

# Bylaws of the Evangelical Free Church of the Conejo Valley

## ARTICLE 1 NAME AND AFFILIATION

### Section 1. Name

The name of this church, a non-profit corporation, shall be the Evangelical Free Church of the Conejo Valley doing business as The Bridge.

### Section 2. Affiliation

This church shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America and with the EFCA West district of said denomination. While being a member of the Evangelical Free Church of America, it shall be autonomous, self-governed, and its own authority under God.

The term 'Evangelical' refers to our commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the authority of Scriptures as being inerrant in the original writings and the only sufficient guide to faith and practice.

The term 'Free' refers to both the denomination's history being free from state participation in church affairs and member church governance being local and autonomous (i.e., free from ecclesiastical and hierarchical control).

The term affiliated or affiliation means a volitional and voluntary association by this church.

## ARTICLE 2 STATEMENT OF FAITH

### Section 1. Fundamental Truths

As members of this church, we believe in the following statement of faith<sup>1</sup>:

1. **God:** 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.
2. **The Bible:** 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.
3. **The Human Condition:** 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.
4. **Jesus Christ:** 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The statement of faith aligns with the EFCA's 2019 Statement of Faith ([www.efca.org/sof](http://www.efca.org/sof)). A supplemental document containing foundational citations can be found at <https://helps.efca.org/resources/statement-of-faith-with-citations>. This and other footnotes are explanatory notes only and not considered part of the Bylaws. Footnotes may be amended directly by the elders.

5. **The Work of Christ:** 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.
6. **The Holy Spirit:** 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.
7. **The Church:** 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.
8. **Christian Living:** 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.
9. **Christ's Return:** 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.
10. **Response and Eternal Destiny:** 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 3 PURPOSE**

### **Section 1. Primary Purpose**

The purposes of this church are and shall be:

- A. To glorify God and enjoy Him in worship.
- B. To preach the Word of God.
- C. To maintain the unity of the Spirit of God in fellowship with one another.
- D. To encourage growth toward spiritual maturity and to equip the saints for Christian ministries.
- E. To be witnesses of Christ both here locally and, through missions, the entire world.
- F. To participate in ministries of compassion.

### **Section 2. Purpose For Nonprofit Status**

This corporation is a religious corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person(s). It is organized under the Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law<sup>2</sup> primarily and exclusively for religious purposes.

This corporation is organized exclusively for the religious purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or the corresponding section of any future United States internal revenue law).

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<sup>2</sup> California Corporations Code - Nonprofit Religious Corporations Law  
[https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displayexpandedbranch.xhtml?tocCode=CORP&division=2.&title=1.&part=4.&chapter=&article=](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayexpandedbranch.xhtml?tocCode=CORP&division=2.&title=1.&part=4.&chapter=&article=)

**ARTICLE 4  
CHURCH LOCATION AND FACILITIES**

The principal office for the transaction of business of the church shall be located in the county of Ventura in the state of California.

**ARTICLE 5  
FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year shall be July 1-June 30.

**ARTICLE 6  
CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

**Section 1. Headship of Christ**

The governance of the Church shall be founded upon the Lordship and direction of Jesus Christ. Everyone in authority shall continually seek His mind and will, through His Spirit and the Word of God in all actions and decisions.

**Section 2. Members**

Ultimate authority in the church shall reside in the members of the congregation in the sense that they shall annually approve Elders. Once this approval is given, the authority of the members will be considered delegated to the Elders except for:

- A. Changing the Bylaws
- B. Calling or dismissing the Lead Pastor
- C. Acquisitions of church real property
- D. Approval of the annual budget
- E. Any other item(s) the Elder Board may deem necessary to bring to the members

Should the members not approve a budget prior to the start of the new fiscal year, the Elders shall have authority to act under the prior year's approved budget until the new budget can be approved.

**Section 3. Elder Board**

The church shall be governed by a group of godly men called Elders. The Elders are responsible for pastoral oversight of the church and authority for the day-to-day ministry matters shall reside in their hands. The specific responsibilities of this board are specified in Article 10.

**ARTICLE 7  
MEMBERSHIP**

This church shall receive as members, applicants who have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and are manifesting an obedient Christian life. All applicants must agree with the church statement of faith, comply with all procedures, and meet all prerequisites for admission to membership.

