

CONSTITUTION OF GALVESTON BIBLE CHURCH

an EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

PURPOSE

To the glory of God, Galveston Bible Church exists to make disciples for Jesus Christ. We are committed to this purpose beginning in our city and to the ends of the earth.

It is our desire to: *Seek Jesus Christ for the Good of Our City.*

In the strength God provides we will carry out:

Christ-Centered Community

Prepare followers to model Jesus where they live, work, and play

- Teach and preach Scripture in a clear and relevant manner that applies to life
- Develop and sustain relationships that challenge us to grow in grace and stimulate love toward one another
- Create and sustain active small groups that will provide deep community for believers and a safe place for people to encounter Jesus for the first time

Christ-Centered Worship

Create reverent worship to impact lives in vital and relevant ways

- Make our place of worship inviting and accessible to people of all ages
- Regularly express the gospel in our services in clear and easy to understand terms that exalt the work of Jesus Christ
- Choose the best theologically sound and musically appealing hymns and songs blended with a variety of styles appropriate to express praise and adoration of God
- Pray constantly and fervently for our church family, our city, our nation and the world

Christ Centered Service

Love our island with its varied people with our actions

- Move outside the walls of the church, both physically and relationally, to develop an awareness of the needs of our community and how we can meet them
- Seek to meet the real needs of Galveston families, children and students & internationals from the UTMB, TAMUG, & GC campuses
- Seek justice for those who are least able to seek it for themselves
- Partner with other ministries and missionaries both here and around the world

Christ Centered Witness

Seek those Jesus came to save

- Follow our Savior's example and go to the Spiritually lost and needy and meet them where they are

- Foster a spirit of humility that meets the Spiritually lost in their sin and points them to Christ
- Speak the Gospel as the Spirit leads us at every opportunity

ARTICLE I - INCORPORATION

The name of this church shall be Galveston Bible Church, an Evangelical Free Church, of the City of Galveston, State of Texas, a Texas corporation having its principal place of worship at 424 19th St., Galveston, Texas, hereinafter referred to as the church.

This corporation is a non-profit Christian organization established for the purposes as set forth in the purpose hereof. The term for which this corporation is to exist is perpetual. In the event of dissolution of said corporation, all assets, revenues, proceeds, and funds from whatever source, must be distributed to organizations within the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) as designated by the Elders Board in the Church Policy Statement.

ARTICLE II - DOCTRINE

This church shall function as an autonomous, evangelical church committed to the historic Christian truths recorded in God's inerrant revelation--the Holy Scriptures. All elders, ministerial staff and regular teachers must agree with the 10 Points of the EFCA Statement of Faith.

EFCA Statement of Faith *Adopted by the Conference on June 26, 2008*

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 Christlike 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 premillennial 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.

ARTICLE III - GOVERNMENT

Section 1 - Authority and Responsibility

The ultimate authority for the operation of this church resides in the head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. For purposes of carrying out our Lord's will in the life of this church, the church as a body shall recognize the Senior Pastor as the primary leader of the church elders and together the Senior Pastor and the elders shall have the responsibility for, and the direction of, all of the ministries of the church, including the pulpit ministry, the finances, and the facilities of the church. The operating procedures for the church and the Elders Board are contained in this constitution and a "Church Policy Statement" developed by the Elders.

Section 2 - Congregation

Responsibility: The congregation shall be prayerfully involved in the decision making process, in a manner outlined further in this constitution with regard to the following issues:

- selection and review of all elders
- selection of deacons;
- selection of new paid ministerial staff, removal of paid ministerial staff;
- discipline of members;
- purchase of property and new building programs
- the annual budget

Membership

Types of Membership: all believers in Christ are recognized as members of His body with us. However for the purpose of local church government, two types of congregational members are defined.

- Regular membership - this is available to individuals 18 years or older who are willing to commit themselves to this church and its ministry. It includes the privilege of voting in congregational meetings and the holding of church office.
- Associate membership - this is available to individuals who are committed to the Church and its ministry under any of the following circumstances:
 - less than 18 years of age
 - unable to attend on a regular basis for a valid reason
 - those desiring to retain their regular membership in another church.

Associate members shall be extended the same privilege and benefits as regular members except they shall be unable to vote in congregational meetings or to hold the office of elders or deacon.

