leadership

Within each congregation God calls some believers to serve Jesus Christ through positions of leadership in the church's ministry.

This leadership is for the purpose of working with the pastor so that the church may achieve its purpose and mission.

Such leadership is best expressed as these persons function as models, shepherds and servants for the congregation.

But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 1 Corinthians 12:18

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 1 Timothy 3:1

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

Also see: Acts 6:2-4; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Timothy 3:2-13, 4:16, 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:24

2. Congregation

God calls every believer to serve Jesus Christ through active participation in the church's ministry.

Such participation is best expressed as each believer:

- consistently grows in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,
- respectfully submits to the leadership in the congregation,
- recognizes and joyfully uses spiritual gifts for ministry for the common good,
- obediently reaches out in witness to unbelievers.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:7

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. Hebrews 13:17-18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. 2 Peter 3:18

Also see: Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:2-6, 5:15-21, 6:10-18; Colossians 2:6-7, 4:2-6; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9-12, 3:15-16, 4:10-11; 1 John 1:3-4, 3; Jude 20-21

F. The gifts for the Church

We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the universal spiritual experience of all true Christians, not a post-conversion experience that is evidenced by what some refer to as sign gifts. At the moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit places the new believer into the universal church. The believer now has the capacity to be under the Spirit's empowerment for character transformation and ministry.

Spiritual gifts are special endowments or abilities given by the Holy Spirit to each believer, as He determines, enabling the believer to participate effectively in the church's ministry. Properly exercised and received by the body, every gift brings honor to Jesus Christ, produces unity, develops spiritual maturity within the body, and helps to complete the mission of the Church.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

We believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit spoken of in the New Testament were distributed to all believers for the common good (I Corinthians 12:7). Concerning the "sign gifts" (e.g., tongues, interpretation of tongues, revelatory prophecy, gifts of healing) we discourage any inference that these gifts indicate special spiritual attainment and/or superiority. We believe the practice of spiritual gifts is to "be done in a fitting and orderly way." (I Corinthians 14:40)

We believe the "sign gifts" accounts as recorded in Acts are descriptive of the events that occurred at the birth of the Christian Church. We do not regard the practice of "sign gifts" in any of our ministry gatherings (such as public worship or small groups) as necessary for the local church or the individual believer. Nor do we believe that the public exercise of these gifts must occur for the spiritual growth of the individual or the numerical growth of the church.

Also see: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:11-16;
1 Peter 4:11.

G. The ordinances of the Church

We believe that an ordinance is an outward ceremony symbolic of a spiritual truth or experience which was instituted by Christ for perpetual use by the Church. It is not a means of salvation but becomes a source of spiritual inspiration and strength as one is obedient to the Lord's command. We believe that the Christian ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism

We believe water baptism symbolizes the experience of regeneration and union with Jesus Christ.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,... Matthew 28:19

It is a public confession of the believer's identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.
Colossians 2:12

Baptism is to be administered to believers only, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We encourage immersion because this form of baptism clearly symbolizes its spiritual significance. However, other modes are recognized. Water baptism does not save or cleanse from sin. It is the answer of a good conscience toward God. Because of the scriptural instruction to baptize those who believe, because of the scriptural example that those who believed were baptized, and because of the clear meaning of baptism as indicated above, we recognize only baptism administered after a person has confessed faith in Jesus Christ, and we expect that all believers will be baptized.

Also see: Acts 8:36-38, 16:30-34

2. The Lord's Supper

We believe the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ on the night of his betrayal and is to be observed by his Church until he returns.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Matthew 26:26-30

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:26

Also see: Luke 22:19

We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death, an expression of fellowship with God and with other believers, a testimony to saving faith, a visible seal of Christ's redemptive covenant, and the assurance of his promised return.

The Lord's Supper consists of partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, symbolizes the broken body and shed blood of Christ for the remission of our sins and reaffirms our continuing dependence upon him. Its observance is to be preceded by honest self-examination.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Corinthians 11:27-29

The communion table shall be open to all believers who know themselves to be in right relationship to God.

ARTICLE VI - THE FINAL THINGS

A. The second advent of Christ

We believe in the personal, visible and premillennial return of Christ.

"...This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:11b

"...I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

John 14:2b-3

Also see: Mark 13:22-27

We believe this will be accomplished in two phases. In the first, Christ will descend from heaven to claim his waiting bride, which is the living Church, as well as departed believers.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

In the second phase, he will descend with his saints to establish the long-promised kingdom and reign upon the earth for one thousand years.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the Word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:4-6

Also see: Daniel 7:13-14; Luke 1:32-33, 21:25-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10; Revelation 5:9-10

B. The judgments

We believe the believer's works will be judged for rewards at the judgment seat of

Christ at the time of his coming, the believer's sins having been judged in Christ upon the cross.

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, he has crossed over from death to life.

John 5:24

...For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Romans 14:10c, 12

Also see: 1 Corinthians 3:8-15, 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:8

The unbeliever will appear before God for judgment at the great white throne after the millennial reign of Christ and will then be consigned to the lake of fire to suffer torment forever and ever with the devil and his angels.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...

Hebrews 9:27

Also see: Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:10-15

PART III - ARTICLES OF PRACTICE

ARTICLE I - THE LORD'S DAY

We believe one day of the week was divinely set aside for rest and worship. The Jewish Sabbath (the seventh day) was obligatory upon those who lived under the Jewish law. (Genesis 2:2b-3; Exodus 20:8)

In commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the Church has set aside the first day of the week as a special day to honor her Lord in the celebration of worship, the joy of fellowship, and the love of service. (Acts 20:7a; Romans 14:6a)

Rest is experienced through spiritual exercises as well as through physical relaxation and recreative activities. Although rest should be viewed in contrast to one's daily routine, works of mercy and necessity should not be left undone. Discretion is to be exercised in the context of love rather than legalism. (Mark 2:27-28)

ARTICLE II - CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

We believe God's ownership of all things by creation and by redemption is clearly indicated in the Scriptures. Since we are saved by grace and the death of Christ provided our ransom, our whole being--spirit, soul, and body--should be freely given to God, which is our reasonable service. Our stewardship responsibility thus extends to our time, talents, and temporal goods. (Psalm 24:1; Haggai 2:8; 1 Corinthians 6:20)

We believe that giving of our temporal possessions is an act of worship out of a motive of love for Jesus Christ.

