

# Constitution of



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# CONSTITUTION OF TRINITY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

## PREAMBLE

The local church is the visible organized expression of the Body of Christ. Therefore, the people of God are to live and serve in obedience to the Word of God and under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In order to assist us with these commissions the members of Trinity Evangelical Free Church adopt this constitution.

## ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this church shall be Trinity Evangelical Free Church. This church shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America as well as the Evangelical Fellowship of Free Churches; but it shall remain autonomous and, under God, its own highest authority.

## ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of this church shall be to bring glory and pleasure to God by making more growing disciples who celebrate Him together in worship (Worship), and are committed to obeying Jesus Christ (Discipleship), loving and serving each other (Fellowship and Ministry), and penetrating our spheres of influence with the gospel of Jesus Christ (Evangelism).

## ARTICLE III – ORDINANCES

- A. **Water Baptism** – Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ shall be baptized in accordance and obedience to the New Testamental teaching of water baptism.
- B. **The Lord's Supper** (Communion) shall be administered regularly

## ARTICLE IV – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

This church believes:

- A. **The Scriptures:** Both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired word of God without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and the divine and final authority for Christian faith and life. (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:19-21)
- B. **God:** In One God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (John 17:3; Matthew 28:19; II Cor. 13:13)
- C. **Jesus Christ:** Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven where, at the right hand of God Almighty, He is our high priest and advocate. (John 1:1; Heb. 1:3 & 8; I Cor. 15:3-4)
- D. **Holy Spirit:** That the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and, during this age, to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service. (John 14:17; John 16:7-14)
- E. **Human Condition:** That man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration and salvation can spiritual life be obtained. (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 5:12;

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Titus 3:3-7)

- F. The Work of Christ:** That the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit and thus become children of God. (Acts 4:12; Col. 1:20; Titus 3:5-7)
- G. The Church:** That the true church is composed of all such persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the body of Christ of which He is the head. (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18)
- H. Church Membership:** That only those who are thus members of the true church shall be eligible for membership in the local church. (Acts 2)
- I. Church Ordinances:** That water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the church during the present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as a means of salvation. (Rom. 6:3-5; Acts 8:36-39; I Cor. 11:23-25)
- J. Church Government:** That Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of the church and that every local church has the right under Christ to decide and govern its own affairs. (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18)
- K. Christ's Return:** In the personal, premillennial, imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and that this blessed hope has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer. (I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:16-18; Titus 2:13-14)
- L. Eternal Destiny:** In the bodily resurrection of the dead: of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the lord; of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting punishment. (I Cor. 15; John 5:28-29)
- M. Statement on Marriage:** That God created human beings male and female and the distinction between the two sexes are to be held sacred. We believe that God's design of marriage is solely between one man and one woman, as modeled by Adam and Eve in the beginning and reaffirmed by Jesus in the Gospels. (Gen 1:27; Gen 2:18-24; Matt 19:4-6)

We believe that the act of sex is a gift of God to be experienced solely within the marital relationship, and abstinence from sexual activity is required outside of marriage. (I Cor. 7:2, 9, I Thess. 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)

## **ARTICLE V – CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

- A. Authority of Jesus Christ:** This local church recognizes Jesus Christ as its sole Head. Ultimate authority lies in Christ as the Head of the church, and in the Scriptures as the basis for all faith and practice.
- B. Authority of the Believer:** The government of this church is vested in its membership and administered by its officers. In function, final authority shall reside in the membership. They shall approve and/or affirm qualified leadership to carry out Christ's purposes. Adult members (18 and over) shall have full membership privileges, including the right to vote at congregational meetings.

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## C. **Authority of the Church Board:** (*“Board” as used within the contents of this document refers to the Executive Board of the church*)

1. The Board members of this church shall consist of the Senior Pastor and the Elder(s)
2. The membership of this church delegates authority to the Board members elected by the membership for the ministry of this church
3. The Board shall coordinate and oversee all ministries of this church
4. The Board may appoint members of this church to fill vacancies until the following annual meeting
5. The Board shall elect a chairman from the members of the Board
6. The Board shall appoint a secretary to record the minutes at Board meetings
7. Board members shall be elected by a 2/3 affirmative vote of the members voting

## **ARTICLE VI – BOARD AND CHURCH OFFICERS**

Trinity Evangelical Free Church is a Congregationally-ruled, Elder-led, Staff-run, and Volunteer-driven church motivated by “Helping People Follow Jesus Christ”. The church may call paid full-time or part-time Ministry Staff as needed to further the ministry of the church. All Elders, Pastors, Staff and Officers must be people of true Christian character, sound in faith and in doctrine, and qualified to perform their responsibilities with competence.

