

**VENTURE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF THE PASS  
CONSTITUTION**

*PREAMBLE*

We, the members of Venture Evangelical Free Church of the Pass, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

*ARTICLE I*  
**NAME**

The name of this organization, a non-profit corporation, shall be Venture Evangelical Free Church of the Pass, also known as Venture Church.

*ARTICLE II*  
**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

**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 III* **PURPOSE**

We are a community of Christ-followers whose mission it is to love God and others, grow as disciples of Christ and share the gospel.

### *ARTICLE IV* **AFFILIATION**

This church shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America and with its EFCA West District. This church shall remain its own highest authority under the headship of Jesus Christ.

### *ARTICLE V* **GOVERNMENT**

This church shall be governed by a group of godly men called elders. Ultimate authority in this church shall reside in the members of the congregation in the sense that they shall approve elders. Once this approval is given, the authority of the congregation will be considered delegated to the elders except for major items such as changing the Constitution, approving the annual budget, the hiring of the Senior Pastor and the assumption of indebtedness in excess of ten percent of the annual budget.

### *ARTICLE VI* **OFFICERS**

The officers of this church shall be the pastor(s) and elders, and other officers as deemed necessary by the local church. The elders shall derive their authority to act as elders in church matters solely from the decisions of the Board of Elders or from authority expressly delegated by the board. No elder or officer of the Board of Elders shall have authority to act on his own in church matters apart from this delegated authority.

*ARTICLE VII*  
**MEMBERSHIP**

When people accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, they become members of Christ's universal spiritual body, the Church (I Corinthians 1:9). However, God does not intend for believers to grow in isolation but to identify with a local body of believers. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..."(Hebrews 10:25). We view this identification not as mere formality, but as a partnership relationship involving a commitment to: (1) the purpose of the church (see Article III); (2) the people of the church; (3) the ministries of the church.

*ARTICLE VIII*  
**FINANCES**

Necessary finances for conducting this church -- its local and worldwide ministry -- shall be obtained through voluntary offerings. Additional projects, pledges and free will offerings may be taken as deemed advisable by the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall submit a budget to the congregation for approval at least once a year.

*ARTICLE IX*  
**PROPERTY RIGHTS**

This church shall have power to buy, own, sell, mortgage and hypothecate real and personal property in its own name. If a division occurs in this church, the name and all the property shall be retained by those adhering to this constitution. If this church ceases to function, and its organization is dissolved, the property shall automatically become the property of the EFCA West District of the Evangelical Free Church.

*ARTICLE X*  
**AMENDMENTS**

Proposed amendments to this constitution must involve the following procedure:

- A. The amendment must be submitted to the Board of Elders in writing for its discussion, signed by fifteen voting members of the congregation, and then submitted in written form to the members of the congregation two weeks prior to a congregational meeting. A two-thirds majority vote of the votes cast at the congregational meeting is necessary to pass the amendment.
- B. The Board of Elders shall periodically review this constitution and recommend amendment(s) to the congregation in written form two weeks prior to a congregational meeting. A two-thirds majority vote of the votes cast at the congregational meeting is necessary to pass any amendment.

## BY-LAWS

### I. OFFICERS

#### SECTION 1: ELDERS

##### A. Qualifications

The elders shall be mature, godly males who manifest the qualifications stipulated by the Scriptures (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus: 5-9; I Peter 5:1-5). All elders shall be members of Venture Church and shall accept, without reservation, the church's statement of faith.

##### B. Selection

The Holy Spirit selects men for leadership. His choices are expressed through human agency. The following process will be used:

1. Selection will be made primarily on the basis of spiritual qualification with secondary regard for functional matters.
2. As often as needed, but at least yearly prior to the annual meeting, the Board of Elders will ask the members of the congregation for suggestions of men who, in their estimation, meet the qualifications of an elder.
3. The Board of Elders will then prayerfully evaluate and screen the suggestions according to the qualifications of an elder.
4. If a proposed elder is married, the evaluation and screening process shall include a statement of support and affirmation from his wife.
5. The Board of Elders will prayerfully select from these men those who meet the qualifications of an elder.
6. The Board of Elders will then submit its selections to the congregation for approval at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting. Any member having reservations regarding a nominee must submit a signed letter expressing these reservations in writing to the Board at least one week before the congregational meeting to permit review of these concerns prior to the meeting.
7. Each elder will be individually approved on a written ballot by three-fourths majority vote of the voting members present.

