

**THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**  
**OF**  
**HILL COUNTRY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH**  
**OF**  
**FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS**

**PREAMBLE**

Whereas, we, a body of evangelical believers in Jesus Christ, organized for the purpose of fellowship and fulfilling the mission Christ has for His church, as recorded in the Holy Scripture, deem it wise that we have certain laws to guide our work and help preserve the purpose and function of the local church; therefore be it resolved: that beginning with its legal adoption thereof we shall be governed by the following Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

**ARTICLE I - NAME**

The official name of this organization, a non-profit religious corporation organized under the laws of the State of Texas, is Hill Country Evangelical Free Church, an affiliate of the Evangelical Free Church of America. For purposes of brevity and common usage it shall be called Hill Country Church, a legal assumed name of Hill Country Evangelical Free Church.

**ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church shall be to worship God, win the lost, build the believers, equip the workers, multiply leaders, and send out disciple makers both locally and globally for Christ's church. All this shall be done under the authority of the Scriptures.

**ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF FAITH**

We believe:

1. The Scriptures, 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 Christian faith and life. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Peter 3:15b-16; Luke 24:27, 44)
2. In one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Mark 12:29; John 1:1, 14; 15:26)
3. 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 as 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 is now our High Priest and Advocate. (John 1:1, 14; 8:58; 10:30, 33; 12:45; 14:9; 20:28; 1 Tim 2:5; Matt. 1:18, 20, 23-25; Luke 1:31-35; Isa. 53; Mark 15:25; Luke 23:33; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2; Matt. 28:5-6, 9; Mark 15:5-6; Luke 24:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:3-5; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; 2:32-33; 7:56; Heb. 1:3; 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-16; 7:26; Job 16:19; 1 John 2:1)
4. 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, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service. (John 15:26; 16:7-11, 13, 14; 14:17, 26; 3:5-6; 4:10, 13-15; 7:37-39; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14; Titus 3:5-6; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25)

5. 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. (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7, 21-24, 16-17; 3:6-7, 16-19, 23-24; Rom. 5:12, 18; Eph. 2:1-5; John 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5-6)
6. 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. (Heb. 9:11-14, 22; 1 John 2:2; Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 1:12-13; 3:5-7, 14-16, 36; Rom. 8:9, 14-16; Gal. 3:26; 1 John 3:1)
7. That water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church during the present age. (Eph. 2:8-9; Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:35-38; 10:46-48; Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)
8. 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. (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:11-22; 3:6; 4:11-16; 5:23, 29-32)
9. That only those who are thus members of the true Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church. (Acts 2:41-47; 2 Cor. 1:1; Heb. 10:23-25)
10. 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. (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; Acts 13:1-3; 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil. 4:15)
11. In the personal pre-millennial 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. (Acts 1:11; Rev. 19:11-20:6; 22:20; 2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:31-33; Isa. 2:1-4, 11; Ezek. 37:21-28; Micah 4:1-8; Zech. 14; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 3:10-14; 1 John 3:2-3)
12. In the bodily resurrection of the dead; of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord, and of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment. (Job 19:25-27; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Luke 14:14; John 5:21, 25, 28-29; 6:40, 44, 54; 11:23-25; 1 Cor. 15:12-14; 2 Cor. 4:14; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1-22:5; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Mark 9:43-49; Luke 16:19-26; Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15)

## **ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1 - Application for Membership**

1. This church shall receive as members only those who have by faith accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.
2. No person shall be excluded from membership because of sex, race, national or ethnic origin or color. Rather, the Elder Team shall examine all applicants for membership to determine if they are members of the Body of Christ, and to determine if they sincerely support the purpose of this local church as stated in Article II. If the Elder Team, in its sole discretion, determines that the moral and spiritual character of an individual would not support the stated purpose of this local church, then his or her application for membership shall be rejected.
3. Any person who is qualified by the Elder Team's examination and desires membership shall receive and complete an application for membership and return same to a Pastor or other Elder Team member. To be approved for membership, the candidate should substantially agree with the Statement of Faith and be willing to abide by the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of this church. A person is not excluded from membership because he or she does not agree on every fine point of doctrine. Within the Evangelical Free Church, there is allowance for legitimate differences of understanding in some areas of doctrine.
4. This person shall be required to share his or her personal testimony of faith in Christ with selected Elder Team members or those (two or more) whom the Elder Team designates.

5. Pastors and their wives automatically become members with full voting privileges on receipt and acceptance of a call from the church.