### A. **Elders**

1. **Area of Responsibility:** In addition to functioning as the legal corporate Board of the church, the Elders serve as the spiritual leaders of the church
2. **Members of the Board:** The Board shall be a team consisting of godly men raised up from and by the congregation, including the Senior Pastor (vocational) and non-vocational Elders.
3. **Terms of Service:** Elders shall serve a term of three years with annual majority re-affirmation amongst the Board. The maximum term of office being six consecutive years, unless a request for extension is recommended by the Board to the membership, or they may be re-elected after a one year absence. The Senior Pastor is a member of the Board as long as he remains on Pastoral Staff.
4. **Nomination of Elders:** Nominations for Elders must be given to the Board at least one month before the annual meeting. Nominees can result from the membership as well as the Board itself. Nominees will be contacted regarding their qualifications and availability to serve on the Board. Ballots of the nominations shall be available to members at least two weeks before the annual meeting. There shall be no nominations made from the floor.
5. **Affirmation of Vote:** A 2/3 majority vote shall be necessary for affirmation as an Elder. The Board

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shall give guidance to the church between congregational business meetings.

6. **Qualifications of Elders:** All Elders must be men of true Christian character, active members, who submit to Christ as the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18) and who possess the qualifications for Elders given in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. The congregation is encouraged to submit names of potential Elders for consideration. The Elders shall submit annually a list of potential Elders to the congregation for affirmation.
7. **Accusations toward Elders:** Any possible accusations against an Elder of the church shall be handled in the same way as an accusation against a Pastor (see below).
8. **Job Description:** Being led by the Holy Spirit the Elders shall:
  - a. Shepherd the flock and give oversight to the spiritual welfare of the church (Hebrews 13:17), giving leadership to the spiritual tasks of the local body in the areas of worship, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, and discipleship (Matt. 22:37-40; Matt. 28:18-20); Elders must be devoted to prayer and ministry of the word (Acts 6:4)
  - b. Be available to minister to specific needs regarding the encouragement, teaching, and/or discipline of the church body (James 5:13-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-2)
  - c. Oversee the Senior Pastor
  - d. Direct and coordinate all activities involved in calling a new Senior Pastor
  - e. Work closely with the Senior Pastor and Pastoral Staff in overseeing the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12)
  - f. Work with the Senior Pastor if there arises a need for pulpit supply
  - g. Oversee the membership application process
  - h. Approve and oversee such ministry teams and personnel needed to efficiently carry out the purposes of this church
  - i. Oversee the ministry of all Deacons/Deaconesses
  - j. Engage and dismiss church Support Staff (clerical, janitorial, etc.)
  - k. Oversee the preparation of an annual budget
  - l. Communicate to the congregation and community the vision and direction the Lord gives

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## B. Pastors/Pastoral Staff

1. **Elder Qualified/Vocational Elder:** Everything concerning the function of Elders written above is also true of Pastors. In terms of office and role, the Bible makes no distinction between Pastor/Elder/Overseer (Acts 20:17-28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). However, we use the term “Pastor” to typically refer to “vocational Elders” who are compensated by the church so that their time can be uniquely dedicated to teaching, shepherding, and working to implement the direction and vision that the Board sets together as a team.
2. **Role of Pastors:** That said, there needs to be some distinction in the selection, responsibilities, and dismissal of the men we call “Pastors.” Pastors especially must be men of true Christian character, sound in faith and in doctrine, qualified to teach the Word of God, and meet the Biblical qualifications for Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-3; Titus 1:5-9). Pastors must be especially careful to:
  - a. Submit to Christ as Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18)
  - b. Shepherd the flock that God has given to them, voluntarily and gladly exercising oversight of the sheep, not lording it over the sheep, but being a godly example to them (1 Pet 5:1-4)
  - c. Be devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).

Individual job descriptions delineating specific roles and responsibilities for the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors will be approved by the Elders. The Senior Pastor shall be *ex officio* members of all boards and committees of the church.

3. **Membership:** Pastors and their wives shall automatically be considered Active Members upon acceptance of a call from the church. Membership shall be considered as indefinite, and their membership terminates upon the end of service.
4. **Selection and call of Pastoral Staff:** The Board shall select a pastoral search team, to be affirmed by the congregation. For a Senior Pastor, the search team will constitute representatives from the Board and three Active Members at-large. For Associate Pastors, the search team will be the Senior Pastor, representatives from the Board and at least one Active Member currently serving in the ministry area for which an Associate Pastor is being sought. The role of these teams is to screen a number of candidates and recommend the most appropriate pastoral candidate to the body. The EFCA West District and the Intermountain West District of the EFFC should be consulted to provide potential candidates that fit the criteria set by the search team. Only one candidate at a time will be presented to the congregation, with terms of call, for consideration. A 2/3 majority vote will be required to call a Pastor.
5. **Dismissal or Resignation of Pastoral Staff:** Any possible accusations against a Pastor shall be made to the Board and shall not be admitted until a full review is completed by the Board and