##### C. Term of Service

An elder shall remain in office for a term of three years. After two consecutive terms an elder must be off the Board for at least one year before being eligible to serve another term.

1. Any elder may resign his office by submitting a letter of resignation to the Board of Elders. The resignation must be accepted and approved by the Board of Elders.
2. An elder may be dismissed by a three-fourths vote of the entire Board of Elders (excluding the elder under question from the vote and for the purpose of determining the percentage of the Board of Elders required), or by a three-fourths vote of the voting members of the congregation present at a special meeting properly called according to the procedures described in Article VIII, Section 3, Point B.

##### D. Evaluation and Discipline

Each year the Board of Elders shall evaluate itself and its members. The Board of Elders shall also be a self-disciplining board according to Matt. 18:15-20, II Thess. 3:14-15 and I Tim. 5:19-20. The elders are directly accountable to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, for all their actions (Heb. 13:17). They are also accountable to the congregation. Individual elders are accountable to the Board of Elders.

##### E. Function

Church elders, individually and corporately, will essentially have a three-fold function.

1. As an Elder (I Tim. 3:1-7) his primary role is to be a growing Christian who has reached a certain level of maturity and experience. This maturity is reflected in the fruit of the Spirit visible in his life, godly leadership of his household, the quality of his relationships with people within the congregation, and his good reputation in the community.
2. As a Shepherd (I Peter 5:2, 3) he is developing intimate, burden-bearing relationships with people in the congregation. He is actively involved attending to the needs of the people in the flock through instruction, encouragement, discipline, and by modeling a godly lifestyle.
3. As an Overseer (Acts 20:28-31) an elder gives prayerful and wise oversight to the church by endeavoring to maintain sensitivity to the parts while cultivating a perspective of the whole. This

involves assessing the needs of the body in light of biblical priorities, planning, implementing, evaluating, and guarding against harmful influences that might bring injury to this church.

F. Basis of Authority

The basis of authority for all the deliberations and activities of the Board of Elders shall be the Scriptures.

G. Decision Making Process

The elders shall approach decisions in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit with an awareness of their own limited insight and understanding. They shall endeavor to make all of their decisions by consensus. However, there may be issues, which after further study and prayer have not brought the Board to a unanimous agreement. In such cases, decisions will be made on the basis of majority vote.

H. Meetings

The elders shall meet as a Board as is necessary to oversee this church. This Board shall meet with the church body as often as necessary to communicate and interact with the body, which will be done at least once a year at the annual business meeting. A quorum of one more than half of its members must be present for the Board of Elders to transact business at any Board meeting. Minutes of all Board of Elders meetings where the business and programs of this church are discussed shall be taken by the Secretary and shall be available to the church membership upon request.

I. Organization

The Board of Elders shall consist of a minimum of three males and shall be self-organizing. The chairman of the Board, honoring the gifts God has given to the elders, shall delegate responsibilities among the board members as the needs arise. The elders will form committees as needed and will appoint members of the congregation to them.

A Chairman of the Board of Elders, other than the Senior Pastor, shall be selected each year by the Board of Elders. The Chairman shall call meetings, preside over both Board meetings and congregational meetings, and facilitate the execution of Board responsibilities. A Vice-Chairman of the Board of Elders shall be elected to serve in support of the Chairman, taking certain responsibilities as the two mutually determine. Lead pastors will serve as part of the board of elders.

## SECTION 2: LEAD PASTORS

A. Selection of the lead pastors

The Board of Elders shall act as the pulpit or pastoral search committee. It may delegate portions of the pastoral search process to a subcommittee of the elder board but may not delegate the decision as to which pastoral candidate is to be presented to the congregation for consideration. The congregation shall consider only one candidate at a time. The congregation may not consider a second candidate until the first one has been voted on. When the Board of Elders agrees by consensus that the candidate meets the qualifications, it may put the candidate before the vote of the congregation at a congregational meeting.