**Section 1. Eligibility for Membership**

Any person who professes personal faith in Jesus Christ shall be eligible for membership in this local assembly.

**Section 2. Admission to Membership**

The following procedure shall be used to admit new members:

- A. A membership class shall be offered for all those who are interested in membership.
- B. Those who desire membership shall indicate their desire by attending a membership class.
- C. The individual shall be given the application for membership and the Bylaws. He or she shall read through these documents, fill out the application for membership, and submit it to the Church Office.

- D. Elder(s), or those whom the Elder Board designates, shall hear the applicant's personal testimony of faith in Jesus.
- E. The Elder Board shall then decide on the admission of the applicant to membership.

### **Section 3. Discipline of Members**

Since church members are called to be ambassadors for Christ, all members in this fellowship are expected to conduct their lives according to the standard set forth in the Scriptures. Such conduct among others include: moral purity (1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8), personal honesty (Ephesians 4:25), and biblical fidelity (Jude 20, 21; 2 Timothy 3:14-17). Our lives are to be consistent examples of authentic Christianity as we seek to walk in the light (1 John 1:7), emulating the character of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:15-21; 2 Peter 1:2-8).

Church discipline is reserved for unrepentant sinners, who as members willfully depart from this scriptural standard and engage in conduct which conflicts with biblical principles of holiness. The steps of discipline outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 should be followed.

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, after these steps of reproof are taken, there is no repentance, the person shall be removed from the membership (see Section 4) and made known to the congregation, as deemed appropriate by the Board of Elders. Even this step will be taken in the hope that God will grant them repentance to full restoration (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

### **Section 4. Termination of Membership**

- A. By request. Any member may voluntarily withdraw his or her membership by making a written request to the Church Office.
- B. By Inactivity. Any member who is consistently absent and uninvolved in church ministries and fellowship for a period of six months may have his or her membership terminated by the Board of Elders.
- C. Discipline. Any member who is found guilty of conduct unbecoming a Christian and refuses to respond appropriately to discipline as outlined in Article 7, Section 3, of the Bylaws may have his or her membership terminated. Such termination shall be decided by the Board of Elders after due consideration and prayer. The reason for the termination shall be stated in a pastoral letter to the terminated member, sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

### **Section 5. Membership Requirement for Positions of Responsibility**

Church membership shall be required for all Elders and officers. The Elders may determine the membership requirements for teachers or any other position of responsibility with the church or its organizations. Non-members serving as teachers or in other positions must sign an agreement with the statement of faith and agree to submit to the authority of the Board of Elders.

### **Section 6. Membership Record**

The Board of Elders, or their designee, shall be responsible for maintaining a membership record. Records shall contain at a minimum: member name, address, email, and date of membership. If applicable, the date and reason for termination of membership shall be included.

## **ARTICLE 8 PROPERTY RIGHTS**

The church shall have power to buy, own, and sell real property in its own name. If a division occurs in the church, the name and all the property shall be retained by those adhering to the Bylaws. If the church ceases to function and its organization dissolved, the property shall automatically become the property of EFCA West.

## **ARTICLE 9 BUSINESS MEETINGS**

### **Section 1. Annual Business Meeting**

The Annual Business Meeting shall be held within eight weeks prior to the end of the fiscal year, for the purpose of receiving reports, approving Elders and adopting the annual budget. Time and place shall be determined by the Board of Elders, and notice shall be given according to Article 9, Section 3 hereunder.

### **Section 2. Special Business Meetings**

During the year, the Board of Elders may call special business meetings if needed to disseminate or discuss information important to the church membership, or to conduct other necessary business. Time and place shall be determined by the Board of Elders, and notice shall be given according to Article 9, Section 3 hereunder.

### **Section 3. Notice of Business Meetings**

Notice of all business meetings shall be at a minimum:

- A. By announcement in regularly scheduled services on two consecutive weekends prior to the day of the meeting.
- B. Included within customary congregation-wide electronic communications spanning two weeks prior to the day of the meeting.

### **Section 4. Business Meeting Protocol**

All matters in annual and special business meetings shall be decided by majority vote, unless otherwise specified herein.

