

# **CONSTITUTION OF GALVESTON BIBLE CHURCH**

## **an EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH**

### **PURPOSE**

**T**o the glory of God, Galveston Bible Church was established and exists to carry out the God-ordained responsibilities of the local church in a well-balanced ministry of:

1. Worship and prayer--to provide for meaningful, purposeful worship and prayer, and to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion;
2. Teaching--to stand for the historic, fundamental, Christian truths and to equip the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ; with the goal of attaining unity, knowledge of the Son of God, and the maturity that is measured by the fullness of Christ;
3. Fellowship--to provide the means of developing meaningful relationships that provide opportunities for the expression of each believer's spiritual gifts in caring for and loving one another, warning, teaching, stimulating, and encouraging to healthy spiritual lives;
4. Outreach--to participate in evangelism, both in the local community and around the world, and to encourage and train God's people to have an effective influence and loving ministry in the society in which they find themselves.

### **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 Administrative Board in the Church Policy Statement.

### **ARTICLE II - DOCTRINE**

#### **Section 1 - The Importance of 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 12 Points of the EFCA Statement of Faith (following this paragraph) and the Doctrinal Statement (attached to and considered a part of this constitution).

## **Section 2 - 12 Points of the Evangelical Free Church's Statement of Faith**

1. We believe the Scripture, 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 all Christian faith and life.

2. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Ghost 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 the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Advocate.

4. We believe 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, and indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service.

5. We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.

6. We believe 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.

7. We believe 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 means of salvation.

8. We believe 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.

9. We believe that only those who are thus members of the true Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church.

10. We believe 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.

11. We believe in the personal and premillennial and 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.

12. We believe 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 conscious punishment.

### **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 have the responsibility to recognize all qualified men in the church as elders, and to recognize certain elders as an Administrative Board. The Administrative Board 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 Board are contained in this constitution and a "Church Policy Statement" developed by the Administrative Board.

## **Section 2 - Congregation**

A. 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:

1. selection and review of all elders and Administrative Board members;
2. selection of deacons;
3. selection of new paid ministerial staff, removal of paid ministerial staff;
4. discipline of members;
5. purchase of property and new building programs; and
6. the annual budget.

### **B. Membership**

1. 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.

a. 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.

b. Associate membership - this is available to individuals who are committed to the Church and its ministry under any of the following circumstances:

- 1.) less than 18 years of age
- 2.) unable to attend on a regular basis for a valid reason
- 3.) 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 elder or deacon.

2. Procedure for Joining the Membership: The Administrative Board 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 Board as a whole or to an individual Board member any comments he may have as to the prospective member's qualification.

3. Qualifications for Membership:

- a. Statement of faith in Christ
- b. Baptism
- c. Willingness to submit to the elders of this church
- d. Complete agreement with the 12 points of the EFC Statement of Faith
- e. No fundamental disagreement with the doctrinal statement and a willingness not to propagate doctrine contrary to it
- f. Not involved in any unrepentant sin that would disgrace the name of Christ and discredit the testimony of this church

4. Removal from Membership:

- a. The Administrative Board shall be responsible for the annual review of the membership rolls.
- b. Members may be removed from the roll of the Church for any of the following reasons:
  - 1.) Joining another church
  - 2.) Death
  - 3.) Requesting that their names be dropped from the roll
  - 4.) Absence from the worship services of the church for six months or longer without valid reasons
  - 5.) Failure to maintain qualifications for membership
  - 6.) Discipline.

5. 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 Administrative Board 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 unanimous vote of the Administrative Board except when a member of the Administrative Board or a member of his immediate family is being considered, in which case a unanimous vote of all remaining members of the Board 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.

C. Congregational meetings

- 1. The congregation shall meet at least three times annually in a business session.
- 2. Congregational meetings may be called by the Chairman of the Administrative Board, a majority of the elders, or 5% of the regular membership (but not less than 10 members).
- 3. The time and purpose for all congregational meetings must be announced to the congregation in two regular, weekly, church-wide meetings over at least a thirteen-day period preceding said meetings to allow for prayerful consideration of any decisions.
- 4. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, or in the absence of both, a voting member of the Administrative Board shall preside.
- 5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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**

A. Church Officers: The officers of the Church shall consist of elders and other officers, such as deacons and staff ministers, as the elders who are serving on the Administrative Board shall determine to be necessary for the effective operation of the ministry.

