

CONSTITUTION OF EVANGELICAL FRIENDS CHURCH INTERNATIONAL

Preamble

Arising out of a God-given concern to participate fully as Friends in seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness through the church, we herein set forth a constitution to serve as a guide for faith and action by Evangelical Friends Church International. In so doing, we declare our belief in the value of Christian unity for the spiritual welfare and for the advancement of the program of the Evangelical Friends Church worldwide.

Article – Name

The name of this organization shall be: Evangelical Friends Church International.

Article II – Purpose

The organization shall be an international alliance of Friends churches that officially accept and communicate the evangelical doctrines of the Christian faith as herein defined. This purpose of the alliance will be seen:

1. by working together under policies and arrangements herein stated,
2. by serving together in Christian ministries based upon Biblical principles,
3. by prayerfully investing both personal and material resources in order to fulfill the Great Commission,
4. by seeking continuously to discern both the call of God and the need of humanity as it is expressed in diverse cultures and respond appropriately in a Christian manner.

Article III – Objectives

1. Renewal. To motivate a renewed sensitivity to God's voice through scripture and contemporary needs by persistent waiting on the Lord and total availability to the Holy Spirit for living the life of Christ in and through us.
2. Evangelism. To share creative and effective methods of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world with those who have not received Him as Savior and Lord.
3. Fellowship. To stimulate genuine sharing of joys and burdens with one another in the family of Friends, locally, nationally and internationally.
4. Leadership. To develop individuals whose God-given call and vision, spiritual gifts and Christ-like lifestyles command respect as servant leaders among God's people.

Article IV – **Statement of Faith**

The Holy Bible:

We believe that the 66 books of the Holy Bible were given by the inspiration of God; that there can be no appeal from these Scriptures to any other authority whatsoever; that they are able to make one wise unto salvation through faith that is in Jesus Christ; that the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures must ever be its true interpreter as Christ works through the disciplined and dedicated minds of those within His Church; that any professed guidance that is contrary to these Scriptures must be counted as a delusion.

God:

We believe in one God, revealed through the Holy Spirit in the person of Jesus Christ; that He is both the creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible; that He alone is worthy of worship, honor, glory, dominion, praise, and thanksgiving both now and forevermore; and that in the unity of the Godhead, there exists three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, inseparable in divinity, power, glory and eternity.

Jesus Christ

We believe Jesus Christ to be the only begotten Son of God; that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary; that He is the express image of the invisible God; and that He combines within Himself both the nature of God and the nature of man in one perfect indivisible personality, the God-man.

We believe that He was crucified as a substitutionary atonement for us and for the sins of the whole world, making provision whereby each person may find the forgiveness of sins, the power for a new life, and be brought back into a perfect relationship with the Father.

We believe that He arose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of God, making intercession for us, and that He will come to earth again to receive His Church unto Himself and to judge the world in righteousness.

Holy Spirit:

We believe the Holy Spirit to be the third person of the Trinity, proceeding from both Father and Son, but equal with them in authority, power, and glory; that He convicts the world of sin, imparts life to the penitent believer, sanctifies the child of God, empowers the disciple for service to others, and enables each one by His indwelling presence to love God supremely.

People:

We believe that God created people as male and female in His own image; that they enjoyed unbroken fellowship with their maker and that their whole life centered in the person of God. We believe that people fell from this original state by an act of transgression; that in this fall they suffered the immediate loss of their perfect relationship to God, making self the center of their life; and that in this act they suffered immediate spiritual death. All people are born in this disposition to sin. We own no principle inherent naturally by which they may be saved, except by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as a provision for all people.

Salvation:

We believe that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the direct and immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, people can be recovered from their fallen state through divine enlightenment, forgiveness of sin, regeneration and sanctification of their affection, and the final glorification of their bodies; that in this life they can love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, that they can live in victory over known sin and enjoy unbroken fellowship with the Heavenly Father; and that once more their whole lives may center in and revolve around their Creator and Redeemer.

We believe the experience of sanctification is the work of God's grace by which affections are purified and exalted to a supreme love to God and others, and the believer is empowered to witness of the living Christ. This is accomplished by the filling with the Holy Spirit in the life of a dedicated and believing child of God; that this is both an act in which the heart is purified by faith and a process in which the life is continuously disciplined into paths of holiness. By submission and availability to Jesus Christ, people become channels for Christ to do His work in this present age.