Notice of the meeting and its purpose should be given at least two weeks in advance from the pulpit and in the weekly printed bulletin or handouts. Any member having reservations about the candidate must submit a signed letter expressing these reservations in writing to the Board of Elders, no later than one week prior to the stated congregational meeting to permit review of these concerns. A three-fourths vote of members present shall be necessary to extend a call. The vote shall be a written ballot.

With acceptance of the congregation's call, the candidate and spouse shall automatically become members of this church.

B. Qualifications of the Lead Pastors

The candidate shall meet all the qualifications of an elder and evidence gifts equipping him to be a pastor. The Board of Elders shall clearly sense that God has called him to be a pastor. He shall be in sympathy and cooperation with the Evangelical Free Church of America and subscribe to this Constitution. He is required to accept, without reservation, the church's Statement of Faith.

C. Salary and benefits of the Lead Pastors

The Lead Pastors' salary plan and benefits shall be determined by the Board of Elders at the time the call is extended and shall be reviewed at least annually by the Board of Elders at the beginning of the church calendar, July 1.

D. Duties and responsibilities of the Lead Pastors

The primary responsibilities of the Lead Pastors shall be leadership of the spiritual life of the congregation, in concert with the elders. They shall be responsible for the teaching and preaching of God's Word, oversight of the pastoral care and ministries of the congregation, supervision of other pastoral and non-pastoral staff, and accountability for the administrative and business affairs of this church.

The Lead Pastors serve as permanent, voting members of the Board of Elders, but will constitute a minority of the overall elder board. They shall work within the guidelines of a written job description to be determined by the Board of Elders at the time the call is extended. This job description is to be reviewed and, if necessary, revised annually by the Board of Elders. They are accountable to submit to the decisions and directives of the Board of Elders but are not under the authority of any individual member or officer of the Board.

E. Term of office of the Lead Pastors

The Lead Pastors shall serve for an indeterminate term. If they desire to resign, they shall give at least 45 days written notice to the Board of Elders before relinquishing their duties, unless waived by mutual consent. If the Board of Elders determines that a Lead Pastor no longer meets the qualifications of an elder, or is no longer effectively serving the needs of the congregation, as determined by the Board of Elders then upon a three-fourths vote of the entire Board of Elders (excluding the pastors from the vote and as elders for purposes of determining the percentage of the Board of Elders required), it may dismiss the pastor, relieving him immediately of his pastoral duties. The dismissal procedure shall be the same procedure as in dismissing an elder from office. (Article V, Section 2, C.2)

F. Associate pastoral staff

As the need arises, pastoral associates shall be called. Additions to the pastoral staff shall be made by the board of Elders upon recommendation of the Lead Pastors. The participation of the congregation shall be actively sought in the process, by providing public opportunities to meet the candidate, and soliciting input to the elders prior to their vote.

Pastoral candidates shall meet all the appropriate spiritual, personal, Biblical and practical qualifications for their ministry. The pastoral staff shall be responsible to the Senior Pastor. Terms of employment and termination of ministry shall be determined by the Board of Elders. They are required to accept without reservation the doctrinal statement of Venture Church and the EFCA.

G. Other ministerial staff

As the need arises, other ministerial staff shall be called. The need for such staff, their qualifications, terms of employment and termination shall be made on the recommendation of the Lead Pastors, and with the approval of the Board of Elders. The ministerial staff shall assist the Lead Pastors and, under their supervision, perform such duties as are assigned to them by the Lead Pastors. They shall possess the same kind of personal, biblical, spiritual, practical and theological qualifications as pastoral staff. They are required to accept without reservation the doctrinal statement of Venture Church and the EFCA.

## II. MEMBERSHIP

### SECTION 1: ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP

The following procedure will be used to admit new members into this partnership:

A. Membership requirements

1. A credible profession of faith in Christ, and evidence of a desire to live a consistent Christian Life.
2. An agreement with the doctrinal statement and a willingness to share in the fellowship and submit to the discipline of this local body.

3. While baptism is not a specific membership requirement we believe it is a biblical commandment that each believer needs to take seriously.
4. Prospective members will sign the membership covenant.

