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WEST SHORE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH Constitution and Bylaws

Presented for adoption
November 19, 1975

Amended

September 8, 1976
September 14, 1977
June 11, 1980
June 29, 1983
April 4, 1984
July 8, 1992
June 19, 1994
May 14, 2003
February 8, 2009
June 12, 2016
June 11, 2017
June 19, 2019

June 19, 2019 Amendment: Incorporates EFCA Statement of Faith modification dated June 19, 2019



CONSTITUTION OF ~~THE~~ WEST SHORE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

PREAMBLE

We, the members of this congregation of the Evangelical Free Church of America, do hereby commit and voluntarily submit ourselves to the following articles.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church shall be "~~The~~ West Shore Evangelical Free Church."

ARTICLE II - STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Statement of Faith of West Shore Evangelical Free Church is the current Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). Any future changes to the Statement of Faith as duly adopted by the EFCA will automatically be adopted by West Shore Evangelical Free Church without further action on the part of the congregation. The current version was adopted by the EFCA on June 19, 2019.

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus— Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

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

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

Final Authority for Matters of Belief and Conduct

The foregoing Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of West Shore Evangelical Free Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Board of Elders is our final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

ARTICLE III - PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation is to: 1) provide fellowship for the worship of God and the edification and encouragement of the believers in the unity of love and faith; 2) pursue a strong, evangelistic effort in order to bring others, both at home and abroad, to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; and 3) provide training in the Scriptures for the fulfillment of every believer's responsibility to do his/her part of the work of the ministry of reconciliation.

ARTICLE IV - AFFILIATION

The congregation is affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America, Incorporated for the purpose of pursuing mutual objectives with the said Evangelical Free Church of America. This affiliation in no way affects the complete autonomy of this congregation.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

This church shall receive into its membership only individuals who give testimony of having accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who being thus born again give evidence in life of true faith in God and manifest the fruits of Christian experience in the conduct of Christian life and faith in accordance with Article II.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

The officers of this corporation shall be: president (chairman of the Board of Elders), vice president, treasurer, and secretary, as elected by the Board of Elders from among the lay elders from time to time.

ARTICLE VII - PROPERTY

1. This corporation shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as is deemed necessary for the business of the corporation, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed or otherwise. All such property shall be held in the name of the corporation. The Board of Elders shall have the power to receive, purchase, sell, lease, convey, mortgage, deed or otherwise transfer property of the corporation; provided, however, that the prior approval of the members at a duly convened congregational meeting shall be required for any transaction or series of transactions involving (i) the purchase, lease, sale or other disposition of fixed assets valued in excess of **five percent5%** of the annual budget, (ii) any new agreement, loan or other obligation that would obligate the corporation to expend or borrow in excess of **five percent5%** of the annual budget, or (iii) any increase in the principal amount of any existing loan or other obligation in excess of **five percent5%** of the annual budget. Announcements of the proposed matter requiring approval shall be provided at least two weeks before the meeting. All contracts, notes, mortgages, conveyances, assignments, leases, releases, and other papers and documents on behalf of the corporation shall be executed by the president, secretary and treasurer or as otherwise may be designated by the Board of Elders.

2. In **the** event of a division **of the membership**, those persons who differ with the Statement of Faith in Article II or any other provisions of this Constitution shall **withdraw be removed** from membership **by the Board of Elders**. They shall have no right or claim to the property or assets of this corporation.

3. In the event that the members vote to dissolve the church corporation, distribution of all assets and property of the corporation shall be made in accordance with Article III, last paragraph, of this organization's Articles of Incorporation. Preference shall be given to the following organizations, in the sequence shown, if they qualify under the then existing laws and are in agreement with Article II of this Constitution at that time (organizational addresses may be revised upon notification of change or relocation):
 - a. The Eastern District Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America,
Mailing: PO Box 3547, Camp Hill, PA 17011-3547
(IRS # 41-0721672N)
 - b. The Evangelical Free Church of America,
Mailing: E. 78th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55420-1300
(IRS # 41-0721672N)
 - c. Another religious organization meeting the above criteria.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any meeting of the congregation by a **three-fourths (3/4)** majority of votes cast, provided said proposed amendments have been presented in writing and discussed at a **congregational general** business meeting **of the congregation** at least three **(3)** months prior to the time of the meeting. Article II of this Constitution can only be amended, substituted or its content changed by a **nine-tenths (9/10)** majority of votes cast.