B. Elder Qualifications and Tenure: The Church shall recognize as elders (through the selection process indicated in Section 3, C, of this Article) all active, male members of the Church who qualify according to Titus 1 and I Timothy 3, who are in agreement with the Doctrinal Statement, and who demonstrate shepherding and ruling qualities as described in Titus and Timothy. These men shall continue to be regarded as elders whether or not they are serving on the Administrative Board, unless and until they cease to be qualified or to function as elders. The Church shall select from these elders an Administrative Board who shall serve for three-year, staggered terms, and who shall be responsible for the oversight of all of the Church's ministries.

#### **C. Selection of Elders**

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

a. The congregation shall pray that God will provide qualified men for consideration as elders.

b. Men of the congregation shall be accountable for filling these positions by preparing themselves to serve as elders.

2. A committee of two or more Administrative 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 elder. The Administrative Board, with all other elders, at a properly called meeting will prayerfully consider whether to recommend the man to the congregation. Unanimous approval by all voting members of the Administrative Board is required before a recommendation can be made to the congregation.

3. The candidate(s) will be presented to the congregation for consideration at least two weeks prior to the "good report" ballot (see 3. below).

a. The congregation shall prayerfully consider the qualification of the candidate(s).

b. Any concerns about the candidate(s) qualifications shall be discussed directly with the candidate(s) or voiced to an elder during the consideration period.

4. In a congregational meeting to be held no later than the last Sunday in March, the regular members shall be given the opportunity to indicate by a written, "good report" ballot its approval or disapproval of the prospective elder.

5. 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.

6. Any person considered unqualified by 8 or more of those filling out ballots (with reasons stated) shall be asked to meet with the Administrative Board and pastor to prayerfully evaluate the congregational balloting. A unanimous vote of the Administrative 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.

7. The detailed results of the "good-report" ballots need not be publicized, but shall be available to any member who wishes to see them.

8. 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).

#### D. Elder Review and Elder Removal

1. Annually, in a congregational meeting to be held no later than the last Sunday in March, all of the elders, including ministerial staff, that have been recognized by the Administrative Board to be elders, shall be presented to the congregation, and the regular members shall express their evaluation of each elder by a "good report" ballot. If 50% of the regular members balloting give an unsatisfactory report, the elder shall be removed from office. Any elder 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 Administrative Board, and the pastor, to prayerfully consider the reports. A maximum of one month shall be extended by the Board upon request of the elder 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 elder from office. An elder will not be allowed to vote in his own case but will be allowed ample defense before the elders.

2. An elder may be removed from his eldership during the year by either church discipline or a unanimous 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).

## E. The Administrative Board

### 1. Number and tenure:--

a. The Administrative Board shall consist of recognized elders of this Church who shall serve for three-year staggered terms on the Board.

b. A Board member may not succeed himself, unless no other qualified elders are available to serve.

c. As elders are available there shall be no less than five nor more than ten elders comprising the Administrative Board.

d. The number constituting the Board may be changed within the limitations noted above by recommendation of the Board and approval by all the elders.

e. All regular Administrative Board meetings are open to all other elders, ministerial staff, and congregation, but without voting privileges.

f. The senior pastor shall be a permanent non-voting member of the Administrative Board.

### 2. Selection of Administrative Board members:

a. The Church shall select from the elders an Administrative Board who shall serve for three-year, staggered terms, and who shall be responsible for the oversight of all of the Church's ministries.

b. Administrative Board balloting meeting – In an annual meeting to be held not later than the last Sunday in October, the voting members of the congregation shall indicate by ballot one choice for each position available on the Administrative Board. Only signed ballots will be accepted. At least two Sundays prior to the Administrative Board balloting meeting, the Chairman for the Administrative Board shall distribute to the congregation for prayerful consideration, a list of all elders not currently serving on the Board and are willing to do so. Following the vote, the elder/elders with the most votes shall assume the available Administrative Board position(s). In the case of a tie or if no candidate receives greater than 30% of the vote, the Administrative Board shall designate the new board member.

c. Administrative Board Replacements - In the event that a position on the Board is vacated, the Board shall select another elder to fill the unexpired term.