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unless supported by evidence of two or more sources (1 Timothy 5:19). Should it be proven that the pastor erred in doctrine or conduct, he shall be admonished in the spirit of love by the Board (Galatians 6:1). If this does not bring repentance and restoration, he shall be temporarily relieved of his pastoral duties and the matter shall be laid before the membership at a properly called congregational business meeting (1 Timothy 5:20). The Board may, at that meeting, recommend that the Pastor be dismissed permanently and/or immediately from his duties. Dismissal shall require a 2/3 majority of voting members present at the meeting. At any point during the above process, if the Board determines that the offense is such that it requires an immediate suspension of a Pastor pending further action by vote of the membership, the Board may act to do so.

If dismissal from employment is required for any reason, a notice must be given to the Pastor in writing by the Board thirty days in advance of the terminating date, unless modified by recommendation of the Board.

If a Pastor desires to resign for any reason, a notice shall be given in writing to the Elders at least thirty days prior to the effective date, unless modified by the Board.

### C. Ministry Staff

1. The need for a paid Ministry Staff position and a job description for any such position shall be presented by the Board at a congregational business meeting. If the congregation affirms the Board's recommendation, a search team including a Pastor, at least one Board member, and at least one Active Member at-large shall seek candidates to fill the position. Their recommendation of a candidate shall be considered by the Senior Pastor and then by the Board and, if approved, shall be presented to the congregation with terms of call for approval by a 2/3 majority vote.
2. Paid Ministry Staff shall automatically be considered Active Members upon acceptance of a call from the church. Dismissal and resignation of a paid Ministry Staff member shall be handled in the same way as the dismissal or resignation of a Pastor. Any possible accusations against a paid Ministry Staff person shall be handled in the same way as an accusation against a Pastor.

### D. Other Officers

The officers shall cooperate with and report to the Board, and be affirmed or appointed annually by the Board. The officers of this church shall consist of Deacon, Deaconess, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

#### 1. Deacons and Deaconesses

- a. **Qualifications:** Deacons and Deaconesses serve the church through practical service as they administer specific tasks of ministry designated by the Board. They must be men and women of true Christian character who submit to Christ as the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18) and who possess the qualifications for Deacons and Deaconesses given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

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- b. **Areas of Responsibility:** The Deacons and Deaconesses are to perform duties delegated to them by the Board (Acts 6:1-6) and should support the ministry and leadership of the Pastors/Elders. These duties may include (but are not limited to):
  - 1. Ministries of mercy in the church and out in the community
  - 2. Overseeing the care and maintenance of church property
  - 3. Assisting in the logistical operations of church ministries and services
- c. **Authority:** Deacons and/or the Deaconesses do not constitute a formal “Board” but may meet whenever it is necessary to plan or organize for effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of their ministries.
- d. **Selection:** The Board shall determine the number of Deacons and Deaconesses based on the needs of the church and the number of qualified and available men and women. Only Active Members shall be considered for these positions. The Board will appoint the men and women to be Deacons and Deaconesses.
- e. **Terms of Service:** Reaffirmation of Deacons and Deaconesses shall be considered annually by the Board, as long as they remain biblically qualified and desire to remain serving in this capacity.

## 2. Treasurer

- a. The Treasurer shall pay all the church bills, keep an accurate record of accounts, and keep the church informed about the finances of the church
- b. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Board annually

## 3. Financial Secretary

- a. The Financial Secretary shall deposit the weekly offerings in the church bank account, keep a record of the income of the church and furnish written statements of contributions to those who have given financially to this church
- b. The Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Board annually

## ARTICLE VII – MEMBERSHIP

### A. Membership Process

This church shall receive as members those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and who give evidence by their confession and conduct that they have been born again by the Spirit of God and who are in agreement with the following:

- 1. Candidates for church membership will meet with the Board to discuss:



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- a. the doctrinal statement of this church,
  - b. the expectations of membership, and
  - c. the contents of this constitution
2. Candidates for church membership shall give testimony to their faith in Jesus Christ before members of the Board or others appointed by the Board
  3. The candidates shall be approved as members by the membership at a congregational meeting with at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members present voting in favor of membership
  4. Accepted members agree to hold harmless other church members from damages arising out of the exercise of this constitution

## **B. Expectations of Church Members**

2. To build up the church by using the talents and gifts that God has given them. (I Cor. 12; Eph. 4; Rom. 12)
3. To regularly attend the services and congregational business meetings of the church. (Heb. 10:25)
4. To support the church financially according to Biblical guidelines. (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:6-15)
5. To be a positive witness for Christ in the community by both word and deed. (Matt. 5:13-16; Acts 1:8)
6. To support and submit to the leadership of the church. (Heb. 13:17)
7. To promote the unity and growth of the church. (Eph. 4:1-3; Phil. 2:1-4; Col. 3:12-17)