BYLAWS OF ~~THE~~ WEST SHORE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

Article I - Membership

- A. The following procedure shall govern the application and acceptance into membership:
1. ~~Applicants~~ Those interested in membership shall receive instruction on church doctrine and practice to be taught by qualified members acceptable to the Board of Elders. Members agree to support and abide by the doctrinal statement of the church.
 2. Application shall be made to the Board of Elders. ~~The Applicants~~ must be at least 16 years of age. The application shall include a Membership Covenant stating the expectations for every member. ~~The applicant~~ Members shall indicate by signing the Membership Covenant that they will support and abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of West Shore Evangelical Free Church WSEFC. Their signature further indicates that they will submit to the discipline of this church body as it seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. The Board of Elders shall arrange a meeting with the applicants who shall give an oral testimony of conversion and personal faith, whereupon one or more elders shall have the liberty of questioning the applicant(s) relative to doctrine and Christian experience. The Board of Elders shall vote in the absence of the applicant(s) whether to recommend the applicant for recommendation to the congregation. Upon the Board of Elders' approval, a written list of membership applicants shall be provided to the congregation at least one two weeks before the names are presented for congregational approval.
 4. Should a church member object to an applicant for membership, said member shall state the reason to an elder who shall report it to the Board of Elders, who shall investigate the objection, and if appropriate, the applicant will be reconsidered by the Board of Elders.
 5. The applicants' names shall be presented at a congregational business meeting for a vote of acceptance. The accepted applicant(s) shall be publicly received into membership during a at the same congregational meeting.
- B. In accordance with the membership covenant, it is the expected duty of every member to loyally and faithfully attend the services of the church and seek to faithfully fulfill his/her reasonable Christian obligations in the community in order that Article III of the Constitution may be realized. Each member, according to his/her ability, shall support the congregation in its ministry through prayer, service and financial contributions.
- C. If a member wishes to unite with another congregation, he/she may, upon written request, receive a letter of recommendation from this church. This letter of recommendation shall be given upon request to any member who leaves the church in good standing.

D. All members of the ministerial staff (as defined in Article VI, section F) and their spouses shall become members of this congregation upon assuming their positions, and shall be released from membership upon ceasing to be active members. The congregational vote on the Senior Pastor and any other Ministerial Staff member who also serves as an ex officio member of the Board of Elders shall convey membership to both employee and spouse, along with eldership and role to the employee. Other pastors and all other Ministerial Staff as well as their spouses will pursue membership through the Membership Process as soon as feasible.

E. Members may dissolve their membership relationship with the church by written request. However, the dissolution of membership of a member under active church discipline shall not be effective until that process is complete the membership of a member under church discipline cannot be withdrawn until the disciplinary process is complete.

Members who absent themselves from the church services and support the congregation's program discontinue faithful engagement in the life of the church and fail to adhere to the expectations of the Membership Covenant may be classified inactive by the Board of Elders. Should this inactive status continue for one year, after inquiry the Board of Elders shall have the prerogative to remove such members from the church membership list. After careful due process and consideration of the individual circumstances, the Board of Elders may remove the membership of a member who has discontinued faithful engagement in the life of the church and has failed to adhere to the Membership Covenant.

Article II - Confidentiality

A. The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect. It also discourages harmful gossip, invites confession, and encourages people to seek counseling. In particular, Pastors and all other Ministerial Staff pastors and elders shall carefully protect all information they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the guidelines outlined in Article II, B-D, following guidelines.

B. Although confidentiality is to be duly respected, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when the Pastors and all other Ministerial Staff pastors and elders of this church believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

1. When a Pastor or other Ministerial Staff person or elder is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular issue and needs to seek advice from other Pastors or other Ministerial Staff pastors or elders in this church or, if the person attends another church, from the pastors of that church;
2. When the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene;
3. When a member refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to institute disciplinary proceedings or seek the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church;



4. If, during the disciplinary process or while a censure is still in effect, a member under church discipline leaves the church to attend another, the Board of Elders may inform the other church's leadership that the person is currently under church discipline and may ask ~~the other church's pastor~~ to encourage the member to repent and submit to the discipline; or

5. When required by law.

C. The ~~Pastors and all other Ministerial Staff~~ and elders may, but need not, provide counsel with written notice of these confidentiality provisions; however, these provisions shall be in effect regardless of whether such notice is given.

D. This article does not apply to the professional counselors who serve in the counseling ~~referral~~ ministry of ~~West Shore Evangelical Free Church~~ and who operate under the ethical and legal mandates for their profession.