The believer is to give systematically, proportionately, cheerfully, prayerfully, and liberally. (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:8-10, 9:6-8)

Before the Mosaic law, tithing was voluntarily practiced by Abraham (Genesis 14:20) and Jacob (Genesis 28:22). The law in the Old Testament teaches the system of tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:10-12). The New Testament emphasizes systematic, generous, and gracious giving (2 Corinthians 8-9). As an expression of grace, believers are encouraged to follow the principle that the tithe of personal income is a minimum expression of their stewardship, with offerings beyond the tithe an expression of their generosity.

ARTICLE III - DEDICATION OF CHILDREN

We believe the Scriptures teach that children are of great value and God has a special concern for their well-being. Indeed, Jesus indicated their significance by tenderly taking them into his arms. The Scriptures relate instances where children were publicly

dedicated. Therefore, we encourage Christian parents to dedicate their children to the Lord publicly in prayer. (1 Samuel 1:24-28; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:16; Luke 2:21-24)

ARTICLE IV - THE HOME

A. The marriage relationship

We believe marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God as a permanent and totally intimate relationship between one man and one woman. It is intended to endure until it is broken by the death of one of the partners. (Matthew 19:5-6)
We believe the Scriptures do not give liberty for a believer to marry a non-believer. (2 Corinthians 6:14)

We believe divorce is a basic violation of God's original intention for marriage. (Matthew 19:3-9) Divorce is nowhere encouraged in the Scriptures. Because reconciliation is central and basic to Christianity, it should be pursued with zeal as opposed to divorce. Due to the hardness of the human heart, reconciliation may not always be possible. There are two clear cases in Scripture where divorce, though not encouraged, is permitted:

1. When one of the partners in marriage has committed adultery. (Matthew 5:32, 19:9)
2. When a non-believing partner chooses to desert a believer even though the believing partner has been seeking to reflect the Spirit of Christ in their relationship. (1 Corinthians 7:15)

A person who obtained a divorce deemed biblically legitimate may enter another marriage relationship. However, in seeking to avoid any possible offense to the former partner or to anyone else, it would be acting in love to delay entering into another marriage relationship until the former partner dies or remarries. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Romans 14:14, 20-21; Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15)

B. Family relationships

We believe God instituted the family for a husband and wife to share mutual love, concerns, joys, ideals, ambitions, and responsibilities. The practical patterns for experiencing a God-honoring family may vary, but the underlying principles are constant and clearly defined. (Ephesians 5:21-23, 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-19)

The family is also the institution designed for procreation and basic nurture of children. Christian parents should train and teach their children by such means as living godly, exemplary lives; praying for them; leading them in family worship; instructing them in the Scriptures; and disciplining them in a manner pleasing to the Lord. (Genesis 1:27-28; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4)

Children are to obey their parents while under their care and are always to maintain a spirit of love, honor, and respect. (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20)

ARTICLE V - CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

We believe the Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ in faith and obedience, which results in being transformed into Christ's likeness with ever-increasing glory. This transformation is demonstrated through loving mutual submission and maintaining the unity of the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18) The Christian seeks to grow in his faith and obedience in order:

1. To develop a deeper love-relationship with God. (Matthew 22:37-40)
2. To be more useful for God.

This process of growing in Christ is progressive and life-long. God commands the Christian to grow and provides the power to do so through the presence of his Holy Spirit. Some tools God provides for the Christian to grow are his Word (1 Peter 2:2), prayer (Matthew 26:41), the local body of believers (Hebrews 10:24-25), and trials. (James 1:2-4)

The Christian is commanded to put Christ first in every area of their life. The cost of being a disciple is everything. (Matthew 10:37-39, 16:24; Luke 14:25-35) A person must count this cost at one's conversion to Christ. A person is not permitted to come to Christ with other gods in tow. (Matthew 19:16-24) As one grows in Christ, the Holy Spirit will open their eyes to areas of their life that are not in submission to Christ. The Christian is then commanded to bring that area into submission and obey the Master. A Christian is required to exercise a faithful stewardship of time, possessions, and abilities. All belongs to God and should be dedicated to God.

The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and should not be defiled or abused in any way. Therefore, the Christian will seek to maintain attitudes and actions which are not harmful to them or others and which bring honor to Jesus Christ and his Church. (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20, 10:31)

As Christians submit to Christ, they will increasingly experience the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23a) This fruit will be evident to others and equip one to be useful for Christ in the church and useful for Christ in sharing the gospel with the lost.

The Christian is to maintain a distinctive lifestyle that reflects the Savior in order to draw non-Christians to the Savior. (Matthew 5:13-14) Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world. (John 17:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5: 10) They are to be in the world to lead others to the Savior. A Christian is not to behave immorally like a non-Christian or be conformed to the pattern of the world. (Romans 6:12-13, 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24) The Christian should be willing to identify openly with Jesus Christ and, when necessary, stand alone for what is right. Therefore, relationships which involve practices that

conflict with one's allegiance to Jesus Christ, with the truth of the gospel or with the spirit of its expression should be avoided. (Matthew 25:14-30; 2 Corinthians 6: 14-7:2, 8-9)

ARTICLE VI - ATTITUDE TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe God instituted and established civil government to direct justly the interaction of society by maintaining good laws, commending those who do right and punishing those who do wrong. Its function is to be carried out by people of integrity, justice and moral courage. (Romans 13:1; Exodus 18:21-23; Romans 13:2-10)

Though our primary allegiance is to Jesus Christ, it is our duty to pray for those in government; to respect those in authority; to proclaim truth; to demonstrate love and justice; to witness against corruption, discrimination and dishonesty; to pay taxes and to obey all laws that do not conflict with the principles of God's Word. (Matthew 22:17-21; Acts 5:29; Romans 14:9-13; 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

ARTICLE VII - ATTITUDE TOWARD STRIFE AND MILITARY SERVICE

We believe the teaching of Scripture enjoins believers to love their enemies, to pray for their persecutors and to overcome evil with good. They are instructed to make every effort to live peaceably with everyone. (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:18, 12:21)

We do not believe it is God's will to promote strife among individuals, groups, classes, or nations. Because of this principle and in the light of the historic position of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches opposing the bearing of arms in military service and law enforcement, we uphold our Christian youth who, because of their faith and conscience, choose to express the law of love uniformly in personal, social and civil relationships and to seek exemptions from or alternatives to combat service. (Romans 12:20)

We also respect the right of individual conviction and recognize that various positions will be taken on military service and law enforcement. Therefore, we support those who choose to serve in agencies of civil government, such as the military or a police force, because civil government is recognized as God's servant. (Roman 13:4)

In any event, our churches should give instruction, spiritual aid and encouragement so that our youth may make prayerful, honest decisions and may exert a positive testimony for Jesus Christ in whatever area of service chosen.

