

CONSTITUTION OF THE FINDLAY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

PREAMBLE:

The Findlay Evangelical Free Church is a family of Bible based churches committed to the Scriptures and collaborating together for the work of the gospel. These like-minded churches shall be called Member Churches. Member Churches are signatories to The Findlay Evangelical Free Church Multiple Member Collaboration Agreement and remain in good standing with this agreement. Together, the Member Churches comprise The Findlay Evangelical Free Church and shall maintain ministry interdependence more fully described in The Findlay Evangelical Free Church Multiple Member Collaboration Agreement. This Family of Churches exists to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ and seeks to follow the New Testament model for the church as expressed in Acts 2:42 and elsewhere in the Scriptures.

This revised and restated Constitution and these revised and restated By-laws replace any and all previous Constitutions and By-laws of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church and are intended to remain in place even if only one Member Church exists at any time.

ARTICLE I – NAME, INCORPORATION, AND PURPOSE

NAME:

The legal name of this church shall be The Findlay Evangelical Free Church. However, individual Member Churches (which together comprise The Findlay Evangelical Free Church) may call themselves a Findlay Evangelical Free Church or another name as appropriate for local ministry.

INCORPORATION:

Founded on April 19, 1988, The Findlay Evangelical Free Church is incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio. The Findlay Evangelical Free Church is one legal entity made up of multiple Member Churches that collaborate together. The Findlay Evangelical Free Church operates as a non-profit corporation.

Member Churches may separate from The Findlay Evangelical Free Church by incorporating as an independent entity, as more fully described in The Findlay Evangelical Free Church Multiple Member Collaboration Agreement.

PURPOSE:

The Findlay Evangelical Free Church provides and maintains places for Christian worship and equipping of members and attenders for ministry; ministers to the spiritual needs of members and attenders; engages in local and world missions; owns real estate, buildings, and other assets for the purpose of current and future ministry; receives, holds, and disburses gifts whether cash or other assets; acquires debt consistent with financing ministry assets or initiatives; and does all other things necessary to carry out the work and mission of the church to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

ARTICLE II – GOVERNANCE

Individuals holding membership comprise the governing body of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church with no official submission to any outside body. The Findlay Evangelical Free Church is voluntarily associated with the Evangelical Free Church of America, Great Lakes District.

ARTICLE III - DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The Findlay Evangelical Free Church voluntarily subscribes to the current Doctrinal Statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America as amended from time to time. The current doctrinal statement is available from the Evangelical Free Church of America or from The Findlay Evangelical Free Church. In addition, The Findlay Evangelical Free Church affirms the eternal security of every truly born-again believer, and is non-charismatic in orientation.

ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be extended to people who apply, subject to the by-laws of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church. Membership shall be vested in a Member Church, however, by virtue of this Member Church membership; members there are also members of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church for the purpose of matters directly affecting The Findlay Evangelical Free Church as a whole.

ARTICLE V – ORDINANCES

The Findlay Evangelical Free Church will administer two ordinances: water baptism (by immersion following biblical conversion) and communion.

ARTICLE VI – PROPERTY

The Findlay Evangelical Free Church shall have power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold real and personal property as authorized by the laws of the State of Ohio when it is deemed by the Elders of the church as desirable to accomplish the business and mission of the church. The church may acquire debt to finance property or ministry activities and may freely dispose of assets not needed to accomplish its business or mission. All property shall be held in the name of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

In the case of a dissolution of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church, the property shall be assigned to the Great Lakes District of the Evangelical Free Church of America to renew the work or to use the value thereof for further gospel enterprises. The Findlay Evangelical Free Church shall be considered dissolved when decided by the members, or after the church has not held annual meetings for 3 years, or when fewer than 20 members remain.

ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to members of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church in writing and adopted as a preliminary step at a duly called business meeting of the church. Amendments to this Constitution that have been adopted preliminarily may be finally approved at a duly called business meeting of the church no less than 90 days from the date of preliminary adoption. They must be acted upon as previously adopted and without further amendment by affirmative vote of at least 67% of votes cast.

ARTICLE VIII – OFFICERS AND BY-LAWS

The Findlay Evangelical Free Church will have the authority to establish officers and by-laws consistent with this Constitution and the purpose of this church.