### **Section 2 - Membership Roll**

1. The membership roll shall be supervised by the Elder Team.
2. The membership roll shall be reviewed by the Elder Team or those selected by that team at least annually to determine if the needs of any members have been neglected, or if any name should be removed from the roll.
3. If any member should be absent from the church services for a period of six months without communicating with the church, the Elder Team shall endeavor to contact such member and unless he or she has an acceptable reason, the name of said member shall be removed from the roll, and the member notified of this action.

### **Section 3 - Discipline**

1. If any member of the church or non-member who attends this church is found to be living or teaching contrary to the Word of God and the Statement of Faith of this church, he or she shall be counseled in love by a Pastor or by the Elder Team. If efforts to bring repentance and restoration fail, then the Elder Team will follow the procedures outlined in the following passages of Scripture: Matthew 18:15-18; I Corinthians 5; II Corinthians 2:5-11; Galatians 6:1-2.
2. No accusation shall be considered by the church against any member unless supported by at least two witnesses. I Timothy 5:19.
3. Any member who has withdrawn or has been dismissed has no right to or claim upon the church property, real or personal.

## **ARTICLE V - RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Section 1 - Local Autonomy**

This church is free to organize itself as it wishes and to regulate its own affairs. It is in subjection to no ecclesiastical body, except by its own consent. It controls the admission, discipline, and removal of its members according to its own understanding of the Word of God.

### **Section 2 - Denomination**

Realizing the necessity and advantage of united effort, and being in general accord with the aim and scope of the Evangelical Free Church of America, this church, by vote of the congregation, has applied for and has been accepted for membership in that Church Body and endeavors to cooperate with the Evangelical Free Church in activities that are in accord with the purpose of Hill Country Evangelical Free Church. However, Hill Country Evangelical Free Church shall remain self-governing and its own highest authority under God.

## **ARTICLE VI - PROPERTY RIGHTS**

1. This church shall have the power to buy, own, and sell property in its corporate name.

2. Conveyance or encumbrance of all or any church property may be made, provided, however, that any such action must receive at least a two-thirds majority vote of the membership of the church present at a meeting duly called pursuant to Article VIII of the Articles of Incorporation of this church. Instruments of conveyance or encumbrance so authorized at any such meeting shall be executed in the name of the church by the President and Secretary of the church.
3. In the event of disagreement and division in the church membership (which God forbids), the church name and all church property shall be retained by those members remaining and adhering to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.
4. In the event the church ceases to function or should the corporation be dissolved, the right, title, and interest in and to all of the real and personal property of the church shall accrue to the benefit of, and be vested in, the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District of the Evangelical Free Church of America or the successor to said Church Body, provided, however, that the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District of the Evangelical Free Church of America or its successor organization shall at the time of designation, be exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended, or under such successor provision of the Code as may then be in effect. If the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District of the Evangelical Free Church of America is not so exempt from federal income tax at the time of dissolution of the church, then all of the real and personal property of the church shall be distributed to the Evangelical Free Church of America.

## **ARTICLE VII-AMENDMENTS**

Amendments, additions or changes to these Articles of Incorporation may be made at any business session of the church when said proposed amendments, additions or changes have been presented in written form and discussed at a previous regular or special meeting for discussion. A three-fourths majority of votes cast is necessary for ratification.

## **BYLAWS**

### **Section 1 - Statement of Government**

1. Ultimate authority in the church shall reside in the membership of the congregation. They shall approve Biblically qualified elders and deacons. The Elder Team and Deacon Team shall carry on the routine operation and government of the church as delegated by the congregation.
2. The Deacon Team shall be subject to the Elder Team and assist the Elder Team in whatever areas the Elder Team designates.
3. The Elder Team will elect from its members the following officers each year: A Chairman, who shall be the President of the church and Elder Team; a Vice-Chairman, who shall be Vice-President of the church and Elder Team; and a Secretary for the congregation and Elder Team. Unless the Team decides otherwise, the Senior Pastor shall serve as Secretary. For legal purposes these men shall serve as the corporate officers/trustees of the church.
4. The Elder Team shall appoint ministry teams, task forces, and personnel needed to carry out the purpose of this church effectively and efficiently.