### **Section 5. Quorums**

A quorum at any church business meeting shall consist of 25% of the voting membership. In the event that a quorum is not present, those members present shall discuss the issues that were to be voted on and a consensus taken. This consensus shall be forwarded to the Board of Elders as a recommendation. The Board of Elders shall then make the final decision on those matters.

### **Section 6. Voting Rights**

Only those members 18 years of age or older shall be eligible to vote.

## **ARTICLE 10 THE BOARD OF ELDERS**

### **Section 1. Qualifications**

The Elders shall be mature, godly men who manifest the qualifications stipulated by the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). All Elders shall be members.

### **Section 2. Selection**

Selection will be made on the basis of scriptural qualifications and the following process will be used:

- A. Prior to the annual meeting, the Board of Elders will ask the members of the congregation for nominations to be considered for the Board of Elders. Elders may also submit nominations.
- B. The Board will prayerfully evaluate and screen these men according to the qualifications of an Elder. They will then recommend Elder candidate(s) to the members for affirmation.
- C. Each Elder candidate will be affirmed by receiving at least two-thirds of the votes cast. Voting shall be by secret ballot.
- D. If the Board of Elders feels that new or additional Elders are needed, it may call for a special business meeting to affirm the new Elders. The same process will be used with the exception that current Elders shall not be re-approved during the special business meeting.

### **Section 3. Number of Elders**

The number of men on the Board of Elders shall be determined by the Board of Elders annually based on the number of qualified men available and the need of the church. The Lead Pastor shall automatically be a member of the Board of Elders. The Board shall have a minimum number of three (3) elders (including the Lead Pastor).

### **Section 4. Term of Service**

Each Elder shall be affirmed by the members to serve for a term of three (3) years. An Elder may serve up to two (2) consecutive terms, after which he must take at least one year off before becoming eligible to serve as an Elder again.

### **Section 5. 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 seeking guidance from Matthew 18:15-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20. Any decision regarding the discipline of an Elder shall be by unanimous decision of the remaining Elders.

### **Section 6. Function**

The Elders have the responsibility of the spiritual oversight of the congregation. This involves praying with and feeding the flock of God, refutation of error, and administration of discipline. They shall oversee the entire ministry of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3). This involves assessing the needs of the body and planning to meet those needs.

### **Section 7. Elder Meetings**

Unless stated in the Bylaws, meetings shall be called and conducted in compliance with the Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law of the State of California Section 9211.

- A. The Elders shall meet as often as is necessary to adequately govern the church.
- B. Meetings may be called by the Chairman of the Board, the Lead Pastor, or by any two Elders.
- C. Notice of meetings, both time and place, shall be announced with a minimum of 48 hours' notice prior to the meeting time and delivered personally, by telephone, or electronic transmission. Meetings may be held with less notice if unanimously agreed upon by the board.
- D. A majority of board members shall constitute quorum required to conduct business.
- E. Any meeting of the Board of Elders may be held by conference telephone or similar communications equipment, so long as all participants can clearly speak and hear one another.
- F. Action taken by the Board of Elders under any provision of law may be taken without meeting if all the Elders shall individually or collectively consent in writing to the action. Action taken by written consent shall have the same force and effect as the unanimous vote of the Elders. The action shall be filed within the minutes of the next meeting of the Board of Elders.

### **Section 8. Accountability**

The Elders are directly accountable to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, for all their actions (Hebrews 13:17). They are also accountable to the congregation members. Individual Elders are accountable to the Board of Elders.

### **Section 9. Organization**

The Board of Elders shall be self-organizing. That is, the various functions which are the responsibility of the Board of Elders shall be parceled out among the Board Members on an annual basis. A Chairman of the Board of Elders, other than the Lead Pastor, shall be selected each year by the Board of Elders. The Chairman shall call meetings and preside over both Elder Board Meetings and Business meetings.

### **Section 10. Decision-Making Process**

The Elders shall approach decisions in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit. All decisions shall be made by unanimous vote, but the Elders shall always seek to reach a unity of spirit. If there is initial disagreement on an issue and subsequent discussion does not resolve the disagreement, the Elders shall

postpone the decision, study more, and pray until they come to full agreement. Such agreement will be determined either by open or closed ballot, at the discretion of the chairman.