Article III - Conflict Resolution

A. The church is committed to resolving in a Biblical manner all conflicts that may arise in our congregation. This commitment is based on God's command that Christians should strive earnestly to live at peace with one another (Mt. 5:9; John 17:20-23; Rom. 12:18; Eph. 4:1-3) and that when conflicts arise, Christians should resolve them according to the principles set forth in Scripture (Prov. 19:11; Mt. 5:23-25, 18:15-22; I Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1). We believe these commands and principles are required of all Christians and essential for the well-being and work of the church.

B. If a conflict arises between a member and the church, or between a group of members and the church, and cannot be resolved through the internal procedures described above, it shall be resolved through Christian conciliation which may include ~~individual counseling and mediation and ultimately arbitration.~~

Article IV - Discipline

A. Should a ~~Pastor or other Ministerial Staff~~ or any member by a sinful and ungodly life, or by heresy, bring dishonor upon, or be an offense to, Christ and the church, that person may be subject to church discipline ~~and their membership may be terminated by the Board of Elders.~~ Whatever disciplinary action is being taken may be communicated by the Board of Elders publicly within the church to the community of believers with which the ~~former member under discipline~~ was connected. However, he/she shall first be dealt with in a loving and Christian spirit according to Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1-2; Titus 3:10-11 and I Timothy 5:19-22, so that he/she may be restored to the will of God.

B. A member under ~~active~~ church discipline ~~or whose membership was so terminated because of a sinful life~~ may be restored to full membership ~~or readmitted~~ upon approval of the Board of Elders, when satisfactory evidence is presented to the Board of Elders that he/she has genuinely repented and is living in fellowship with God.

C. If a member under church discipline leaves the church during the disciplinary process or while a censure is still in effect, and if the Board of Elders learns that the member is attending another church, the Board may inform the other church's leadership that the person is currently under church discipline and may ask the other church to encourage that person to repent and to submit to the discipline.

~~D. Members who absent themselves from the church services and fail to support the congregation's program may be classified inactive by the Board of Elders. Should this inactive status continue for one year, after inquiry the Board of Elders shall have the prerogative to remove such members from the church membership list. The dissolution of membership of a member under active church discipline shall not be effective until that process is complete. The membership of a member under active church discipline cannot be dissolved until that process is complete.~~

Article V - Leaders: Their Qualifications

A. The senior pastor must be a man who has experienced the saving grace of God and is of established and irreproachable Christian character. He must have the ability to proclaim and expound the Word of God and execute the duties of a pastor in every way.

B. All corporate officers, elders and Ministerial Staff of the church shall be members of the congregation with established good character and reputation as indicated by I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.

C. All church employees play a critical role in advancing the church's mission, principles and beliefs. Accordingly, all employees shall agree to affirm and adhere to the church's Statement of Faith, Constitution and Bylaws.

Article VI - Leaders: Board of Elders

A. The Board of Elders will consist of no less than six and no more than fifteen men total, with a minimum ratio of two lay elders for each staff elder. Lay elders will be elected at the annual congregational business meeting for a three-year term and will be eligible for election to one subsequent three-year term. The term of an elder is limited to six consecutive years. The elder must then take a minimum of one year off before becoming eligible to serve again. ~~Approximately one-third of the terms will expire each year.~~

B. The senior pastor will be an ex officio member of the Board of Elders. The senior pastor and lay elders will be responsible for selecting any Ministerial Staff who may also serve as ex officio members of the Board of Elders. As all elders are ultimately responsible to the congregation, the senior pastor and any other Ministerial Staff member who serves as an ex officio member of the Board of Elders must be confirmed by a three-fourths affirmative vote at a congregational meeting. ~~The congregational vote on the Senior Pastor and any other Ministerial Staff member who also serves as an ex officio member of the Board of Elders shall convey membership to both employee and spouse, along with eldership and role to the employee.~~

C. A nominating team committee of two current elders and at least three other spiritually mature, active members of the congregation shall be elected by the congregation at least three months prior to the

annual congregational business meeting. The Board of Elders shall present a recommended slate of nominees for the nominating team committee to the congregation at least two weeks prior to a congregational meeting. A vacancy on the nominating team committee may be filled by the Board of Elders.

