



**FELLOWSHIP**  
OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

## Bylaws



## Article I - Name

This religious organization is known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, hereafter also referred to as FEC or the Fellowship.

## Article II - Purpose

- A. Our Mission: FEC exists to help its local churches obey the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) by establishing reproducing churches worldwide.
- B. We do so:
  - 1. believing Jesus is the Lord of his Church, and has chosen the Church to be the primary transforming instrument in the world.
  - 2. holding a shared adherence to an evangelical theology as expressed in our Articles of Faith & Practice.
  - 3. practicing biblical stewardship to the glory of God while engendering the confidence of our local churches as we partner together.
  - 4. leveraging partnerships with aligned organizations for the advancement of God's kingdom.
  - 5. acknowledging our Anabaptist heritage as documented in Church on a Mission: A Newcomers Guide to the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches by Stan Nussbaum.

## Article III - Membership

- A. Local Churches - FEC is composed of those churches which:
  - 1. adhere to the Articles of Faith and Practice and have declared their desire to affirm and abide by the Fellowship's Bylaws.
  - 2. have been assessed and recommended by the FEC Elder Board and General Board.
  - 3. have been affirmed by the Fellowship's delegate body.
  - 4. maintain governing documents in harmony with the FEC's Articles of Faith and Practice and Bylaws.
  - 5. have their pastoral staff credentialed by the FEC Elder Board prior to being hired, and, at the local church's discretion have other members of their ministry staff credentialed.
  - 6. contribute to the shared financial needs of the fellowship.

7. relate to each other as members of one fellowship with a shared vision, humble fidelity in core doctrine, collaborative ministry, and an appreciated history.
8. remain in the Fellowship until one of the following occurs:
  - a. Voluntary Withdrawal - Upon a majority vote of local membership, and subsequent written notice to the FEC President, General Board, and Elder Board; any church may withdraw from the Fellowship.
  - b. Removal Upon Cause - A local church may be removed from FEC affiliation based upon its willful and consistent failure to adhere to any of the expectations listed above. Disaffiliation results after careful review by the Elder Board and General Board, a majority vote by the two boards, and a written notice is provided to the local church's leadership team.

## B. Credentialed Personnel

The pastoral staff of the local churches will obtain and maintain credentials administered by the FEC Elder Board. This partnership between credentialed personnel and the Fellowship supports fidelity in core doctrine, mutual accountability, and the opportunity for ministry support.

### 1. Types of Credentials

- a. Service License - The service license is available to persons called to serve nationally or internationally in a supportive vocational role. It is an affirmation of service for those who do not desire or qualify for other credentials.
- b. Ministry License - The ministry license is available to persons called to the ministry of the gospel. It is the ministerial credential necessary for those not aspiring to or qualified for a lead pastor role. It is an affirmation of ministerial function as defined by the local church under the supervision of a lead pastor or ordained individual.
- c. Lead Pastor License - The lead pastor license is available to men called to the ministry of the gospel. It is the credential for those qualified for a lead pastor role, but have not yet met the requirements of ordination. It is an affirmation of all ministerial functions within the local church.
- d. Ordination - Ordination is granted to men who have held a lead pastor license and effectively served a minimum of three years within the Fellowship. It is an affirmation of proven faithfulness in pastoral ministry within the local church and the broader fellowship. It is required for service on the FEC Elder Board and does not require renewal.

### 2. Obtaining and Maintaining Credentials

- a. Expectation - Churches are led by credentialed pastors and ministry staff. When an applicant has become a candidate for hire by an FEC church, the church is expected to present individuals for credentialing.

- b. Qualifications - Candidates for all credentials must be in harmony with the doctrine and mission of the Fellowship. Candidates must be persons of prayer, the Scriptures, and growing Christlike character. Ministry licensed individuals must be called to specific ministerial roles by the local church or approved organization. In addition, a lead pastor license requires a man to have a formal biblical degree from an accredited institution or the equivalence of as determined by the Elder Board.
- c. Renewal & Status - Service, ministry, and lead pastor licenses are renewed annually and maintain an active status until further notice from the Elder Board or request by the credentialed individual. In disciplinary circumstances, licenses may be revoked by the Elder Board through written notice. In instances where a credentialed person is no longer serving within an FEC church, credentials are categorized as inactive. In either instance, elder approval is required to return credentials to active status.