B. Membership procedure

1. Any person sixteen years or older who desires membership shall attend the membership classes. The Board of Elders may waive this requirement in exceptional circumstances. Only members who are eighteen years or older are considered voting members.
2. An applicant will share a personal testimony of faith in Christ with selected Board of Elder members or their designees.
3. Individuals who meet the membership requirements shall be received into membership by unanimous vote of the elders.
4. A special category of associate membership shall be established for individuals who, for compelling personal reasons, are unable to become full members. Such status will only be granted by unanimous agreement of the Board of Elders. The category provides for full membership privileges.

SECTION 2: TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

A. By Request

A member, on request, will be dismissed from membership by the Board of Elders. They shall seek to discern and if necessary resolve the reasons for such a request.

B. By Membership Change

When a member joins another church, membership in Venture Church automatically terminates, except in the case of missionaries who join churches where they are serving.

C. By Inactivity

Members who are absent for more than one year, and who do not respond favorably to inquiries, may be removed from membership at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

D. By Relocation

Members who become non-resident will forfeit their membership after a period of six months. Exceptions may be made by the Board of Elders for missionaries, students, those in the military service and other special circumstances.

E. Discipline

It is part of the ministry of Venture Church to encourage and equip its members to live in accordance with the teachings of Scripture. Should disciplinary intervention become necessary to accomplish this ministry, the Elders will do so according to biblical guidelines (e.g., Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2: 5-11; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Tim 5:19-20; Titus 3:10; James 5: 19-20). Our purpose in disciplinary intervention will be the restoration of the erring member and the purity of the Body of Christ. Our motivation will be love; our method will be grace. If, however, the member should choose to continue in an unrepentant condition, his/her membership may be terminated upon final determination by the Elders and made known to the congregation as deemed appropriate. Even this step will be taken in the hope that God will grant them repentance to full restoration (2 Tim. 2:25-26)

**III. FINANCES**

SECTION 1: BUDGET

- A. An annual budget will be prepared and submitted to the Board of Elders for recommendation to the membership.
- B. The recommended budget will be then submitted to the membership for approval at the annual church business meeting.
- C. The Board of Elders shall have the authority to increase the annual budget, as needs may arise, by no more than ten percent of the general fund.
- D. Offerings will be accounted for by a team of at least two unrelated individuals.

## **IV. GATHERINGS**

### **SECTION 1: WORSHIP AND OTHER GATHERINGS**

The church will gather regularly for study, worship, and preaching of the Word of God. The Board of Elders will establish the other gatherings needed to fulfill the purpose of the church.

### **SECTION 2: ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

The church as a whole shall have at least one scheduled business meeting per year. Notification of the date and place of the meeting shall be by public announcement on the two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting, in the Sunday morning worship services and in the printed weekly bulletin or in printed handout(s).

### **SECTION 3: SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

- A. Congregational meetings may be called at any time by the Board of Elders. Notification of the date and place of each congregational meeting shall be by public announcement and in the printed weekly handout on two successive Sundays prior to the date of said meeting.
- B. A special congregational meeting may also be called at any time by members of the congregation. The procedure for calling such a meeting shall be as follows:
1. A written petition describing the reasons for calling the meeting and the issue or issues to be discussed shall be submitted to the Board of Elders asking it to call a special meeting at the earliest convenient date.
  2. This petition must be signed by at least twenty-five percent of the voting members.
  3. If the Board of Elders does not call a meeting to be held within three weeks of its reception of the petition, the person whose signature is listed first on the petition shall have the authority to call the meeting. Notification of the meeting stating its purpose, location, and date shall be announced to the congregation from the pulpit and in the weekly handouts on two successive Sundays prior to the meeting.

### **SECTION 4: QUORUMS**

A quorum at any congregational meeting shall consist of those members who are present, as long as said meeting has been called by following the proper procedures and notices as stated in Section 2 and 3 above.

## **V. AMENDMENTS**

Proposed amendments to these by-laws must involve the following procedure:

- A. The amendment must be submitted to the Board of Elders in writing for its discussion, signed by fifteen voting members of the congregation, and then submitted in written form to the members of the congregation two weeks prior to a congregational meeting. A two-thirds majority vote of the votes cast at the congregational meeting is necessary to pass the amendment.
- B. The Board of Elders shall periodically review these by-laws and recommend amendment(s) to the congregation in written form two weeks prior to a congregational meeting. A two-thirds majority vote of the votes cast at the congregational meeting is necessary to pass any amendment.