## **C. Dismissal of Members**

### 1. Forms of Dismissal

Membership in the church may be terminated or suspended in the following manners:

- a. Voluntary. Any member may withdraw from membership in the church by submitting a written request to the Board that his or her name be removed from the list of members. Such withdrawal shall be effective as of the date of receipt of such request. Any member may accept a temporary suspension of his or her membership in the church, as recommended by the Board.
- b. Involuntary. Any member may be dropped or suspended from membership in the church without his or her consent, for good cause based on the Scriptures and/or the Constitution or Bylaws of the church, as determined by the Board and upon a vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members present in a congregational meeting. A motion to involuntarily terminate or suspend the membership of any member may be made only by the Board. Involuntary termination or suspension shall be effective immediately upon conclusion of such supporting vote.

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- c. By Review. The Board shall provide for at least an annual updating of the membership records of the church to keep them current. Any member who fails to attend at least one (1) worship service or other function of the church during any consecutive three (3) month period, for any reason other than missionary work, military deployment, or prolonged illness, may be dropped from membership in the church by majority vote of the Board.

### 2. Church Discipline

Members of this church who err in doctrine or conduct shall be subject to disciplinary action. The restoration of the erring members shall be the single purpose, and love the sole motivation in these actions. (Matt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5; II Thess. 3:14-15; I Tim. 5:19-21; and Gal. 6:1) All members of the church are expected to conduct their lives according to the standards set forth in Scripture. Where any member is found to be living in clear and willful disobedience of Scripture or teaching contrary to Scripture, the procedures set forth in Matthew 18:15-17 shall be followed for the purpose of leading the erring individual to repentance and, ultimately, to full restoration. This shall be done in a spirit of prayerfulness, loving honesty (Eph. 4:25), humility, and gentleness (Gal. 6:1).

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1). Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Board, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18.

Before such dismissal, however, (1) it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individual in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then (2) the warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but this time accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then (3) it shall be brought to the attention of the Board (or a duly appointed committee of the Board). If the Board (or a duly appointed committee of the Board) unanimously determines, after thorough investigation in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture (Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Timothy 5:19, Titus 3:10), that:

- a. there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin,
- b. he/she has been appropriately confronted, and
- c. that he/she has refused to repent,

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then the Board shall inform the congregation at a congregational meeting in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a subsequent congregational meeting. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then (4) he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the fellowship and/or membership of the church at the congregational meeting. The members of the congregation will treat the unrepentant individual, who has been dismissed, as one who needs to hear the gospel message and come to repentance. If after being dismissed, the erring individual heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement before the Board, then he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of fellowship and/or membership. The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation at the third or fourth stages of church discipline. Members who are under discipline by the church, as defined in this section, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church. This restriction prevents erring members from avoiding God's commandments regarding church discipline. Resignations from membership are possible only by members who are in good standing and who are not under any disciplinary action.

## **ARTICLE VIII – ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. Meetings and Quorum**

1. The annual congregational business meeting should be held within 15 days after the end of the previous fiscal year. The church fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31.
2. One-Third of the voting members of this church shall constitute a quorum at any congregational meeting and no business can be transacted without a quorum
3. A majority vote of the quorum is sufficient to conduct business
4. Absentee balloting is permitted
5. Congregational business meetings may be called by the Board as deemed necessary. All efforts will be made to publicize for two weeks prior to said meeting, unless special circumstances dictate otherwise.

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## ARTICLE IX – DISSOLUTION OF CHURCH

If this church ceases to function and the organization is dissolved as a Corporation, the Board shall cause the assets herein to be sold. All liabilities shall be cured prior to the release of any cash assets. The cash shall then be distributed according to Exhibit A, defined by the Board, and shall be reviewed and approved by the congregation during each Annual Business Meeting.

**EXHIBIT A: Dissolution of Church Assets** *(see attachment)*

## ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

### **A. Proposal**

1. Amendments to this constitution must be submitted to the Board in writing at least one month prior to a congregational meeting
2. Amendments to this constitution must be made public two weeks in advance of a congregational meeting

**B. Adoption:** Amendments may be adopted by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members voting and take effect immediately

## ARTICLE XI – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

### **A. Position Papers**

1. **Definition:** The Board may release Position Papers defining the practices and beliefs of Trinity Evangelical Free Church. Position Papers are meant to be a guide to help Christians understand important issues in light of the Scriptures and the policy of Trinity Evangelical Free Church as it relates to these issues.
2. **Adoption and Revision:** Position Papers must be unanimously approved by the Board prior to issue
3. **Revision:** Position Papers may be revised at any time. Revisions must be unanimously approved by the Board prior to reissue