### C. Church Delegates

- 1. Purpose - A body of delegates shall convene annually, whether physically or virtually, to conduct the business of the Fellowship. Delegates in attendance constitute a quorum and serve as the voting members of the meeting except for instances of a special called meeting.
- 2. Composition - The delegate body consists of:
  - a. current members of the General and Elder Boards
  - b. those holding active FEC credentials
  - c. the Executive Director and Board Chairman of affiliate ministries
  - d. and up to six additional appointed delegates from each FEC church
- 3. Delegate Action – A simple majority vote is required for action unless otherwise specified when presented.
- 4. Special Called Meetings - When more immediate action of the delegate body is required, a special called meeting is in order. At the behest of local church leaders, in conjunction with the affirmation of the General Board or Elder Board's affirmation, the General Board can initiate a special called meeting by a majority vote. Special called meetings require:
  - a. timely communication to the primary pastor and lay leader of each church stating the purpose for convening,
  - b. a quorum of at least one-third of the Fellowship's churches represented,
  - c. any action to be reviewed at the subsequent annual meeting.

## Article IV - Leadership

### A. General Board

1. Central Role - to function as the Fellowship's administrative overseers
2. Primary Responsibilities:
  - a. employment, remuneration, oversight, and support of the FEC President
  - b. faithful stewardship of the Fellowship's finances and properties (See Article V)
  - c. organizational fidelity in purpose, policies, and practice
  - d. designation, agenda, and facilitation of an orderly annual business meeting of delegates
3. Composition & Selection
  - a. The board is composed of:
    - i. a minimum of eight elected members
    - ii. an appointed representative of the Elder Board
    - iii. the President who is an ex-officio member
  - b. The General Board presents prospective members to the delegate body for election. Members serve three-year terms, for no more than two consecutive terms, followed by a one year sabbatical before being eligible to serve in an elected office again. The composition of the board should reflect the diversity (gender, race, geography, etc.) of the churches and their members.
  - c. Board members should evidence Christian maturity; be a member in good standing in an FEC church; and be an advocate of the Fellowship's mission, beliefs, and practices.
  - d. Upon cause, an elected member may be removed by a majority vote of the rest of the General Board.
4. Organization & Meetings
  - a. Officers - The board annually elects four officers – Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary – from its elected membership. These officers, along with an Elder Board representative constitute the Executive Team.
  - b. Meetings -
    - i. The General Board meets no less than quarterly and can meet more often at the call of the President, Board Chair, or three of its members.
    - ii. The Executive Team meets more routinely with the President to provide counsel, clarity, and concern in leadership matters.
      - a. The Executive Team annually:
        - i. provides job performance and constructive feedback to the President,

- ii. reviews staff compensation, and
- iii. recommends the President's salary to the General Board.
- b. In the event of transition, the Executive Team serves as the search committee to recommend a candidate for FEC President to the General Board for the delegate body's final affirmation.

## B. Elder Board

1. Central Role - to function as the Fellowship's spiritual overseers
2. Primary Responsibilities:
  - a. ensure the faithful interpretation and application of the Fellowship's Bylaws & Articles of Faith & Practice by the Fellowship, the local churches, and credentialed personnel.
  - b. review with discernment applications for credentialing; administer and maintain appropriate credentials for ministry within the Fellowship.
  - c. ensure and provide counsel, correction, and care to credentialed personnel and churches. This includes the responsibility to work with local church leadership in times of crisis and difficulty. If necessary, the Board may temporarily suspend a church's governing practices or leadership while partnering with the FEC Office to provide interim leadership during the recovery period.
3. Composition & Selection
  - a. The board consists of a minimum of five FEC ordained pastors, as well as the President who is an ex-officio member.
  - b. Upon the recommendation of the elders, the General Board presents prospective members to the delegate body for election. Members serve three-year terms, for no more than two consecutive terms, followed by a one year sabbatical before being eligible to serve in an elected office again.
  - c. Upon cause, an elected member may be removed by a majority vote of the rest of the Elder Board.
4. Organization & Meetings -
  - a. Officers - The board elects a Chairman and Secretary from its elected membership. The chairman or another appointee serves as an Elder Representative on the General Board and Executive Team.
  - b. Meetings - In addition to credentialing interviews, the Elder Board meets no less than semi-annually and can meet more often at the call of the President or Elder Board Chairman.