ARTICLE VIII - THE CHRISTIAN'S SPEECH

We believe the Scriptures teach that it is a sin to use the name of the Lord irreverently or to speak of sacred things in a blasphemous, frivolous or light manner. The Christian's speech should be above reproach at all times. (Exodus 20:7; Ephesians 4:29)

We respect the right of our members to affirm the truth in place of swearing a judicial oath. (Matthew 5:33-35, 37; James 5:12) Christians are obligated to speak the truth whether in legal matters or in the normal course of life. (Exodus 20:16; Psalm 15:2; Ephesians 4:16)

ARTICLE IX - ILLNESS AND HEALING

We believe all sickness is fundamentally the result of man's sin from which the condition of spiritual death was immediately incurred and from which the course toward physical death was set into motion through aging, sickness and suffering. (Genesis 2:17, 3:17, 19, 5:5; Revelation 9:27)

The work of Jesus Christ provides for the eventual and complete redemption of the body through resurrection. (1 Corinthians 12:21-23, 15:44; Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:22-23)

Until the complete redemption of our bodies, we believe that God may work through human instrumentality or directly and without human means to alleviate human suffering. Therefore, we believe that we may accept and appropriate human medical knowledge or aid as a token of divine mercy and blessing. We also believe prayer may be made for the sick in accordance with Scriptural instructions. By whatever means and whenever God chooses to heal, it is always for his glory. (John 9:1-7; James 5:14-16)

We also recognize there are times when the Lord in his wisdom and for his sovereign purpose chooses not to heal one who has an ailment. While we may not always understand the Lord's will, sickness may be permitted for such diverse reasons as proving our faith, developing righteous qualities or bringing about the termination of earthly life which enables us to enter into the Lord's presence. (Psalm 119:67; Acts 9:37, 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8, 12:7-10, Hebrews 12:5-7, James 1:2)

PART IV - ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION

ARTICLE I – CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

A. Membership

The Fellowship of Evangelical Churches shall be composed of those churches which are already members and any other churches which declare their desire to adopt this constitution, are recommended by the General Board, and are approved by the Delegate Body.

Churches within the conference relate to each other as members of one body. In broader relationships, we also acknowledge and appreciate other parts of the Church, as evidenced by our affiliation with various inter-denominational groups of like faith and convictions.

B. Delegate Body

1. Responsibilities

The Delegate Body shall:

- a. convene once every year.
- b. elect conference officers, board members, and committee members as needed.
- c. receive reports and affirm the vision and direction of FEC cooperative ministry.
- d. approve amendments and revisions to this manual as recommended by the Board of Elders and/or General Board.
- e. serve as final authority for the application of the FEC Manual.
- f. transact other business that comes before the Delegate Body.

2. Composition

- a. The following shall be voting delegates by virtue of office:
 - (1) Members of the General Board.
 - (2) Those holding FEC credentials who are active in FEC.
 - (3) Missionaries on North American assignment.
 - (4) Chairman and Executive Director of each FEC affiliate corporations.
- b. In addition to any delegates from Part IV, Article I, B.2.a, each established FEC church and church plant shall be entitled to one delegate plus one delegate for every fifty attenders, up to a maximum of ten delegates. Each delegate must exhibit commitment as defined under

Part IV, Article II, B. and sign an agreement to the Articles of Faith and Practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches. Delegate quotas are calculated by rounding church attenders to the nearest multiple of fifty. See table below.

Average Weekly Worship Attendance

0 - 75 Attenders – 2 delegates	276-325 Attenders – 7 delegates
76-125 Attenders – 3 delegates	326-375 Attenders – 8 delegates
126-175 Attenders – 4 delegates	376-425 Attenders – 9 delegates
176-225 Attenders – 5 delegates	426 + Attenders – 10 delegates
226-275 Attenders – 6 delegates	

3. Governing rules

- a. The General Board Chair and President shall prepare an agenda for the Delegate Body.
- b. Roberts Rules of Order shall govern the proceedings, except as otherwise provided by this manual.
- c. A majority of registered delegates shall constitute a quorum for conducting business.
- d. Only delegates in attendance during a voting session may cast votes.

C. Fiscal year

The fiscal year shall begin the first day of January and end on the last day in December in each year.

D. Conference officers

1. Identification and selection

a. Identification

The conference officers shall consist of the President (see Part IV, Article I, G.1), as well as the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.

b. Selection

The Delegate Body shall elect the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer for terms of three years. A majority of the votes cast shall be required for election. They shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms in any one office. The Secretary and Treasurer may select someone approved by the General Board to assist them when necessary. The President shall be elected following the process defined by Part IV. Article I.G.1.a

2. Qualifications

Each elected conference officer shall:

- a. be a growing Christian, participating in a Fellowship of Evangelical Churches congregation. In addition, the Chair and Vice-Chair shall possess at least a ministry license.
- b. demonstrate an interest in and an ability to perform the function of the office.
- c. be committed to the mission of the conference.
- d. exhibit commitment as defined under Part IV, Article II, B. and sign an agreement to the Articles of Faith and Practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

3. Responsibilities

- a. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Delegate Body and call and preside at the meetings of the General Board and its Executive Council.
- b. The Vice-Chair shall perform all the duties of the Chair and exercise all the rights when the Chair is absent, or when the Chair so delegates them. In case of resignation, death, or other disqualification of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall become the Chair until the next meeting of the Delegate Body.
- c. The Secretary shall make and keep a record of all proceedings of the Delegate Body, the General Board and Executive Council. The Secretary is responsible to compile a report of the meetings of the Delegate Body, including an annual membership and financial report of each church in the conference and a listing of conference officers, staff and personnel, issue all necessary certificates and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the General Board.
- d. The Treasurer shall receive and hold in trust all funds, securities, and annuities intended for the work of the conference or affecting conference-owned property, except as otherwise provided for, and shall issue receipts or certificates for the same. The Treasurer shall hold in trust or disburse these according to orders issued by the General Board or other officers responsible for the funds involved. The Treasurer shall keep an accurate record of all transactions, submit periodic reports to the General Board when advisable or requested, and present a complete audited report to the Delegate Body.

E. General Board

1. Composition and selection

a. Composition

The General Board shall consist of the conference officers, six at-large representatives, and the Chairman of the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders may appoint one additional person from its Board to serve on the General Board.

b. Selection of the At-Large Representatives

(1) The At-Large Representatives shall be elected by the delegates for terms of three years. They shall not serve more than two consecutive terms.