The Church:

We believe that all those persons who repent of their sins, believe in and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior, are born again into His kingdom by the Holy Spirit, and that these constitute the Church of Jesus Christ. This Church we believe to be spiritual in nature, universal in scope, holy in character, and redemptive in her life and purpose.

We believe that wherever two or three are gathered together regularly and faithfully in the name of Christ, He is truly present in the person of the Holy Spirit and that such an assembly is a local church, the visible expression of His body and the Church universal.

We believe that believers must relate themselves to the local and visible body of Christ being fitly framed together with others into a holy temple in the Lord and built together for a habitation of His Holy Spirit.

Christian Ministries:

We believe that in the church, the believer is committed to both the worship and the work of God; that this work involved not only personal righteousness as the fruit of a new life, but the ministry of evangelism and teaching; that in this commission of Christ every believer is involved in the stewardship of the kingdom, and that is fulfilled only the faithful service in and through the fellowship of His church; and that this work is continuous until Christ comes again calling the Church unto Himself. We believe that all Christians are called upon to witness by word and by deed within a sinful world, not returning evil for evil, but in Christlikeness demonstrating love, forgiveness, and the way of peace.

We believe that in the fellowship of His body, the Holy Spirit gives to every member a gift to be exercised for the mutual advantage of every member in the body, and for the influence of the Church upon those outside; the ministry is a special calling given to certain ones whom God ordains for a service of leadership in His Church; that this service may be that of pastoring, teaching, evangelizing, administration, or other kinds of service to humanity.

Liberty:

Regarding Christian liberty we recognize that among Evangelical Friends and among the larger body of evangelical Christians there are minor differences of faith and practice, due in part to historical and cultural differences and our imperfections. We look forward to the time when we shall all come into a greater unity of the faith. Until then, we believe that in biblical essentials there must be unity, that in nonessentials there must be liberty, but in all things there must be charity.

Spiritual Realities:

We believe that both Christian baptism and communion are spiritual realities which are not dependent upon physical and outward ordinances; that baptism is an inward receiving of the Holy Spirit in which He becomes Lord over all – guiding, cleansing, empowering, and in general, representing God to us in immediate experience; that communion is the daily receiving and realization of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; that this communion is dependent not only upon the condition of the believer walking daily in the light of Christ but also in the historic act of Christ on Calvary as His body was broken and blood shed once and for all for us; that Christ thus becomes a daily personal spiritual reality known immediately in Christian experience; and that through Him and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, God and divine realities are known experientially and immediately.

Resurrection and Judgment:

We believe in the second coming of Christ; that at His coming the dead shall be resurrected, some to everlasting glory and others to everlasting condemnation; that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive recompense for the things done in the body; that the judgment of the blessed shall be unto heaven, and the judgment of the lost shall be unto hell; that the punishment of the wicked and the blessedness of the righteous shall be everlasting; that this judgment is in the hands of our compassionate Redeemer, who does all things after the counsel of his wisdom, love and holiness.

Article V – **Membership**

Any Yearly Meeting of Friends, or any organized Friends group of churches, may apply for membership in Evangelical Friends Church International and will be accepted provided there is official agreement with the doctrines and policies of Evangelical Friends Church International and the Regional Coordinating Council of the respective region approves such application.

For a single international or regional event, a non-member yearly meeting or Friends group of churches who agrees with the Statement of Faith may participate on a temporary basis. Their financial support will be proportionate for this event. Planning and participation will last for this single event only.

Article VI – **Organization**

Membership shall be under a two level system.

Level I – Membership in Evangelical Friends Church International by geographical region, i.e.:

EFC – AFRICA
EFC – ASIA
EFC – LATIN AMERICA
EFC – NORTH AMERICA
EFC – EUROPE

It shall be directed by an International Council composed of the Director of each region, plus an International Director to be nominated by them and approved by each regional Coordinating Council.

Level II – Membership in respective regions as a yearly meeting or organized Friends group within any of the regions. It shall have a controlling body to be known as the Coordinating Council and is made up of representatives of member yearly meetings, as determined by each respective region.

There shall be in addition an Executive Committee of each Regional Coordinating Council composed of the general superintendents or their equivalent, and a member-at-large of each member yearly meeting, or any organized Friends group of churches.

Article VII – Commissions

Commissions may be established in a respective region by the Regional Coordinating Council to give impetus and direction to the special areas of concern. Specifically, such commissions shall follow the general departmental concerns of the member churches. Each commission shall organize from its own members, with a Chairman, vice-Chairman, and Secretary. Also, it may appoint a Treasurer.