THE FINDLAY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - PURPOSE

The purpose of these By-laws is to set forth procedures and principles of operation for The Findlay Evangelical Free Church so that in all things the church glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

Qualification for Membership

Membership of the Findlay Evangelical Free Church shall be comprised of individuals: who have been born-again through saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; who subscribe to the Doctrinal Statement described in Article III of the Constitution; who endeavor to walk in newness of life by the work of the Spirit of God and the Word of God; and who are committed to biblical unity in all things. Members shall support the mission of the church with their prayers, attendance, spiritual gifts and talents, financial resources, and willing service. Members shall voluntarily relinquish membership if they no longer meet these commitments.

Admission into Membership

Application for membership to any Member Church may be made to the Senior Pastor or any Elder of a Member Church. Applicants will be provided a copy of the Doctrinal Statement and the Constitution and By-laws of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

Applicants must complete a membership application that provides a personal testimony of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ; evidence of a life in active transformation; and written agreement with the Doctrinal Statement, Constitution, and By-laws of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

Any existing member, having valid biblical reason for objection to receiving any applicant into membership, shall immediately appear before the Elders of the Member Church and give scriptural reasons for objecting. The Elders shall consider the validity of these objections.

Designation of Membership

Membership shall be vested in the Member Church where the member attends and employs their time, gifts, skills, and financial resources. All members of each Member Church are also members of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

Members will be eligible to vote at business meetings of their Member Church, but also at business meetings of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church on matters concerning the entire Family of Churches.

Member Conduct

Membership is not a casual commitment. Instead, it is a sacred duty to participate fully in the body of Christ. While it is recognized that biblical transformation is a matter of heart change (Romans 12:1-2), it is also recognized that the natural outflow of walking with Christ has external evidence:

- Active transformation by the Spirit of God through personal and private devotion to Scripture and prayer in a spirit of humility before God (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18).
- Participation in community with other believers that includes regular attendance in public services of the church (Hebrews 10:25, 1 John 1:7).
- Personal and public testimony of the Gospel before the lost (Romans 10:14-15, 1 Peter 3:15-16).
- Generously giving of time, gifts, skills, and financial resources to further the kingdom of God

and this church (Colossians 3:17, 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

- Living in biblical unity with all believers and peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18, Ephesians 4:1-6).
- Accepting of the sacred duty as parents to provide Christian instruction for their children (Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4).
- Accepting responsibility to remember each other in prayer (Ephesians 6:18), to aid each other in sickness and distress (James 5:15-16), to be courteous in speech (Colossians 4:6), and to be slow to anger (Ephesians 4:29-32).

Removal from Membership

Members who no longer meet the qualifications for membership or the commitments of member conduct may voluntarily withdraw their membership by written request delivered to their Senior Pastor or an Elder.

Elders shall discipline any member for the purpose of restoration when it has been determined that, despite intentional Elder counsel, they no longer meet the qualifications for membership or live in violation of the commitments of membership. Counsel shall follow the biblical model of repentance and restoration in genuine humility (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-3, Ephesians 4:1-2, 1 Timothy 5:19-22, Titus 3:10-11). Removal shall be considered a final step when it is concluded by the majority of Member Church Elders that the individual chooses to continue in an unrepentant manner. Members who cease participation in the life of any Member Church will be removed from the membership list by the Elders.

Any previous member may re-apply for membership at a future time by following the normal application process.

ARTICLE III – MEETINGS

Public Services

Worship services, Christian education classes, and other ministry activities shall be conducted at times decided by each Member Church.

Business Meetings - General

Meetings shall be held at times and places likely to be convenient for the great majority of members. Notice of meetings and agenda shall be broadly disseminated so as to inform every member as can be reasonably expected at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

The Chairman of the Elders shall conduct the annual meeting and other business meetings according to Robert's Rules of Order. Motions from the floor on matters not covered by the meeting agenda shall be tabled for consideration at a future meeting.

While all members are encouraged to attend business meetings, only members at least 18 years of age have the right to vote in matters coming before a business meeting.