(2) The At-Large Representatives shall consist of three men and three women. There shall be no more than two At-Large Representatives from any one state.

c. Qualifications of the At-Large Representative:

Each At-Large Representative shall be:

(1) a growing Christian, participating in a Fellowship of Evangelical Churches congregation.

(2) demonstrate an interest in, an ability for, and a commitment to the mission of the conference.

(3) Each At-Large-Member must exhibit commitment as defined under Part IV, Article II, B. and sign an agreement to the Articles of Faith and Practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

2. Organization and meetings

a. Officers

The conference President, Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer shall serve as the officers of the General Board.

b. Executive Council

- (1) The conference President, officers, and the Chairman of the Board of Elders shall constitute the Executive Council. It shall have the authority to transact both urgent and/or necessary business.
- (2) The Executive Council will serve as the search committee to search for and recommend a candidate(s) for FEC President to General Board.
- (3) The Executive Council will serve to give input to the President on Director candidates. The President will present Director candidates for approval by the General Board.
- (4) The Executive Council will propose compensation packages to the General Board for the President and Directors.

c. Meetings

The General Board shall meet at least semi-annually or more often at the call of the President, the Chair or by three of its members.

3. Responsibilities

The General Board shall:

- a. develop policies for the organization and operation of the conference which are not already established by this manual including a determination of areas in which Directors and/or Director's advisory boards should be added.
- b. determine conference priorities in connection with the Board of Elders, President and Directors.
- c. oversee the raising and allocating of conference funds. This oversight function should include:
 - (1) recommending a budget to the Delegate Body.
 - (2) promoting conference needs and securing ministry funding.
 - (3) approving requests for funds for special projects not otherwise listed.
- d. function as the board of directors of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches:
 - (1) hold all conference-owned property in trust, subject to the laws of any state in which the property is located.

- (2) receive, hold in trust, and distribute bequests, annuities and undesignated funds for the work of the conference.
 - (3) invest and transfer funds, buy and sell real or personal property, and give good and valid conveyance thereof.
 - (4) designate agents to perform any of the foregoing powers.
- e. be responsible for the employment and remuneration of Resource Center staff:
 - (1) bring a presidential nominee to be elected by the Delegate Body.
 - (2) approve executive compensation packages for the FEC President and Directors.
 - (3) approve the employment and remuneration of any other necessary administrative personnel recommended by the President.
- f. act on any matter relating to fraternal relations.
- g. approve the formation and bylaws of auxiliary organizations to the conference.
- h. perform duties assigned to it by the Delegate Body.
- i. act on interim matters such as when a vacancy in a conference office occurs between meetings of the Delegate Body.
- j. act in any emergency not otherwise provided for in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Manual.
- k. call for a joint meeting with the Board of Elders when it determines that a matter overlaps the two boards' concerns and responsibilities.
- l. designate a time and place to conduct a general convention.

F. Board of Elders

- 1. Composition and selection
 - a. Composition

The Board of Elders shall consist of five ordained ministers of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches and the President.

b. Selection

(1) The President shall be an ex-officio non-voting member.

(2) The remaining members shall be nominated by the General Board following input from the Board of Elders. The nominees are then elected by the Delegate Body. A majority of the votes cast shall be required for election. A member shall be elected for a term of three years and shall not serve more than two consecutive terms.

c. Officers

(1) The board shall annually elect a Chairman and a Secretary from its elected membership.

(2) The Chairman shall serve as a member of the General Board and Executive Council.

2. Qualifications

Each elected board member shall be:

- a. an ordained minister of the conference.
- b. in agreement with and able to articulate and defend the Articles of Faith and Practice of the conference.
- c. a man of prayer, of the Word, and growing in Christian character.
- d. a man of stature and good reputation with a minimum of five years ministry experience, two of which are in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

3. Responsibilities

The Board of Elders shall provide leadership by:

- a. interpreting the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Articles of Faith and Practice.
- b. determining FEC ministry vision and priorities in conjunction with the General Board, President and Directors.

- c. meeting periodically with the FEC Directors as a follow up to the vision and priorities determined from Part IV, Article I, E.3.b. above.
- d. meeting periodically with General Board and regularly receiving the General Board agenda and minutes.
- e. providing opportunities for continuing education for all personnel holding credentials.
- f. being available to encourage and counsel all personnel holding credentials.
- g. examining (as it seems advisable, upon the request of a local church or the President) the teachings, beliefs, and lifestyles of conference employees, officeholders, and those holding conference credentials to determine if such are in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Practice of the conference.
- h. confronting, admonishing, and appropriately disciplining any personnel holding credentials, conference employees, and officeholders whose lifestyle or teaching deviates from the Articles of Faith and Practice of the conference.
- i. meeting with the congregation to evaluate the situation and counsel the congregation and its leadership with the objective of reconciliation when there is an allegation of a consistent deviation from the Articles of Faith and Practice of the conference by a congregation. This meeting shall be called upon the request of the President, a pastor, or a significant number from a congregation.
- j. calling for a joint meeting with the General Board when it determines that a matter overlaps the concern and responsibilities between the two boards.
- k. acting on any matter relating to church-state affairs, social issues, and higher education including college and seminary scholarships.
- l. granting credentials in accordance with the guidelines for credentials, and periodically define ministerial functions as specified in Part IV, Article I, F.4. below

4. Guidelines for credentials

The Board of Elders is charged with the responsibility to periodically define ministerial functions and grant credentials to persons who make the necessary application and who qualify for such recognition. Credentials shall be granted

according to the following guidelines and policies:

- a. There shall be four types of credentials: Service License, Ministry License, Pastor's License, and Ordination.
- b. Persons desiring any of the above credentials shall make application to the Board of Elders through the President.
- c. Exceptions to these guiding principles and policies may be made when such exceptions would serve the good of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches and the person or persons involved.
- d. Any person, prior to being employed in a ministerial position by a local church or other affiliate group, shall make application for licensing to the Board of Elders through the President.
- e. Individuals holding Ministry License, Pastor's License or Ordination in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches are members of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Ministers' Association. Members of the association not serving in a Fellowship of Evangelical Churches ministry or with Fellowship of Evangelical Churches financial support may retain their credentials by an annual report to and approval by the Board of Elders.

5. Types of credentials

a. Service License

(1) Definition

The Service License is available to persons called by God to Christian service at home or overseas in a supportive vocational role. It represents approval for service for those who do not desire or do not qualify for Ministry License, Pastor's License, or Ordination. It does not give approval for the performance of ministerial functions as defined by the conference Board of Elders.