All official minutes and actions of each commission shall be forwarded promptly to the Director of each Regional Coordinating Council for final disposition. There shall be a close cooperative working relationship between each commission and the Coordinating Council.

Any commission may also be open for participation by individuals with expertise from corresponding yearly meeting departments provided both the commission and the Executive Committee shall approve such affiliation, but without membership in the Regional Coordinating Council.

Each commission shall draw up guidelines or a constitution for its own use in providing stability and continuity to its work and program.

Article VIII – Officers

Level I – The International Council of Evangelical Friends Church International shall be composed of the Regional Directors and shall organize every three years by appointing the International Director. The other officers of Assistant International Director, Secretary and Treasurer shall be appointed from among themselves. The officers shall be limited to not more than three years.

Level II – The Regional Coordinating Council shall organize annually by appointing the following officers: Regional Director, Assistant Regional Director, Secretary, and Treasurer, with the Regional Director as ex-officio member of each commission. These officers shall be nominated from the Executive Committee by a nominating committee of three named by the Regional coordinating Council and shall also serve as the officers of the Executive Committee.

As need may arise, the Coordinating Council may appoint, as stipulated under Article IX, Level II, paragraph 1 such administrative personnel as may be deemed advisable. Such persons shall be well qualified by natural ability, experience and Christian character, enabling them to act in the best interest for the entire cause of Evangelical Friends.

Article IX – Policies

The following policies are accepted as guides for Evangelical Friends Church International.

Level I:

- (1) The International Council shall be empowered to appoint task force members to plan a specific event that is to be international in scope. Otherwise, all organized gatherings shall be on regional levels and shall be planned and directed by the respective Regional Coordinating Council.
- (2) Funding for international events shall be raised from the entire membership of Evangelical Friends Church International.

The following policies are accepted as guides for the future development of a respective region;

- (1) The Regional Coordinating Council shall be empowered to take actions in areas of Christian concern that are delegated to it by the member yearly meetings, with the exception that action involving the appointment of administrative personnel, major policy changes, budgets, and amendments are subject to the approval of member groups.
- (2) All decisions made by the Regional Coordinating Council shall be in accordance with the Friends policy of seeking, through prayer and discussion, the mind of the Lord, which shall be discerned as the sense of the meeting by the one in charge. Those who disagree, after extended discussion and prayer, may stand aside from the decision allowing the others to move ahead. If those who disagree with an action want their opposition on record, they may register their concerns in the official minute, which must be reported.
- (3) Member churches shall be kept informed on financial needs in the operation of the respective region and may support the united program by whatever methods may be deemed advisable, whether by budgetary or freewill contributions. In cases where fixed expenses are involved, the requests for finances should be met on a proportionate basis. The Regional Coordinating Council shall be responsible for receiving and considering all financial needs and askings of the various commissions, and when approved it shall forward such appeals to the member churches through proper channels.

Article X – **Budget**

Level I – All budgets which have been approved by Evangelical Friends Church International for specific international events shall be underwritten by each member yearly meeting and organized Friends group on a formula basis that takes into consideration applicable factors, including (a) the membership of each one, and (b) ability to pay based on per capita gross national product for each country represented. These apportionments shall be paid into the treasurer of Evangelical Friends Church International.

Level II – Each region shall establish its own annual budget with approval by its Regional Coordinating Council which shall be underwritten by member yearly meetings and organized Friends groups in the region on a formula basis determined by yearly meeting memberships.

Article XI – **Records**

Official minutes of all actions taken shall be carefully kept and preserved by the International Council, each Regional Coordinating Council and the commissions. Careful records of receipts and expenditures of the Councils or commission shall be kept by their respective treasurers, and the books audited annually. Audit reports shall be forwarded to each member church.

Article XII - **Amendments**

The power to amend the constitution may be initiated by the Coordinating Council of any regions at its regularly held meeting.

Amendments, upon approval by the recommending Regional Coordinating Council, shall then be presented to all other Regional Coordinating Councils for similar action.

Upon approval by each Regional Coordinating Council, amendments to this constitution shall be come final upon approval of the International Coordinating Council.

Article XIII – **Bylaws**

The International Coordinating Council is authorized to adopt bylaws and job descriptions.

Article XIV – **Dissolution**

If it s found desirable to dissolve Evangelical Friends Church International, it shall be done by approval of the Regional Councils and International Council. The International Council shall supervise the distribution of assets to member yearly meetings and groups of Friends Churches on a proportionate basis.