All matters shall be determined by a simple majority vote, except when otherwise specified by the Constitution or By-laws of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

Business Meetings – The Findlay Evangelical Free Church

The Findlay Evangelical Church shall have an annual business meeting at a time decided by the

Combined Elders (see ARTICLE V), normally within 30 days of a new fiscal year. Other business meetings will be held as determined by the Combined Elders, or if the congregation submits a request to the Elders in writing, signed by 15% of the membership.

33% of voting membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business as presented in the agenda. A quorum is required to call a congregational meeting to order. Members may vote by written proxy or absentee ballot, which will be counted toward the required quorum for conducting a business meeting. No business meeting shall last for more than two and one-half hours from the announced time it was to convene.

The agenda of the business meeting of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church shall include action items that concern the entire Family of Churches:

- Changes to the Constitution or By-laws of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church
- Election of officers of the Corporation
- Additions or separations of Member Churches
- Acquiring aggregate debt or other financial obligations in excess of \$75,000 at any Member Church
- Confirmation of the consolidated operating budget of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church
- Other general matters reasonably affecting the entire Family of Churches that comprise The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

Business Meetings – Member Churches

Member Churches shall have an annual business meeting at such time decided by the Member Church Elders. Other business meetings will be held as needed and determined by the Elders, or if the local congregation submits a request in writing to the Elders signed by 15% of the membership.

50% of voting membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business as presented in the agenda. A quorum is required to call a congregational meeting to order. Members may vote by written proxy or absentee ballot, which will be counted toward the required quorum for conducting a business meeting. No business meeting shall last for more than two and one-half hours from the announced time it was to convene.

The agenda for the business meeting of each Member Church shall include actions specific to that church:

- Annual operating budget
- Affirmation of Elders and Deacons
- Hiring of the Senior Pastor
- Major ministry direction and decisions
- Acquiring aggregate debt or other financial obligations of less than \$75,000
- Other matters reasonably affecting the specific Member Church.

ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS

The officers of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church shall consist of President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Corporate officers must be elected as required by Ohio Law. Corporate officers shall be members of the church in good standing who are selected by the Combined Elders for confirmation by members at the annual business meeting of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

The signature of all three officers (or their designated signers) shall be required to receive by gift, to purchase, to sell, or to mortgage, real property; or to open or close financial or bank accounts.

The signature of one officer (or his designated signer) shall be required for all checks drawn on a bank account in the name of The Findlay Evangelical Church.

ARTICLE V – Elders

Elders are the leaders of the New Testament church. The Senior Pastor of each Member Church shall be an Elder. Additional Elders shall be chosen from among voting members of the Member Church, and may include other vocational Pastors of their Member Church if deemed appropriate by a particular Member Church.

Elders must meet the requirements found in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 20:28-31a, 1 Peter 5:1-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 5:17-18). They shall be men of exemplary Christian character, being examples to the members and attenders in the life of the church and in all areas of Christian living. Elders must engage the gift of teaching.

An Elder shall be chosen by other Elders and affirmed by his Member Church for service at his Member Church at a business meeting by 75% affirmative vote of those voting. Elders of all Member Churches will also be Elders of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church. Elders shall serve three-year terms, after which time they must be re-affirmed by their Member Church. The presence or absence of term limits can be decided by each individual Member Church.

Members may nominate an Elder candidate to any active Elder for consideration.

Elders shall be subject to a self-evaluation followed by evaluation by other Elders at his Member Church on an annual basis. Elders who no longer meet the requirements found in Scripture or who are no longer able or willing to serve, may resign or be relieved of service by majority Elder decision at any time.

The number of Elders shall be determined by each Member Church based on ministry needs. Elders shall be active leaders of the church and principal voices in accomplishing the mission of the church.

Designated Elders: Each Member Church will designate two of its Elders who shall be known as its Designated Elders. The two Designated Elders from each Member Church will serve together with the two Designated Elders from all other Member Churches when necessary due to unusual circumstances and to provide leadership concerning decisions affecting the entire Family of Churches. Designated Elders will plan meetings of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

Combined Elders: The Combined Elders is a group composed of all the Elders from all the Member Churches.