(2) Qualifications

- (a) The candidate shall be in harmony with the doctrines, practice, and objectives of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.
- (b) The candidate shall be a person of prayer; of the Word, and growing in Christian character.

(3) Application procedure

(a) Make application to the Board of Elders through the President on a form provided for that purpose.

(b) The President shall arrange an interview with the Board of Elders, who shall determine appropriate action.

(4) Tenure

Licenses are issued for one year and may be renewed annually upon request of the licensee and approval by the Board of Elders.

b. Ministry License

(1) Definition

The Ministry License is available to persons called by God to ministry of the Gospel. It is the highest credential for those not qualified for or aspiring to a pastoral role. It represents approval for limited ministerial functions and other duties defined by local churches or approved organizations. A person who holds a ministry license shall function under the guidance of a senior pastor or an approved administrator.

(2) Qualifications

(a) The candidate shall be in agreement with and able to articulate and defend the Articles of Faith and Practice of the conference.

(b) The candidate shall be a person of prayer, the Word, and growing in Christian character.

(c) The candidate shall have been called to specific ministerial roles by the local church or approved organization.

(3) Application procedure

(a) Make application to the Board of Elders through the President on the forms provided for that purpose.

(b) The President shall arrange an interview with the Board of Elders who shall determine appropriate action.

(4) Tenure

- (a) Licenses are issued for one year and may be renewed annually upon request of the licensee and approval of the Board of Elders.
- (b) Upon completion of two years of effective ministry a person may request a license which does not require annual renewal. This may be granted when the Board of Elders has reviewed and approved the individual's doctrine and ministry.
- (c) A person who holds a Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Ministry License and enters another type of work which is not predominately Christian service or designed for the exercise of ministerial functions shall submit the Ministry License for termination. Should the other type of work have special significance and purpose for Christian ministry, the Board of Elders may grant continuation of the license.

c. Pastor's License

(1) Definition

The Pastor's License is available to men called by God to ministry of the Gospel. This license is for those qualified for the role of pastor who have yet to meet the requirements for ordination. It represents approval for all pastoral duties and ministerial functions as defined by the Board of Elders.

(2) Qualifications

- (a) The candidate shall be a graduate from an acceptable seminary or have a degree with a major in Bible from an acceptable college.
- (b) The candidate shall be in agreement with and able to articulate and defend the Articles of Faith and Practice of the conference.
- (c) The candidate shall be a man of prayer, the Word, and growing in Christian character.
- (d) The candidate shall have been called to a broad pastoral role by the local church or approved organization, or as senior pastor.

(3) Application procedure

- (a) Make application to the Board of Elders through the President on the forms provided for that purpose.

- (b) The President shall arrange an interview with the Board of Elders who shall determine appropriate action.

(4) Tenure

- (a) Licenses are issued for one year and may be renewed annually upon request of the licensee and approval of the Board of Elders.
- (b) Upon completion of two years of effective ministry the man holding a Pastor's License is encouraged to pursue ordination in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches. It is expected a licensee will have completed the ordination requirements by the end of five years service in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.
- (c) A person who holds a Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Pastor's License and enters another type of work which is not predominately Christian service or designed for the exercise of ministerial functions shall submit his Pastor's License for termination. Should the other type of work have special significance and purpose for Christian ministry, the Board of Elders may grant continuation of the license.

d. Ordination

(1) Definition

Ordination is granted to men who have held a Pastor's License and effectively served a minimum of two years in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

Ordination represents approval for all pastoral and ministerial functions in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches at home or overseas with no need for renewal.

(2) Qualifications

- (a) The candidate shall be a graduate from an acceptable seminary or have a degree with a major in Bible from an acceptable college.
- (b) The candidate shall be in agreement with and able to articulate and defend the Articles of Faith and Practice of the conference.
- (c) The candidate shall be a man of prayer, the Word, and growing in Christian character.

(d) The candidate shall be recommended for ordination by his local church.

(3) Procedure

(a) The candidate shall rewrite his original doctrinal questionnaire.

(b) The candidate shall prepare an expositional sermon and write a paper on "Aspects of the Christian Faith and Practice."

(4) Tenure

(a) In the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, ordination implies a functional relationship and does not confer automatically a lifetime status. Therefore, an individual ordained by the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches who enters another type of work which is not predominately Christian service or designed for the exercise of ministerial functions shall submit his ordination for termination. Should the other type of work have special significance and purpose for Christian ministry, the Board of Elders may grant continuation of the ordination.

(b) Persons who are ordained ministers at retirement shall be so recognized for life.

6. Transfer and recognition of credentials

Ministers coming from another denomination who desire to have their credentials either transferred to or recognized by the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches shall make application to the Board of Elders through the President on the forms provided, give the particulars as to previous credentials, and the reasons for the desired change. A personal interview with the Board of Elders shall be necessary for action in keeping with its guiding principles and policies.

7. Church membership

Ministers and spouses are members of the church where they serve. Retired ministers and spouses and ministers and spouses in transition are members-at-large of the conference until other membership arrangements are made.

G. Administrative officers

1. President

a. Selection

The General Board shall receive a candidate from the Executive Council for approval and recommendation to the Delegate Body. A two-thirds majority of votes cast by the Delegate Body shall be required for election. The General Board shall determine the terms of employment. The President shall not serve for a period exceeding six years without re-election by the Delegate Body.

b. Qualifications

The President shall:

- (1) be a man of prayer, of the Word, and growing in Christian character.
- (2) be in agreement with and able to articulate and defend the Articles of Faith and Practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.
- (3) possess vision; have the ability to plan, organize, delegate, and supervise; and be able to motivate and instill confidence.

c. Responsibilities

The President, as a conference officer accountable to the General Board, shall:

- (1) Serve as the conference administrator:
 - (a) he may recommend policies to the General Board and the Board of Elders.
 - (b) he shall implement the policies of the General Board and the Board of Elders.
 - (c) he shall coordinate the work of both General Board and Board of Elders.
 - (d) he shall oversee the daily operations of the conference office.
 - (e) he shall recommend to the General Board the employment of support staff.

(f) he shall prepare an annual budget for presentation to the General Board.

(g) he shall supervise the plans and programs for general conventions and delegate meetings.

(h) he shall prepare an annual report for the General Board and the Delegate Body.

(i) he shall direct the compiling of an annual report and directory.

(2) Function as the leader of FEC conference ministries:

(a) he shall relate to, encourage, and support local church personnel.

(b) he shall promote conference ministries among the churches.

(c) he shall work with and, if necessary, take charge of any congregation that has become dysfunctional.