## F. Responsibilities of Leaders

### 1. The Elders

a. 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 outside the Board, elders not serving on the Administrative Board shall be included in decisions and action in the following areas, in which two-thirds majority vote of those in attendance shall be binding on the Administrative Board:

- 1.) Selection of paid ministerial staff
- 2.) Removal of paid ministerial staff
- 3.) Discipline of members
- 4.) Purchase of property
- 5.) New building programs
- 6.) Ordaining new elders
- 7.) Any matter requested by the Administrative Board.

b. Special Called Meeting - 25% of all the elders can require that a meeting of all the elders be called to consider and make decisions on any specific issue. Two-thirds majority vote of those in attendance shall be binding on the Administrative Board.

c. Time and Place of Meetings - The time and place of elder meetings, shall be set by the Administrative Board as provided herein.

## 2. The Administrative Board

a. General Responsibilities - The Administrative 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 Administrative 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 Administrative Board. A simple majority of the voting membership of the Administrative 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 unanimity of all major issues, and ample time for prayer (and possibly fasting) shall be provided prior to major decisions.

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

- 1.) Staff positions
- 2.) Ministry committees
- 3.) Deacon positions and committees
- 4.) Other non-elder leadership positions
- 5.) Procedures for church discipline
- 6.) Procedures for selecting paid staff
- 7.) Financial policies and procedures
- 8.) Missionary-support policy
- 9.) Procedures for accepting new members

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

c. Board officers - The Administrative Board shall annually select its own officers

## G. Communication with the Congregation and other Elders

1. The Administrative Board shall, no less frequently than quarterly, make a written report to the Congregation of all major actions taken.

2. The Treasurer shall make regular reports to the Administrative Board as required by the Board, and at least quarterly, report to the Congregation.

3. Minutes of all Administrative Board meetings shall be distributed regularly to all elders and shall be made available to the congregation.

## Section 4: Church Staff

A. Positions: The Administrative Board shall determine what staff positions the Church should have. Any member of the church staff, may also be recognized as an elder according to the

procedure set out in Section 3, C, but shall not be allowed to serve on the Administrative Board, except the senior pastor.

#### B. Procedure for Calling a Minister

1. All elders shall be invited to participate in the selection of all new members of the ministerial staff.

2. A 90% approval by all elders who cast their votes and a unanimous approval by the available members of the Administrative Board shall be required before a recommendation may be brought to the Congregation.

3. 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 Administrative Board to proceed with the call of the candidate. The Administrative Board shall consider comments or objections raised before proceeding with the call.

4. The exact procedure for finding God's man shall be determined by the Administrative Board.

#### C. Procedure for Dismissing a Minister

1. All elders shall be invited to consider the dismissal of a minister.

2. 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.

3. A unanimous vote of all elders present in a properly called elders' meeting shall be sufficient to remove a man from his office. A majority vote shall require congregational consideration.

4. A simple majority of those voting in a properly called congregation meeting shall make the elders' resolution for dismissal final.

### **Section 5 - Deacons**

A. Recognition: The Administrative 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 Administrative Board. A 75% approval of the Administrative Board is required, after which the individual will be recognized before the congregation as a faithful servant of the church.

B. Responsibilities: The deacons shall meet periodically for prayer and coordination of activities. They shall be available to the Administrative Board as a resource for the planning and carrying out of ministries and assessing and meeting needs within the church.

C. Review: The deacons shall be reviewed in June of each year and each individual shall require a 75% approval of the Administrative Board to remain or be newly recognized as a deacon. A special recognition service may then be held as deemed appropriate by the Administrative Board.

### **Section 6 - Treasurer and Finances**

The Administrative Board shall select a church treasurer, whose responsibilities shall be to supervise the collections, deposits and disbursement of all funds. Adequate care shall be taken by the Administrative 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 Administrative Board.

### **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 unanimous vote of the Administrative Board and an 80% vote of qualified voting members, attending a properly called congregational meeting.