### **Section 2 - Elders**

1. Qualifications. The elders shall be male members of this church who are mature, godly men, who fully support the Bible and the Statement of Faith of this church and its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and who manifest the qualifications stipulated by the Scriptures (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

2. Selection. Selection will be made on the basis of spiritual qualifications, leadership qualifications, and commitment to this church and to the Evangelical Free Church of America. The Elder Team shall prayerfully evaluate and screen potential elders as to the qualifications of an elder when elders need to be chosen. The Elder Team shall submit their selections to the congregation for affirmation.
3. Term of Service. Each non-pastor Elder shall be elected by the congregation for a three-year term. A man may be elected for a second term but must take a sabbatical for one year after serving two terms before being eligible to serve again on the Elder Team. However, the Elder Team is permitted to make necessary adjustments so that no more than two elders rotate off in any one year.
4. Removal of an Elder. Any elder who does not fulfill the qualifications or duties of his office, fails to attend three consecutive Elder Team meetings without good reason, or does not regularly attend the stated services of the church shall, after notice and an attempt to restore said member, be asked by the Elder Team to resign. If he refuses to resign, the elders may vote him off the Elder Team.
5. Evaluation, Discipline, and Accountability. The Elder Team shall evaluate itself and its members. It shall be a self-disciplining board according to Matthew 18:15-20; II Thessalonians 3:14-15; I Timothy 5:19-20. However, the elders are directly accountable to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, for all their actions and decisions (Hebrews 13:17). They are also accountable to the congregation.
6. Function. The elders will have essentially a three-fold function: (1) To build and develop their own families in the Lord (I Timothy 3:4-5); (2) To feed, shepherd and pray for the flock of God (John 21:15-17; Acts 10:17-32; Acts 6:1-4). This involves positive impartation of truth, refutation of error, and administration of discipline; and (3) To oversee and manage the entire ministry of this local body (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3). This involves coordinating with the Deacon Team, assessing the needs of the entire body, planning, evaluating, and appointing those to assist in various areas of responsibility.
7. Basis of Authority. The basis of authority for all the deliberations and activities of the Elder Team shall be Scripture.
8. Decision-Making Process. The Elder Team shall approach decisions in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit. They shall earnestly seek to reach a unanimous decision without coercion. (As a last resort, the Team shall take a vote to reach a decision with a simple majority).
9. Quorum. A quorum for an Elder Team meeting shall consist of a simple majority of the members of that team.
10. Organization. The Elder Team shall be self-organizing. That is, the various functions and areas of responsibility of the Elder Team shall be delegated among the Team members on an annual basis. A Chairman of the Elder Team, other than a Pastor, shall be selected each year by the Elder Team. He shall call meetings and preside over both elder and congregational business meetings.

### **Section 3 - Deacons**

1. Selection. Deacons shall be nominated by a Nominating Committee consisting of five members: the Senior Pastor, an additional elder, one deacon, and two members-at-large. The Deacon Team will choose its representative; the two members at large will be chosen by the Elder Team. The Committee shall solicit suggestions from the membership for nominations to the office of deacon, and shall nominate only those who meet the Biblical qualifications for deacon. Nominations must be made by the unanimous vote of the Nominating Committee, and are subject to final approval by the Elder Team.
2. Election. Deacons shall be elected by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast, ignoring abstentions. Election shall be by secret ballot.

3. Term. Deacons shall serve a term of two years, which shall commence upon election. The terms of office of the deacons shall be staggered as much as possible.
4. Meetings. A quorum for the transaction of business by the Deacon Team shall be at least 50 percent of the deacons. The Deacon Team shall conduct joint meetings with the Board of Elders whenever either Team desires such a joint meeting.
5. Responsibilities. Unless the Elder Team designates otherwise, the Deacon Team shall be responsible for overseeing church finances, building and grounds maintenance and construction, facility usage, greeting and ushering, and transportation.

#### **Section 4 - Congregational Meetings**

1. Congregational Meetings. Congregational business meetings may be called at any time by the Elder Team or by a written request signed by 25 percent or more of the voting membership of the church, presented to the Chairman of the Elder Team.
2. Meeting Announcements. These meetings, along with the stated purpose of the meeting, shall be announced publicly on two consecutive Sundays at the morning worship services or by written notice to the members and public announcement on one Sunday at the morning worship services.
3. Voting Age. Members eighteen years of age or older shall be eligible to vote.
4. Quorum and Voting Requirements. A quorum for the transaction of business shall be one-third of the members eligible to vote, except where a different percentage is specifically required by these Bylaws. The majority vote of all members present with voting privileges at any church business meeting shall be final with respect to all matters voted upon at such business meeting, unless the Constitution or these Bylaws require a greater majority, in which case the vote of such greater majority shall be final. Business meetings should allow for motions, questions, discussion, and amendments.
5. Budget. A budget committee chosen by the Elder Team shall prepare a proposed annual budget, including staff salaries. The proposed annual budget shall be submitted to the members and by majority vote of the votes cast, ignoring abstentions, may be approved as submitted, or returned to the budget committee for further consideration. Once the annual budget has been approved by the members, the Elder and Deacon Teams shall have the authority to direct disbursement of the church funds during that year within the framework of the annual budget without further congregational action. The Elder Team shall either approve all expenses exceeding budget, or it may delegate this task to the Deacon Team or a financial committee. In the case of expenses exceeding budget by a large amount, the Elder Team may decide to get congregational approval.