Procedure for Joining the Membership: The elders shall be responsible for and shall establish ongoing procedure for interviewing and approving all prospective members. This procedure shall include an opportunity for any members of the church to express to the elders as a whole or to an individual elder any comments he may have as to the prospective member's qualification.

Qualifications for Membership:

- Statement of faith in Christ
- Baptism
- Willingness to submit to the elders of this church
- Complete agreement with the 10 points of the EFC Statement of Faith
- No fundamental disagreement with the EFCA Statement of Faith and a willingness not to propagate doctrine contrary to it
- Not involved in any unrepentant sin that would disgrace the name of Christ and discredit the testimony of this church

Removal from Membership:

- The elders shall be responsible for the semi-annual review of the membership rolls.
- Members may be removed from the roll of the Church for any of the following reasons:
 - Joining another church
 - Death
 - Requesting that their names be dropped from the roll
 - Absence from the worship services of the church for one year or longer without valid reasons
 - Failure to maintain qualifications for membership
 - Discipline

Discipline of members shall be administered only in cases where clear scriptural grounds are apparent. The procedure for church discipline shall be established by the elders and be included in the Church Policy Statement. The procedure shall follow the biblical principles for church discipline in Matthew 18 and I Cor. 5. Discipline shall require a 75% vote of the Elders Board except when a member of the elders or a member of his immediate family is being considered, in which case a unanimous vote of all remaining Elders is required. If the person being disciplined requests a hearing before the congregation, a simple majority vote of a quorum of the regular members in a properly called meeting is required for discipline.

Congregational Meetings

- The congregation shall meet at least two times annually in a business session.
- Congregational meetings may be called by the Chairman of the elders, a majority of the elders, or 5% of the regular membership (but not less than 10 members).

- The time and purpose for all congregational meetings must be announced to the congregation in one regular, weekly, church-wide meetings over at least a six-day period preceding said meetings to allow for prayerful consideration of any decisions.
- The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, or in the absence of both, an elders shall preside.
- A quorum for congregational meetings shall be 10% of the voting membership but not less than 20 members. In the event a quorum is not present, the meeting shall be rescheduled for a date not less than one week later, and shall be announced in a Sunday worship service. At the rescheduled meeting, those present shall constitute a quorum.
- All meetings are open to any who regularly attend Galveston Bible Church services. However, only members may participate in discussions and voting during the portion of congregational meetings pertaining to fundamental church issues.
- Unless otherwise stated in this constitution, a simple majority vote shall be sufficient to pass any item of business before the congregation. Provision shall be made for absentee balloting. As much as is possible, unanimity shall be sought on all issues.

Section 3 - Leadership

Church Officers: The officers of the Church shall consist of elders and other officers, such as deacons and staff ministers, as the elders shall determine to be necessary for the effective operation of the ministry.

Elders Qualifications and Tenure: The Church shall recognize as elders (through the selection process indicated in this Section) all active, male members of the Church who qualify according to Titus 1 and I Timothy 3, who are in agreement with the EFCA Statement of Faith, and who demonstrate shepherding and ruling qualities as described in Titus and Timothy. These men shall continue to be regarded as elders unless and until they cease to be qualified or to function as elders; or voluntarily place themselves or are placed on inactive status by 75% of the active Elders. The Church shall select elders for active status, who shall serve for three-year, staggered terms, and who shall be responsible for the oversight of all of the Church's ministries. At the end of the three year term, an elder is considered inactive and may continue as an inactive elder, accept he is not a voting member of the Elders Board. A special vote by 75% of the active Elders, may elect to continue the elder on active status for another three years.

Selection of Elders

- Annually, the elders and other members of the congregation shall be given the opportunity to recommend to the Elders Board any persons that they consider qualified, to become elders.