(d) he shall represent the conference to the broader church community.

2. Directors

a. Selection

Director positions will be determined by the President and General Board. The employment of Directors shall be recommended to the General Board by the President.

b. Qualifications

Directors shall:

(1) be persons of prayer, of the Word, and growing in Christian character.

(2) be in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

(3) possess spiritual gifts, expertise, and vision in their areas of leadership.

(4) demonstrate a willingness to function under supervision and to

- cooperate as a member of the conference team.
- (5) possess the ability to motivate and give direction to individuals working under their direction.

c. Responsibilities

Directors shall:

- (1) direct the work of their ministries, under the supervision of the President.
- (2) submit an annual plan and budget to the President.
- (3) provide reports to the General Board, Board of Elders and to the Delegate Body as requested.

H. Committees

1. Nominating Committee

a. Membership

The Nominating Committee shall consist of seven members. The Secretary of the General Board shall serve as Chair of the committee. The General Board shall appoint two members of the Board to serve on the committee. The remaining four members shall be elected by the Delegate Body; terms shall be for two years. Elections shall be staggered to ensure continuity with no more than one member from any one church.

b. Responsibility

It shall provide to the Delegate Body nominations for all elections except for the Board of Elders.

2. Special Committees

Special committees may be requested by the General Board, President, or Directors and approved by the General Board.

I. Affiliate corporations

1. Definition

Affiliate corporations are those which are formed within the conference to provide specific cooperative ministries. Each affiliate corporation shall have its

own constitution, bylaws and board of directors.
Continuing relationships with all corporations shall be determined according to function and need.

2. Relational structure

- a. Nominees to the board of such corporations shall be approved by the General Board.
- b. Each corporation may request financial support from the annual conference budget.
- c. Each corporation shall submit to the General Board for approval:
 - (1) an annual plan for fund raising within the conference.
 - (2) plans for special capital fund drives within the conference.
- d. The conference shall assist the corporation in publicizing its programs and approved fund-raising activities.
- e. Each corporation shall have an annual opportunity to meet with the General Board and shall submit an annual report to the Delegate Body.

3. Identification (as of this publication)

a. Christian Service Foundation (CSF)

The Christian Service Foundation exists to benefit the conference in matters of loans, gifts, and scholarships.

b. Miracle Camp (EMCA)

Miracle Camp serves FEC and other groups by providing facilities in a Christian camping atmosphere.

c. Salem Children's Home (SCH)

Salem Children's Home is a child welfare agency licensed by the State of Illinois. The home seeks to provide outreach, residential and after care services to at-risk children and youth.

d. LifeChange Foundation

LifeChange Foundation serves FEC and other groups by providing Christian camping experiences in the Central States area.

J. Related organizations and other cooperative efforts

FEC's relationship to related organizations and cooperative ministry efforts shall come under the oversight of the Board of Elders and General Board. For a current listing of related organizations, see the FEC Annual Report and Directory.

ARTICLE II - LOCAL CHURCH

A. Constitution and bylaws

Each church shall formulate and adopt a constitution and bylaws for local governance. These documents and subsequent revisions shall be in harmony with the FEC Manual of Faith and Practice and shall be reviewed by the General Board. See exhibit A for guidelines in formulating bylaws.

B. Commitment

FEC expects that local churches identify and develop committed followers both to Christ and his Church. We acknowledge that congregations may employ membership or other means of recognizing such commitment.

This commitment shall include the following:

1. Being born again of the Spirit.
2. Publicly confessing Christ as Savior
3. Submitting to believer's baptism.
4. Being in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.
5. Abstaining from membership in any organization (such as The Masonic Lodge) which makes unbiblical promises or imposes unbiblical requirements.

For more information about membership, Christian discipleship and the spiritual ministries of the church, please refer to Part II, Article V in the Manual of Faith. For further guidance in the area of church discipline refer to exhibit B.

C. Pastoral staff

1. The Role of Pastors

(See Part II, Article V, D. in the Manual of Faith for a description of the role of the pastor.)

2. Evaluation of Pastors

- a. In cooperation with church leadership, a pastor shall develop and participate in a regular evaluation process. It is advisable for evaluation to occur annually.
- b. If at any time during a pastor's term of service anyone from the congregation is aware of a problem concerning the pastor, they should follow the biblical directions in Matthew 18:15-17 and speak to him in a sincere attempt at a solution. Should this not be successful, the appropriate church board should be notified. If that board becomes aware of any problem between the pastor and anyone in the congregation, it is its responsibility to try to bring about reconciliation. The conference Board of Elders is available to assist the local church upon request.

3. Pastoral call

- a. It is recognized that churches have differing procedures for calling pastors. However, each candidate for the position of senior and staff pastor of a FEC church must be given spiritual and doctrinal approval by the conference Board of Elders prior to a vote or a final decision to hire.
- b. It is recommended that a pastor of any conference church shall not be considered as a candidate by another FEC congregation before completing at least three years the first term.
- c. For churches desiring to continue following previously established FEC guidelines in calling a pastor, refer to exhibit C.

PART V - AMENDMENTS

The amendments to the FEC Constitution and Articles of Faith and Practice may be amended by a vote of a three-fourths majority of the delegates present and voting at any delegate session. Amendments to the Articles of Organization shall require a two-thirds majority of the delegates present and voting at any delegate session. Notice of the proposed changes to any part must be given two months in advance of the vote.

Exhibit A

Outline for Local Church Bylaws

The following outline is a guideline for creating or revising local church bylaws.

<u>Articles</u>	<u>Description</u>
I. Preamble/Introduction	gives a reason for the bylaws and makes a statement of harmony with FEC Manual of Faith and Practice
II. Name	identifies the legal name and the commonly used name
III. Affiliation	defines relationship to FEC
IV. Purpose	purpose of the local church
V. Membership	who, qualifications, discipline, termination
VI. Meetings	how often, when, how determined, purpose
VII. Pastors	how they are called, credentials, evaluation process, roles for senior pastor, staff pastors, and filling vacancies
VIII. Organizational Structure	officers, boards, committee,
IX. Elections	how positions are filled
X. Fiscal Year	beginning/ending date
XI. Property	received, held, disposed
XII. Amendments	how the bylaws are amended
XIII. Adoption	how the bylaws are adopted

Exhibit B

Some Guiding Principles of Church Discipline

1. When a problem is referred to a church body for solution, the pastor and church leadership shall be considered as competent to counsel with the people involved and to make appropriate decisions.
2. Disciplinary action must be engaged in only with a deep sense of responsibility to maintain the honor of Christ's name, the purity of his church and integrity of his truth.
3. Disciplinary action must always be carried out in Christian meekness and love with a desire to restore the offender and remove offense among believers and reproach from the church.
4. Private offense ought to be dealt with privately, if possible, and the offender spared undue publicity. Public offense, however, ought to be publicly rebuked and publicly rectified.
5. Any matters which involve or may have the potential to involve the discipline of FEC credentialed personnel should be brought to the immediate attention of the conference Board of Elders.
6. Church discipline, though not limited to, may take one of the following forms: rebuke and admonition, suspension from office or church responsibilities and dismissal from membership.
7. When a disciplined person has shown genuine evidence of repentance, has made appropriate restitution and has shown by conduct a renewed mind and heart, the individual should be restored.