D. It is required that all nominations for the Board of Elders be selected from among spiritually mature, active members by a nominating committee team. The nominating committee team for the Board of Elders will present all names of prospective elders to the current Board of Elders for their review and comments prior to approaching prospective elders regarding their willingness to serve. The Board of Elders shall present a list of all elder nominees candidates to the congregation not less than two weeks prior to the annual congregational business meeting.

E. Should a vacancy on the Board of Elders occur at any time prior to the expiration of the departing elder's term of office, the Board of Elders may appoint or may recommend to the congregation for election a qualified individual to fill the vacated position for the remainder of the term, should it deem such action appropriate. The individual so appointed or elected is then eligible to be elected by the congregation to fill one subsequent complete term, but must then take a minimum of one year off before becoming eligible to serve again.

F. The Board of Elders is responsible to oversee all spiritual and physical operations of the church. Corporate officers of the church will be chosen by the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders may appoint such subordinate boards and teams committees as it deems appropriate.

G. The Board of Elders serves as the ultimate search team committee for all Ministerial Staff (i.e., those designated by the Board of Elders to serve on the ministerial staff team); and hires all Ministerial Staff who are not ex officio elders. Ministerial Staff may shall only be relieved of their duties by the Board of Elders. All other paid employees may be hired and dismissed with the authorization under the authority of the Board of Elders. All Ministerial Staff terminations are subject to review at the employee's request. The review shall be conducted by the superintendent of the Eastern District Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America and may lead to a mediated reconsideration of the decision. All other paid employees may be hired and dismissed with the authorization under the authority of the Board of Elders.

H. It is the duty of the Board of Elders to provide servant leadership to the church in line with Mark 10:42-45. It is the duty of the congregation to recognize as Elders those who have the spiritual qualifications of I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, and to serve with the Board of Elders as part of the Body of Christ, each individual in the congregation using his/her gifts to help others to grow to spiritual maturity.

Article VII - Congregational Business Meetings

A. Congregational Church business meetings shall be held annually and at such other times as determined by section C below. Voting shall be limited to members of the congregation.

B. A quorum consisting of ten percent of the active membership shall be necessary to conduct any business meeting. A two-thirds majority of votes cast shall be required for passage of any motion unless provided otherwise in these Bylaws.

- C. Special congregational **business** meetings may be called:
- a. **1.** By the chairman of the Board of Elders; or
 - b. **2.** When ten percent of the active membership so requests and submits a signed petition to the Board of Elders; or
 - c. **3.** Upon request of a majority of the Board of Elders.
- D. All congregational **business** meetings shall be **generally** conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.
- E. The election of members of the Board of Elders and vote on the annual general fund budget shall take place at the annual **congregational business** meeting to be held in June. Newly elected elders shall assume office July 1.
- F. For all congregational business meetings, notice shall be provided through **written** church communication at least two weeks before such meetings. Where appropriate, informational materials relating to the agenda will be provided prior to the meeting.

Article VIII - Marriage

West Shore Evangelical Free Church ~~This church~~ believes that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God, and is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. (See Constitution, Article II, Section 2.) Accordingly, the church affirms the following convictions regarding marriage:

A. God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man and a woman, which is intended to be representative of Christ and His church (Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:23-24, Ephesians 5:22-33, Revelation 19:6-9), emotional (Genesis 2:20-23, Ephesians 5:22-33), physical (Genesis 1:28, I Corinthians 6:13), permanent, and exclusive (Mark 10:6-9). Therefore, the church only recognizes and facilitates marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. In addition, the church and its staff will not officiate marriages between a biological man and a biological woman who:

- 1.** Profess Christian faith, and either **of them** have been divorced without Biblical grounds for remarriage as determined by **the** Board of Elders. (Mark 10:2-12, Matthew 19:1-9, Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, I Peter 5:15, I Timothy 5:17); **or**
- 2.** Are of opposing convictions regarding Christian faith (i.e., a professing believer and an unbeliever). (II Corinthians 6:14-15); **or**
- 3.** Profess Christian faith, and are not currently committed to sexual purity, regardless of past practice. (Hebrews 13:4)

B. In accordance with the Bible, the Board of Elders will serve as the final determining authority regarding the qualification of all candidates for marriage within the church (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, I Peter 5:1-5, I Timothy 5:17).



Article IX - Amendments

Amendments to these Bylaws can only be made at a congregational business meeting. The proposed Bylaws must have been properly presented at a previous congregational meeting and recorded in the minutes thereof at least twenty-one days before the vote to adopt. A three-fourths majority of votes cast is necessary to amend the Bylaws.