## C. President

1. Central Role - to function as the Fellowship's primary overseer
2. Primary Responsibilities:

- a. cultivate and implement shared vision
- b. ensure the effective service of the FEC Office to the Fellowship
- c. ensure the faithful representation of the Fellowship internally and externally
- d. ensure the shepherding care of FEC credentialed personnel

### 3. Selection

- a. The Executive Team provides a candidate for consideration to the Elder Board.
- b. The Elder Board reviews and endorses the candidate in matters of Christian character, doctrine, and Christlike leadership.
- c. The General Board reviews and approves the candidate, determines terms of employment, and presents him to the delegate body for affirmation.
- d. The delegate body elects a candidate by a two-thirds or greater majority of the votes cast.
- e. The President shall not serve for a period exceeding six years without re-election by the delegate body.
- f. Upon cause, the President may be removed by a majority vote of the General and Elder Boards.

### 4. Serving the Fellowship

- a. Under the authority of the General Board, the President is responsible to hire and oversee the staff necessary to effectively support the Fellowship's churches, mission, and function.

## D. Ministry Boards & Subgroups

- 1. Other ministry boards and subgroups may be established by the General Board, Elder Board, or President for specific tasks, seasons, or purposes.

## Article V - Financial Stewardship

### A. Accountability -

- 1. Expectation - The FEC staff will demonstrate excellence in financial management and stewardship, including internal transparency and external accountability.
- 2. Reviews and Audits - The accounts of FEC shall be reviewed or audited annually by a reputable accounting firm as directed by the General Board.

### B. Stewardship Practices -

- 1. Books of Account - Books of account shall be maintained and open for review by the General Board, or others authorized by the General Board.
- 2. Fiscal Year - The fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31.



3. Annual Budget - A faith-filled, fiscally responsible budget shall be prepared annually under the oversight of the General Board to be affirmed by the delegate body.
4. Contracts - In addition to the four General Board officers, the General Board may authorize FEC staff to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of FEC. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances and should be accompanied by written record.

## Article VI - Indemnification

Indemnification - Each member of an FEC board, committee, or commission, and each executive officer of any of such boards, departments, or divisions shall be indemnified by FEC against all expenses actually and necessarily incurred by such member or officer in connection with the defense of any action, suit, or proceedings to which he/she has been made a party by reason of his/her being or having been such member or officer except as to matters as to which such member or officer shall be adjudicated in such action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of duty.

## Article VII - Affiliate Ministries

- A. Definition - Affiliate ministries are parachurch ministries which serve the Fellowship by providing specific, cooperative ministries. Each affiliate ministry shall have its own constitution, bylaws, and board of directors.
- B. Relationship -
  1. To become an affiliate, the ministry must be assessed and recommended by the FEC Elder Board and General Board to the delegate body for final affirmation.
  2. As with local church membership, an affiliate ministry's governing documents, beliefs, and practices must be in harmony with the FEC. Failure to maintain such harmony, upon review of the Elder Board and General Board, may result in disaffiliation.
  3. The Executive Director of each affiliate must be approved by the FEC General Board; for this reason, it is recommended a representative of FEC be engaged in the search process. The Executive Director and their lead ministry staff members must be credentialed by the FEC Elder Board prior to being hired.
  4. As with our local churches, in the event of dissolution, it is requested that any remaining assets of the affiliate, after the payment of or provision for debts, shall be entrusted to FEC for further stewardship.

5. Each affiliate will be given opportunities to meet with the General Board and shall submit an annual report to the delegate body.

## Article VIII - Amendments & Dissolution

- A. Articles of Faith and Practice - Amendments to the Articles of Faith and Practice must:
  1. be proposed to the delegate body by the Elder Board with the majority support of the General Board,
  2. be provided in writing with a minimum of a four-month notice prior to the delegate meeting, and
  3. receive a three-fourths majority vote of the participating delegates. If passed, the changes are adopted immediately.
- B. Bylaws - Amendments to the Bylaws must:
  1. be proposed to the delegate body by the General Board with majority support of the Elder Board,
  2. be provided in writing with a minimum of a four-month notice prior to the delegate meeting, and,
  3. receive a two-thirds majority vote of the participating delegates.

If passed, the changes are to be implemented at the beginning of the next fiscal year, unless otherwise stated.
- C. Dissolution - The Fellowship may be dissolved by three-fourths vote of representative delegates of no less than 75% of the current number of churches. A purpose and plan for dissolution must be provided by the General Board. In the event of dissolution, any assets of the FEC remaining after the payment of or provision for debts shall be conveyed to such other organizations as are, in the judgment of the FEC that affects the dissolution, best suited to carry out the purpose and objectives of the FEC, provided, however, that any such successor organization, at the time of conveyance, must be exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of said Code, as amended, or under any successor federal law that may then be in effect.



**Fellowship of Evangelical Churches**

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