### **Section 11. Compensation**

Elders shall serve without compensation. They shall be allowed reasonable advancement or reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of their regular Elder duties.

## **ARTICLE 11 OFFICERS**

### **Section 1. Officers**

Pursuant to Section 9213 of the Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law of the State of California this corporation shall have officers as designated herein. The officers of the church shall be:

- A. Chairman of the Board of Elders
- B. Secretary
- C. Treasurer

The officers shall be elected from among the Board of Elders.

Each officer shall be in submission to the authority of the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders may establish additional offices when necessary, to aid in the accomplishment of the goals and purposes of the church.

The Chairman of the Board may not serve concurrently as the Secretary or Treasurer. The Secretary may concurrently serve as the Treasurer.

### **Section 2. Chairman of the Board of Elders**

The Chairman of the Board of Elders shall be annually elected by the Board of Elders. The Chairman of the Board of Elders position shall not be held by the Lead Pastor. In addition to presiding at all meetings of the Board of Elders, he shall also function as Church Moderator at all Business meetings as provided for herein. He will also serve as an ex-officio member of all committees.

### **Section 3. Secretary**

The Secretary shall be appointed annually by the Board of Elders. The Secretary, or a designee, shall keep minutes of all meetings of the Board of Elders and all business meetings of the membership. Minutes of meetings of the Board of Elders shall record time and place of holding, names of those present, and the proceedings of the meeting. Minutes of meetings of the membership shall record compliance to notification of the meeting, time and place of holding, and the proceedings of the meeting. Recording of those present at a meeting of the membership is not required.

The Secretary shall have oversight of the keeping of records at the principal office or at such other place as the Board of Elders may determine. The Secretary shall see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws or as required by law.

### **Section 4. Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall be appointed annually by the Board of Elders. The Treasurer shall oversee the management of the financial affairs of the corporation. The Treasurer shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct books and accounts of the corporation's properties and transactions. The Treasurer shall send or cause to be given to the Board of Elders such financial statements and reports as are required to be given by law, by these Bylaws, or by the Board. The books of account shall be open to inspection by any Elder at all reasonable times.

The Treasurer shall have oversight of the process of depositing all money and valuables in the name of the corporation at such depositories as the Board of Elders may designate. The Treasurer shall have oversight of the process of disbursing the corporation's funds as the Board of Elders may order. The Treasurer shall have oversight of the keeping of a confidential giving record and the sending of end of year reports.

**ARTICLE 12  
THE LEAD PASTOR**

The Lead Pastor shall be a man of true Christian experience and established character. He shall qualify for his office according to the standards of 1 Timothy 3:2-7. He shall be in full accord with its statement of faith. The Lead Pastor, and spouse if married, shall become members of the church on the first day of his employment. He shall be a member of the Board of Elders and, by virtue of his office, shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. The election of a Lead Pastor may take place at any business meeting. A Lead Pastor must receive two-thirds of the votes cast at such meeting and shall be called for an indefinite period of time.

If the Lead Pastor desires to resign, or the membership desires his termination, one month's notice shall be given in writing. The termination of the Lead Pastor's ministry shall be decided by two-thirds of the votes cast by members present at a business meeting. In the event the membership votes for the Lead Pastor's termination, the termination will be effective immediately and the Board of Elders shall determine the amount and form of separation compensation.

**ARTICLE 13  
LEAD PASTOR SEARCH PROCESS**

In the event of a vacancy in the position of Lead Pastor, the Board of Elders may appoint a Pastor Search Team consisting of Elders and church members. The number of Search Team members shall be determined by the Board of Elders. The Committee shall interview candidates and then make a recommendation to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall vote on the recommended candidate. If approved, a business meeting of the membership shall be called for the purposes of voting to call the candidate as the Lead Pastor in accordance with Article 9. Only one candidate shall be brought before the Church membership for approval at a time.

**ARTICLE 14  
AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS**

The Elders may propose amendments to these Bylaws through a process that spans two business meetings. The Elders shall present the proposals in written form to the church membership prior to, or at the start of, the first business meeting during which the proposals are discussed by the congregation. Then, at a separate, subsequent business meeting, the amendment may be approved by two-thirds majority of votes cast. Voting shall be by secret ballot.