In a case where a Member Church is struggling, the Combined Elders shall determine if a Member Church is able to govern itself independently. If not, the Designated Elders shall establish leadership for the Member Church until such time it is again able to fully lead itself independently.

ARTICLE VI – Senior Pastor Call

The Senior Pastor shall be called as both Senior Pastor and Elder by a Member Church at a business meeting by 75% affirmative vote. The Elders of a Member Church will call a Search Team of at least three and no more than nine members, including a minimum of two Elders from the Member Church. Elders from other Member Churches and members of the congregation at large may be invited to join a Search Team by the Elders of a Member Church. The Elders may call upon resources outside the church to assist in the search process. The Elders have the authority to call an Interim Pastor during a search.

Removal

The Senior Pastor may resign at any time; however, absent a resignation, the congregation must vote to remove its Senior Pastor at a business meeting specifically called to remove the Senior Pastor and removal must be approved a 75% majority vote.

Role of the Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor, in partnership with the Elders, is responsible for the overall leadership and spiritual direction of the church. The Senior Pastor provides leadership to the Elders, congregation, and staff. The Senior Pastor is responsible for the operation and ministries of the church. The Senior Pastor shall engage other Elders, Deacons, staff, and members at large in the operation of the church and the work of the ministry.

The Senior Pastor must provide clear leadership in preaching, teaching, prayer, and service, both in words and by example. The Senior Pastor must have the capacity to equip the church in fulfilling the purpose and mission of the church, recognizing the essential need for ministry partnership with other Elders, ministry leaders and staff.

ARTICLE VII – Deacons

A Deacon shall be chosen by Member Church Elders and affirmed by his Member Church for service at his Member Church at a business meeting by 75% affirmative vote. They shall be men of exemplary Christian character, being examples to the members and attenders in the life of the church and in all areas of Christian living. Deacons shall assist the Elders in the ministries of the church (Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13). All Deacons must be chosen from among voting members in good standing at a Member Church. Deacons shall serve three-year terms, after which time they must be re-affirmed by their Member Church. The presence or absence of term limits can be decided by each individual Member Church.

A Deacon shall be subject to a self-evaluation followed by evaluation by Elders at his Member Church on an annual basis. Deacons who no longer meet the requirements found in Scripture or who are no longer able or willing to serve may resign or be relieved of service by a majority Elder decision at any time.

The number of Deacons shall be determined by each Member Church based on local ministry needs. Deacons shall be active leaders of the church and principally focused on service necessary for accomplishing the mission of the church.

Members may nominate a Deacon candidate to any active Elder.

ARTICLE VIII – Pastoral Staff and Other Employees

The Senior Pastor and Elders of each Member Church shall be responsible for the hiring process utilized for full-time and part-time pastors and other staff. They may utilize search committees and seek congregational approval of candidates if they deem this to be appropriate on a case by case basis, but they are not required to do so.

ARTICLE IX – Reliance on Scripture as the Standard for all Matters of Life

We believe that the Holy Bible sets timeless standards for all matters of life, as more fully described in the Doctrinal Statement of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church.

We believe God instituted monogamous marriage between male and female as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. For this reason, we believe that marriage is exclusively the union of one genetic male and one genetic female (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-24, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:31). Because of this biblical foundation, it is our policy that the facilities of this church may not be used for any function that in any way approves of, solemnizes, supports or allows a same-sex or polygamous union. It is also the policy of this church that no pastor or member of the church staff or leadership shall officiate at any ceremony designed to solemnize, promote, create, or approve of such a union. A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by this church only to the extent that it is consistent with this definition of marriage.

The Findlay Evangelical Free Church shall not allow anyone who denies these timeless standards to enter into membership, to lead, or to teach in any ministry of the church.

ARTICLE X - CONFLICT

In the unexpected event of unresolvable conflict, it is agreed in advance by Elders, Deacons, Pastors, Members, and Member Churches, that we will submit to mediation in a process governed by leadership representatives from the Evangelical Free Church of America, Great Lakes District or its successor.

ARTICLE XI – AMENDMENTS

These By-laws may be amended or altered by a 67% majority vote at any regular or special business meeting of The Findlay Evangelical Free Church, provided notification of the proposed change has been made to the congregation at least two weeks prior to such meeting.