Exhibit C

Guidelines for Calling, Recalling and Termination of Pastors

1. Pastoral call using congregational vote

- a. When a church is seeking a pastor, it shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee that will serve in cooperation with the conference President to locate a candidate. The candidate shall be voted upon by the congregation at a meeting announced for the purpose from among persons approved by the President and recommended by the Pastoral Search Committee. This election shall be under the supervision of the conference President.

No vote shall be taken on any candidate without the spiritual and doctrinal approval of the candidate by the conference Board of Elders.

- b. The church shall not vote on more than one candidate at a time. It is recommended that a pastor of any conference church shall not be considered as a candidate by another congregation before he has completed at least one three-year term.
- c. It is recommended that opportunity for public discussion of a candidacy be afforded prior to a vote on the pastoral call. The conference President or a member of the conference Board of Elders shall be available to participate in such a meeting if so desired.
- d. Public notice of any pastoral election shall be made two weeks in advance of the election. Proxy votes are not valid in voting for a pastor. Absentee ballots may be cast in a sealed envelope subject to proper identification.
- e. A quorum for this election shall consist of one-half of the members eligible to vote. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast is necessary for the extension of a call to a candidate.
- f. The initial term of the pastoral call shall be determined by the local congregation and may be up to six years.
- g. A pastor's term of service may be terminated by either the pastor or the church if 90 days' notice is given, or at any time if it is mutually agreeable.

2. Pastoral recall

- a. Approximately six months before the close of the pastor's term of service, the pastor and the board charged with the responsibility for pastoral relations shall conduct an evaluation of the pastor's ministry. It is recommended that the

Pastoral Evaluation Sheet, approved by the conference Board of Elders, be used as a part of the evaluation process. (See exhibit D)

If there are any questions concerning the pastor's recall, these should be discussed privately with him.

- b. A Church Council recommendation should then be formulated and presented to the membership of the church.
 - c. It is recommended that at least four weeks prior to any recall vote members of the congregation shall complete and return the Pastoral Evaluation Sheet.
 - c. A pastoral recall vote shall be taken, governed by the same rules as apply to the original call to service.
3. Pastoral termination

If a pastor terminates because of an inadequate recall vote, the time of termination is negotiable, but the pastor is entitled to 90 days' salary from the time of the vote or from July 1, whichever comes first.

4. Other staff holding credentials

Other staff holding credentials shall be called in the same spirit of prayerfulness and carefulness as is given to the call of the pastor. Each local church is responsible to work out in detail the necessary procedure for the call and for the working relationship. Such procedure shall conform to the guidelines for credentials set forth in Part IV, Article I, F.4.

- Is considerate of all age groups.
- Is not crude.
- Evidences good “common sense.”

Comments _____

MOTIVATION (interest, effort, energy enthusiasm)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ineffective				adequate			very effective		

- Evidences genuine sincerity in projects and persons.
- Is positive in support of existent and planned programs.
- Displays enthusiastic support for ministries that are not his own.

Comments _____

PERSONAL EXAMPLE AND LIFESTYLE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ineffective				adequate			very effective		

- Is respectful of all persons, regardless of age, sex, or social status.
- Dresses appropriately.
- Demonstrates genuine integrity, i.e. can be trusted.
- Models a good work ethic by working neither too much nor too little.

Comments _____

PUBLIC RELATIONS (getting along with people)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ineffective				adequate			very effective		

- Shows proper concern for the relationship of the church to the general public.
- Is well thought of in the community.
- Deals well with people and situations both within and outside of the congregation.
- Promotes a healthy view of the Christian life.

Add the numbers circled and divide by 15 for his rating.

Rating_____

In your judgment, should Pastor _____ be recommended for Ordination? ___Yes ___No

In your judgment, should Pastor _____ be invited to serve for another term? ___Yes ___No

If yes, for how many years? 3 4 5 6

Comments_____

Signed_____

Abortion

Because we believe in the sacredness of human life, which is created in the image of God; and because we believe that human life begins at the moment of fertilization, we abhor and decry any attempt to deliberately induce the extraction or expulsion of the human fetus with the intent of terminating life at any time between fertilization and birth.

When medical science concludes that a mother's physical life is endangered by prolonging pregnancy, it is appropriate for the family to consider separating the unborn child from the mother. At such time, every attempt should be made to save both mother and child.

A position paper entitled "Abortion" has more specific and complete information on this topic and is available upon request from the FEC Office.

Granting Credentials to Separated/Divorced Persons

God designed marriage as the foundational element of human society. As such, it is a divine institution ordained by Him. Therefore, any violation of the marriage relationship must be viewed as being less than God's intended ideal and ultimate standard.

However, with the rising tide of divorce and remarriage, it is inevitable that the church will have to struggle with the issue of ministry for those who have fallen short of this Biblical goal. All such efforts must be carried out with faithfulness to the Scriptures, concern for the mission of the church to the world, and love for all persons concerned.

If it is known that a person with credentials is having serious problems in his marriage relationship, the Board of Elders will seek to make contact with the couple and offer counsel toward the goal of healing and reconciliation.

A leader with credentials who becomes divorced or marries a divorced person will have his credentials suspended regardless of the reason the divorce was granted. Decisions about renewing credentials will be made after due counsel and evaluation by the Board of Elders.

A position paper entitled "Guidelines for granting Credentials to Separated/Divorced Persons" has more specific and complete information on this topic and is available upon request from the FEC Office.

Homosexuality

There are seven explicit passages within the Word of God which refer to homosexual behavior. (Genesis 19:4-5; Leviticus 18:22-23; Leviticus 20:13; Judges 19:22-23; Romans 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-11) All of these scriptures clearly present such behavior as immoral and sinful. Beyond these seven references the whole of Scripture bears witness that God created human sexuality to be practiced only within the marriage relationship between a man and woman.

