

# CONSTITUTION OF THE BETHEL EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

## PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Bethel Evangelical Free Church, in order to carry out more efficiently the commission given by Jesus Christ to His Church, do ordain and establish the following constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

### ARTICLE I: NAME AND AFFILIATION

The name of this organization shall be “The Bethel Evangelical Free Church of Fairmont, Minnesota, of Martin County” hereinafter referred to as the Church or, in Article II and Article III of the Constitution, this organization.

### ARTICLE II: THE PURPOSE

The purpose of this organization shall be to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every way prescribed or approved by the Holy Scriptures, to engage in such religious, educational, charitable and benevolent work as the Constitution and By-Laws of this organization may determine, and to own and maintain such buildings and equipment as may be required to carry out the above stated purpose.

### ARTICLE III: CONFESSION OF FAITH

The confession of faith of this organization shall be the same as that of the North Central District Association and the Evangelical Free Church of America, which reads as follows:

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

*The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:*

#### *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 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 IV: MEMBERSHIP**

Any person 16 years of age or older who confesses faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has personally received Him as his or her own Savior, whose conduct is in accord with his confession, who subscribes to the above Confession of Faith, and who is willing to support the Church with faithful attendance, prayer, and material means, shall be eligible to become a member of the Church. Voting rights shall be reserved for active members as set forth in the Bylaws of the Church.

## **ARTICLE V: OFFICERS**

The officers of the Church shall be the Church Chairman and the Church Vice-Chairman and shall be elected by the Elders from the Elder Board. The Senior Pastor shall be a voting member of the Elder Board and shall be eligible to be an officer of the Church. The procedure for the election of Elders is set forth in the Bylaws of the Church. The Elder Board or voting members of the Church as appointed by the Elder Board shall fulfill the role of the Board of Trustees as designated in Article VII, Section A of the Constitution.

## **ARTICLE VI: MEETINGS**

Worship Services and other services shall be conducted at such times as determined by the Church.

There shall be two regularly scheduled meetings of the membership: an Annual Meeting in December and a Semi-Annual Meeting in June of each year. Special meetings of the membership shall be convened as necessary in accordance with the Bylaws of the Church.

Elder Board meetings shall be convened in accordance with the Bylaws of the Church.

## **ARTICLE VII: PROPERTY**

### **SECTION A:**

This Church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is deemed necessary for the business of the Church, 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 Church. The Board of Trustees shall have the power to receive, purchase, acquire, sell, lease, convey, mortgage, deed, or otherwise transfer property of the Church, but only after having been duly authorized by the Church at a regular or special called business meeting. All contracts, notes, mortgages, conveyances, assignments, leases, releases and other documents and papers in behalf of the Church shall be executed by the Board of Trustees

### **SECTION B:**

In Case of divisions of the Church (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us) the property of the Church shall belong to those who abide by this Constitution.

### **SECTION C:**

In case of dissolution of the Church organization the property shall be assigned to the North Central District Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America. The Church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by organization, or when the Church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain.

## **ARTICLE VIII: AUTHORITY AND AFFILIATION**

### **SECTION A:**

The Church shall be the legislative and governing body of the Church. Legislative and governing actions shall emanate from the Annual, Semi-Annual and Special Business meetings of the Church as set forth in Article IX of the Constitution and the Bylaws of the Church.

### **SECTION B:**

The Church shall be affiliated with the North Central District Association and the Evangelical Free Church of America. With the consent of the Church, said affiliations shall include sending delegates to conferences, supporting Home and Foreign Missions, and uniting in mutual efforts for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ.

## **ARTICLE IX: CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

The Church shall decide upon the calling of the pastoral staff, the admission of applicants for membership, the purchase or sale of church real property, the election of Elders, the establishment of fiscal budgets, and such other matters as it shall determine. The Church shall function in accordance with the Bylaws of the Church as approved by the active members. The Bylaws shall further define the Church government and delegation of responsibilities for fulfilling the purpose of the Church as stated in Article II of the Constitution.

## **ARTICLE X: CHURCH FISCAL YEAR**

The Church fiscal year shall begin January 1 of each year, and end on December 31 of the same year.

## **ARTICLE XI: CHURCH ELECTORAL YEAR**

The Church electoral year shall begin immediately after the Annual Meeting each year and continue through the end of the next Annual Meeting for all positions elected by the Church.

## **ARTICLE XII: AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS**

### **SECTION A:**

This Constitution except as stated in Section B of this Article, may be changed and altered by the Church when deemed necessary. Such changes must be submitted to the members in writing and adopted as preliminary step at a regular business meeting of the church as least six months prior to the annual meeting. At the succeeding annual meeting the changes may be fully adopted and completed, but only by a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting.

**SECTION B:**

Articles II, III, VII, and XII are irrevocable and unalterable. Their contents can never be changed.

**ARTICLE XIII: INTERPRETATION**

**SECTION A:**

Whereas the formers of the Constitution could not have foreseen the governance, language, and cultural changes that would face the Church;

Whereas the intent of Article II of the Constitution is to perpetuate the fulfillment of the purpose of the Church;

Whereas the intent of Article III of the Constitution is to match the Confession of Faith of the Church with that of the North Central District Association and the Evangelical Free Church of America;

Whereas the intent of Article VII of the Constitution is to provide the Church the ability to manage the properties of the Church, to clarify disposition of the property in the event of a division of the Church, and to codify the disposition of the property in the event of the dissolution of the Church;

Whereas the intent of Article XII of the Constitution is to provide a mechanism to amend the Constitution and to prevent alteration to the intent of Articles II, III, VII, and XII;

Be it resolved that the words “irrevocable” and “unalterable” as used in Article XII, Section B of the Constitution be interpreted to mean “irrevocable in intent” and “unalterable in intent” thus allowing the specified Articles to be amended as necessary to adjust for changes in governance, language, and culture.

**SECTION B:**

Whereas the formers of the Bylaws could not have foreseen the governance, language, and cultural changes that would face the Church;

Whereas the intent of Article IX of the Bylaws is to provide the Church the ability to manage the properties of the Church, to clarify disposition of the property in the event of a division of the Church, and to codify the disposition of the property in the event of the dissolution of the Church;

Whereas the intent of Article X of the Bylaws is to preserve a Congregational form of government within the Church and to preserve the affiliation of the Church with the North Central District Association and its parent organization, the Evangelical Free Church of America and its branches;

Whereas the intent of Article XI of the Bylaws is to provide a mechanism to amend the Bylaws and to prevent alteration to the intent of Articles IX, X, and XI;

Be it resolved that the words “irrevocable” and “unalterable” as used in Article XI, Section B of the Bylaws be interpreted to mean “irrevocable in intent” and “unalterable in intent” thus allowing the specified Articles to be amended as necessary to adjust for changes in governance, language, and culture.