- The congregation shall pray that God will provide qualified men for consideration as elders.
 - Men of the congregation shall be accountable for filling these positions by preparing themselves to serve as elders.
- A committee of two or more Elders Board members, designated by the Chairman, shall personally meet with the recommended person(s) and, if married, his wife to review the biblical qualifications and responsibilities of an elders. The Elders Board, with all other active elders, at a properly called meeting will prayerfully consider whether to recommend the man to the congregation. A three quarters vote by all the active elders is required before a recommendation can be made to the congregation.
 - The candidate(s) will be presented to the congregation for consideration at least one week prior to the "good report" ballot (see below).
 - The congregation shall prayerfully consider the qualification of the candidate(s).
 - Any concerns about the candidate(s) qualifications shall be discussed directly with the candidate(s) or voiced to an elder during the consideration period.
 - In a congregational meeting, the regular members shall be given the opportunity to indicate by a written, "good report" ballot its approval or disapproval of the prospective elders.
 - The "good report" ballot shall include a text of the biblical passages addressing the responsibilities and qualifications for elders and a place to indicate the following: (1) Qualified, (2) Unqualified (indicating the reason), (3) No Opinion. Only signed ballots will be considered.
 - Any person considered unqualified by 8 or more of those filling out ballots (with reasons stated) shall be asked to meet with the Elders Board to prayerfully evaluate the congregational balloting. A three quarters vote of the Elders Board will be required for approval of the individual as an elder. If 50% or more of the regular members consider him unqualified, he shall be asked to prayerfully deal with the area or areas of weakness and await consideration for eldership at a later time.
 - The detailed results of the "good-report" ballots need not be publicized, but shall be available to any member who wishes to see them.
 - Soon after approval, the new elder (s) shall be publicly identified with the existing elders by the laying on of hands in a regular worship service (Acts 6:6, 8:18, 18:3).

Elders Review and Elders Removal

- Bi-annually, in a congregational meeting to be held no later than the last Sunday in March, all of the elders, including ministerial staff that has been recognized as elders shall be presented to the congregation, and the regular members shall express their evaluation of each elders by a "good report" ballot. If 50% of the regular members

balloting give an unsatisfactory report, the elders shall be removed from office. Any elders who receives an unsatisfactory report, with reasons stated, from 10% (but not less than 8) of the voting members shall be asked to meet with the Elders Board, to prayerfully consider the reports. A maximum of one month shall be extended by the Board upon request of the elders in order to allow for resolution of the problems. Those members casting unsatisfactory ballots shall be invited to attend the next regularly scheduled Board meeting to discuss the reported problems. If the problems still exist they may request a meeting of all elders with those casting unsatisfactory ballots. A vote shall be taken and a 33% no confidence vote of a quorum of the elders shall be considered grounds for removing the elders from office. An elder will not be allowed to vote in his own case but will be allowed ample defense before the elders.

- An elder may be removed from his eldership during the year by either church discipline or a 75% vote of the other elders. In the case of the discipline of an elder, he shall not have a vote in his own case, but shall be allowed ample defense before the elders. Any complaint against an elder must be brought by at least two or more members of the congregation (I Timothy 5:19).

The Elders Board

- The Elders Board shall consist of all active elders of this Church who shall serve for three-year staggered terms on the Board.
- A Chairman of the Elders Board shall be selected by a majority of the elders to be the leader for a 3 year term.
- A Board member may not succeed himself, unless no other qualified elders are available to serve, or 3/4 of the elders ask the elder to continue in Active status.
- As elders are available there shall be no less than three elders or more than five elders comprising the Elders Board.
- The number constituting the Board may be changed within the limitations noted above by recommendation of the Board and approval by 3/4 of the elders.
- All regular Elders Board meetings are open to all inactive elders, ministerial staff, and congregation, but without voting privileges.
- The senior pastor shall be a member of the Elders Board

Responsibilities of Leaders

The Elders

Normal Responsibilities – Elders will facilitate and actively participate in the Purpose of the Church as stated in the opening section of this document. In addition to leadership and shepherding roles, elders shall be responsible, but not limited to the following actions:

- Selection of paid ministerial staff
- Removal of paid ministerial staff
- Discipline of members
- Purchase of property
- New building programs
- Ordaining new elders

- Any matter requested by the Elders Board.

Time and Place of Meetings - The time and place of elders meetings, shall be set by the Chairman of the elders as provided herein.