The Church must realize that, although God's Word clearly forbids homosexual practice, God offers to all persons not only cleansing and forgiveness but also healing and the power to change. The Good News of Jesus Christ is a gospel of forgiveness and new life, not a gospel of condemnation. This gospel of forgiveness and new life has been given by God to the *whole* world and we, as members of the body of Jesus Christ, are responsible to lovingly share this gospel with the *whole* world. We are to boldly confess that God has identified homosexual behavior as sin while at the same time selflessly demonstrate the love of God to those ensnared by this sin.

The New Testament (1 Timothy 3:1-7) lists qualifications for Christian ministers. Included among these is the instruction that a minister must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, and self-controlled. It is clear that anyone practicing homosexual behavior is living contrary to these qualifications and is therefore unqualified to hold credentials of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

A position paper entitled "Homosexuality" has more specific and complete information on this topic and is available upon request from the FEC Office.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

We believe that marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God as a permanent and totally intimate relationship between one man and one woman. It is intended to endure until it is broken by the death of one of its partners.

Scriptures reveal that God designed marriage to be between one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:31) For this reason our pastors should not officiate in same-sex marriages and same-sex marriage ceremonies should not be performed in local FEC church facilities or upon FEC church owned property

Due to the hardness of the human heart, divorce is a reality in our world. The Scriptures do give indication that in some cases divorce, though not encouraged, is legitimate. Only those persons who obtained a divorce which can be deemed biblically legitimate may enter into another marriage relationship, for example, desertion (1 Corinthians 7:15) and adultery (Matthew 19:9). Those obtaining a divorce for any other reason than one deemed biblically legitimate are not free to remarry until all sin has been dealt with and the former partner has died or remarried.

In dealing with this sensitive and important issue, church leadership must seek to apply biblical principles to each individual situation. The goal of all actions should be to honor God in both the process and the outcome of dealing with broken relationships in a fallen world.

A position paper entitled “Guideline Statement Pertaining to Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage” has more specific and complete information on this topic and is available upon request from the FEC Office.

The Role of Women in the Church

- A. Man and women are image bearers of equal value and significance.

Genesis 1:26, 27 clearly presents the fact that human kind, male and female, was made in the image and likeness of the Triune God. Though the circumstances of their creation differed, the male and female persons shared equally in that image. Not only are the male and female equal in personhood, but they also find equality in spiritual union with Christ. Indeed, all distinctions of race, rank, or sex are removed in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:27, 28)

- B. Man and women are sexually and physically different.

While this fact seems obvious to many, there are those who seek to obliterate its validity and/or ramifications. The result of recognizing and appreciating the differences between man and woman is fulfillment and understanding rather than competition and pride.

- C. Man and women are functionally distinct.

God has ordained a role or functional distinction between equals, man and woman, in the area of authority and leadership. Man is the designated head. The fact that final human authority belongs to a man does not imply male superiority. Equality and submission are compatible as demonstrated by Christ in His submission to the Father, though He was equal with the Father. Such designation of authority in role relationships is necessary for the harmonious functioning of home and church.

Scripture forthrightly speaks of the headship of the husband in the marriage relationships. (Ephesians 5:22,23 for example.) However, his headship does not apply to single women or to other married women. (Scripture does not teach the headship of every man over every woman.)

A position paper entitled “The Role of Women in the Church” has more specific and complete information on this topic and is available upon request from the FEC Office.

APPENDIX

Copy of the Present Charter

State of Illinois
Office of the Secretary of State

To All To Whom These Presents Shall Come, Greetings:

I, Jesse White, Secretary of State of the State of Illinois, do hereby certify that Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, Inc., a domestic corporation, incorporated under the laws of this state December 28, 1948, appears to have complied with all the provisions of the General not for profit corporation act of this state, and as of this date, is a domestic corporation in good standing in the State of Illinois.

In Testimony Whereof, I hereto set my hand and cause to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Illinois, this 26th day of August A.D. 2003.

Signed, Jesse White,
Secretary of State

Baptism Service

(See Articles of Faith. Article V, G, 1) At the time of the baptismal service, each person to be baptized shall be given opportunity to share a personal testimony. After the testimony, each one shall respond to the following questions:

1. Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?
2. Do you believe that you have forgiveness of all your sins through faith in Christ?
3. Do you commit yourself to a life of loving obedience under the Lordship of Christ?
4. Will you seek to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

QUALIFICATIONS AND DESCRIPTION FOR ELDER EMERITUS

Elder Emeritus is an honorary title that recognizes a man's lengthy experience as a Christian leader, a faithful pastor and a denominational elder.

Qualifications:

- (1) retired from the Board of Elders, having served a minimum of 15 years;
- (2) retired from active pastorate;
- (3) recommended and approved by the General Board.

He is not required or expected to be in attendance at the regular meetings of the board. He is not a voting member of that board. He is available to give counsel, to provide leadership in critical situations and to represent the President or the Board of Elders upon invitation.

This title, conferred by the General Board, is for life.

**BYLAWS OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES
MINISTERS ASSOCIATION**

ARTICLE I Name

The name of this organization shall be the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Ministers Association.

ARTICLE II Identity

This Association is a part of the denomination known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches. It is accountable to and operates under the policies designed by the denomination Board of Elders.

ARTICLE III Purpose

The purpose of this Association is to foster fellowship, offer consultation opportunities and provide reporting accountability for Fellowship of Evangelical Churches ministers. It will also provide a basis of relationship to the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches apart from local church membership when a minister is serving in a place or situation where it is not feasible to be an active member of a Fellowship of Evangelical Churches congregation and/or where it is beneficial or necessary to maintain some affiliation with a non-FEC congregation.

ARTICLE IV Officers

The officers of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Board of Elders shall serve as the officers of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches Ministers Association. The officers may assign any subject, duty or responsibility to a standing or special committee as is deemed necessary and practical. The Board of Elders shall serve as the executive committee of the Association.

ARTICLE V Membership

Qualifications

Members of this Association must be credentialed as ministers of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

Categories

Credentialed ministers who serve in FEC and related ministries.

Credentialed ministers who serve in non-FEC related or supported ministries.

Those who are members of a FEC congregation

Responsibilities

All members of this Association are responsible to maintain the spiritual standard of any member of FEC and of any staff member of the local church as outlined in the Manual of Faith, Practice and Organization of the FEC.

ARTICLE VI Meetings

The Association shall meet at each Convention of FEC for roll call of attendance, reporting, and for any other necessary business or beneficial purpose.

Other meetings shall be determined by the officers. These may include retreats, fellowships, special study projects, etc.