#### **Section 5 - Pastors**

##### **1 - The Calling of a Lead (Senior) Pastor**

1. Pastoral Search Team. The Elder Team shall appoint qualified persons to the Pastoral Search Team. In regard to procedure and possible candidates, help is available through the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District Superintendent.
2. Prospective Candidates. Candidates shall be members of or willing and qualified to become members as soon as possible of the Ministerial Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America, which requires a credential with the Evangelical Free Church of America.

3. Congregational Meeting. Once the Elder Team determines it has a man to recommend as a candidate for a call, the congregation shall be convened for a special business meeting. The recommendation should be presented with all the reasons for suggesting him as candidate. The congregation shall then vote as to whether or not it desires to send the recommended candidate a call. If he receives a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and entitled to vote, the call shall be extended. If not, the matter goes back to the Elder Team and Pastoral Search Committee for the presentation of new recommendations.
4. Notification. The Elder Team shall notify the Senior Pastor-elect of the action of the church immediately and upon his affirmative reply make arrangements for his moving and installation.

## **2 - Termination of Office**

1. Term of Office. A Senior Pastor shall serve an unlimited term of service unless other arrangements are made at the time the call is accepted.
2. Voluntary Termination. If the Senior Pastor decides to resign, he should give the church thirty days' notice if possible. If the church requests his resignation and he agrees to resign, the church should give him thirty days' notice as well.
3. Reasons for Involuntary Termination. If a Senior Pastor should depart from the Word of God in his conduct or in doctrine as contained in the Statement of Faith of the church, or demonstrate proven ineffectiveness in ministry, the elders shall admonish him in love, and should this not have the desired result, said pastor shall be discharged by action of the church.
4. Involuntary Termination Procedure. A Senior Pastor may be dismissed only by the congregation at a business meeting called specifically for that purpose. The non-pastor Elders may recommend dismissal of the Pastor for the reasons stated above. The Pastor shall be dismissed upon a majority vote by secret ballot of the voting church membership, provided that a quorum of 35 percent of the voting members participates in the ballot. Any accusation of misconduct or sin against the Pastor shall be presented to the non-pastor Elders in writing and signed by no fewer than two witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). After a thorough investigation, the non-pastor Elders shall recommend dismissal to the church, take other appropriate disciplinary action, or repudiate the accusation.

## **3 - The Duties of the Senior Pastor**

1. He shall automatically be a member of the Elder Team and should therefore meet the Scriptural qualifications for a church Elder.
2. He shall, in coordination with the Elder Team, oversee the entire ministry of the church. Though the entire Elder Team is also responsible for this oversight duty, it should be his special focus.
3. He shall be responsible for providing leadership in planning for the future well-being of the congregation.
4. He shall be responsible for designing and planning the weekly worship services and preaching scripturally-based sermons.
5. He shall provide spiritual leadership and inspiration for the church family.

6. He shall lead the church staff and also be responsible for seeing that the church is properly staffed. He may recommend the hiring or the termination of church staff subject to Elder Team approval.
7. He shall not qualify for any elected office or appointed office on the Elder Team other than Secretary, nor can he serve as the Church President.
8. He shall perform any other duties assigned to him by the Elder Team.
9. He shall abide by the Word of God in his life, teaching and preaching, taking great care in all his conduct so as to be esteemed a man of respect in the congregation and community.

#### **4 - The Duties of Other Church Staff**

1. They shall perform such duties in connection with the work of the church as prescribed by the Senior Pastor with the approval of the Elder Team.
2. They shall abide by the Word of God in their life, taking great care in all their conduct so as to be esteemed a person of respect in the congregation and community.

#### **SECTION 6 - Marriage**

##### **A. Definition of Marriage**

Marriage has been instituted by God. This church defines marriage as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman in which such union is a lifetime commitment. A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage found in this Section 6.

##### **B. Legitimate Sexual Relations**

According to the Bible, legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, sexual activities outside of marriage (referred to in the New Testament as "porneia"), including but not limited to adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality and pedophilia, are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. Further, lascivious conduct, transgender behavior and the creation and/or distribution and/or viewing of pornography are also incompatible with the Biblical witness.

#### **SECTION 7 - AMENDMENTS**

Amendments, additions or changes to these Bylaws may be made at any business session of the church when said proposed amendments, additions or changes have been presented in written form and discussed at a previous regular or special meeting for discussion. A three-fourths majority of votes cast is necessary for ratification.