The Elders Board

General Responsibilities - The Elders Board serving under Christ's authority and leadership shall have the authoritative oversight of personnel, the content and function of all church ministries, and the facilities and finances of the Church. The Elders Board shall also serve as the Church's legal trustees. The appointment of all other boards, committees, and officers shall be the responsibility of the Elders Board. A simple majority of the voting membership of the Elders Board at a properly called meeting of the Board is required for passage of any item of business, except as provided elsewhere in this constitution. There shall be an attempt to obtain consensus of all major issues, and ample time for prayer (and possibly fasting) shall be provided prior to major decisions.

Church Policy Statement - The Elders Board shall produce and periodically review a "Church Policy Statement" covering major areas of church government and ministry including the following:

- Staff positions
- Ministry committees
- Deacon positions and committees
- Other non-elders leadership positions
- Procedures for church discipline
- Procedures for selecting paid staff
- Financial policies and procedures
- Missionary-support policy
- Procedures for accepting new members

Such policy statement must be in conformity with all other provisions contained within this constitution.

Board officers - The Elders Board shall bi-annually select its own officers

Communication with the Congregation and other Elders

- The Elders Board shall, no less frequently than semi-annually, make a written report to the Congregation of all major actions taken.
- The Treasurer shall make regular reports to the Elders Board as required by the Board, and at least semi-annually, report to the Congregation.
- Minutes of all Elders Board meetings shall be made available to the congregation.

Section 4: Church Staff

Positions: The Elders Board shall determine what staff positions the Church should have. Only the senior pastor shall be allowed to serve on the Elders Board. Other paid staff members may attend all Elders meeting and offer recommendations, but are not allowed to vote.

Procedure for Calling a Minister

- All Elders shall be invited to participate in the selection of all new members of the ministerial staff.
- A 75% approval by all elders present shall be required before a recommendation may be brought to the Congregation.
- At least an 80% approval of the votes cast by the regular members in a properly called congregational meeting shall be sufficient to authorize the Elders Board to proceed with the call of the candidate. The Elders Board shall consider comments or objections raised before proceeding with the call.
- The exact procedure for finding God's man shall be determined by the Elders Board.

Procedure for Dismissing a Minister

- All active and inactive elders shall be invited to consider the dismissal of a minister.
- The minister shall be given clear Scriptural grounds for dismissal, relative to his moral and spiritual qualifications and/or his quality of ministry to the church
- A 75% vote of the Elders Board shall be sufficient to remove a man from his office. A majority vote shall require congregational consideration.
- A simple majority of those voting in a properly called congregation meeting shall make the elders' resolution for dismissal final.

Section 5 - Deacons

- Recognition: The Elders Board may recognize on an annual basis, or as deemed appropriate, any member who has been faithful in service and who otherwise meets the qualifications of I Timothy 3, as a deacon or deaconess. The congregation may recommend individuals to the Elders Board. A two thirds approval of the Elders Board is required, after which the individual will be recognized before the congregation as a faithful servant of the church.

- Responsibilities: The deacons shall meet periodically for prayer and coordination of activities. They shall be available to the Elders Board as a resource for the planning and carrying out of ministries and assessing and meeting needs within the church.
- Review: The deacons shall be reviewed in June of every two years and each individual shall require a two thirds approval of the Elders Board to remain or be newly recognized as a deacon. A special recognition service may then be held as deemed appropriate by the Elders Board.

Section 6 - Treasurer and Finances

The Elders Board shall select a church treasurer, whose responsibilities shall be to supervise the collections, deposits and disbursal of all funds. Adequate care shall be taken by the Elders Board to guarantee the propriety of all financial activities including periodic audits or review of the financial record. At any time the Treasurer may be required to present the financial records to the Elders Board. The Senior Pastor will not be allowed to vote on his own salary or the salary of any ministerial member.

Section 7 - Maintaining Unity

The Church as a whole and the elders in particular are to follow the Scriptural patterns for developing healthy unity in balance with sound, biblical convictions through the development of servant attitudes (Phil. 2:1-9). Should major division in the church develop, any two elders or any 20% of the regular membership may request of the District Board of the Evangelical Free Church or the elders of any other church of like doctrine and practice (that is agreeable to a majority of the regular members), to counsel, arbitrate, and if necessary, function with apostolic authority to resolve the problems and restore unity of the church.

ARTICLE IV

This constitution may be revised or amended by a two thirds vote of the Elders Board and a 75% vote of qualified voting members in attendance at a properly called congregational meeting.