



## STATEMENT OF FAITH

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Christ's Return:** We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

**Response & 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.



## CONSTITUTION

### **Who is the South Church family?**

We are a body of evangelical followers of Jesus Christ, organized for the purpose of fellowship and fulfilling the mission Christ has for His church as recorded in the Holy Scripture. Certain laws provide direction and help preserve the purpose and function of our church family. Therefore we are governed by the following Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. South Church is a non-profit religious corporation organized under the laws of the State of Texas and an affiliate of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

### **Why does the South Church family exist & what do its family members believe?**

South Church exists to love God and love others by proclaiming the Truth of Scripture, delighting in the Lord as the primary desire of our lives, and serving others for the glory & fame of Jesus' name. As part of the Evangelical Free Church of America ([www.efca.org](http://www.efca.org)), we believe in the aforementioned Statement of Faith.

### **Members of South Church are family members of the Body of Christ.**

#### **What is a member of the Body of Christ?**

Repentant sinners: Those who recognize their complete inability to rescue themselves from the righteous wrath of God, and are hoping entirely on the righteousness of Christ merited on their behalf through His substitutionary death & victorious resurrection.

The baptized: Baptism is one of the believer's first acts of obedience in following Jesus. This public profession is a willing & outward sign of the inward condition of faith & confidence in Christ, our only hope for salvation.

The obedient: A follower of Christ seeks communion with the saints through participation in corporate worship, in the Lord's Supper, and in ministry to & through the family of faith.

### **Members of South Church are family members of the Body of Christ at South Church.**

#### **How do I become a member of the Body of Christ at South Church?**

There is nothing more important than loving Christ & nothing more helpful than a confident relationship with Him. If we love one another, we can't help but want to do all we can to help each other know & love Jesus. Therefore, it is important for our elders to have the opportunity to hear your testimony of how you became a Christian and to know whether or not you understand & agree to live in harmony with the South Church doctrines.

#### **How do I learn the South Church doctrines?**

Twice each year doctrinal material will be provided those interested in membership, giving them the opportunity to read Scripture and supporting material, as well as meet with an elder in an effort to come to understand the doctrines of South Church.

#### **How do the elders determine if I am a follower of Christ who understands the doctrines of South Church?**

Following the completion of the study of the church doctrines, applicants will share their testimony with an elder providing opportunity to clarify any questions or concerns about salvation or church doctrine.

#### **How long does my South Church membership last?**

All South Church memberships expire annually on December 31. Near the end of every year, any member wishing to extend their membership another year will simply resubmit their name to church leadership. At this time, it is recommended that the renewing member review the doctrines to consider if the church is faithfully teaching them, and if they themselves are faithfully living them. If a renewing member judges themselves deficient in his or her walk of sanctification, he or she should pray with an elder & prayerfully consider becoming more involved in the church ministries of Sustain, Restore and Proclaim.

### How does South Church handle discipline issues?

No accusation is considered unless supported by at least two witnesses (1 Ti 5.19). If a participant is found to be living contrary to Scripture, he or she will be counseled by the elders. If efforts in repentance & restoration fail, elders will follow procedures in Mt 18, 1 Co 5, 2 Co 2, and Ga 6. Members who exhibit unrepentant behavior will be dismissed from membership by a unanimous vote of the elders, with the hope that repentance to the Lord & relationship with His family at South Church may soon be restored (cf. 1 Co 5 & 2 Co 2.5-8).

### How does South Church define *marriage*?

Marriage is established in Genesis 2.20-24 as the union of one man & one woman, combined in one flesh, for as long as they both shall live. By the grace of God, marriage begets children (Gn 1.28). In addition, the spiritual purpose of marriage is to reflect the relationship between Christ & His bride, the Church (Ep 5.22-33, 1 Pt 1.3).

In obedience to our faith, South Church unites in holy matrimony only those born again as determined by the elders of the church, as informed by God's Holy Word and Holy Spirit.

Church property, resources, and personnel are available exclusively to those meeting the aforementioned Biblical definition of marriage. We regard these restrictions and definition to be in obedience to Scripture and an exercise of the freedom of religion clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

### Who does South Church partner with for ministry?

The South Church family has applied and been accepted for membership in and endeavors to cooperate in the EFCA. We understand that: (1) our Statement of Faith must be verbatim to the EFCA Texas-Oklahoma District, (2) our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws must conform to the policies and practices of the EFCA, and (3) our family members must be willing to live in harmony with the EFCA Statement of Faith.

### How does South Church manage the gifts God provides?

South Church has the power to buy, own, and sell property in its corporate name. If we cease to function or our corporation dissolves, the right, title, and interest in and to all real and personal church property will be given to the poor. We are committed to relying on Jesus for equipping the saints and reaching the lost through three core ministries (Sustain, Restore, Proclaim) in order to glorify God to whom all praise is due.

South Church operates on a *monthly* budget. As the Lord provides, monthly expenses are deducted from monthly offerings. Each month, every remaining dollar is allocated in three ways: 70% for community-related Restore & benevolence ministry, 20% for church planting efforts, and 10% for foreign indigenous efforts and short-term mission trips. Ultimately, with every dollar allocated, we begin each month with a zero budget and in full dependence on the Lord for future support and ministry.

### How are necessary changes made to this constitution?

Amendments, additions or changes to these Articles of Incorporation may be made at any family meeting when proposed changes have been presented in written form and discussed at a previous meeting. A 75% majority is necessary for ratification.



## BYLAWS

### How does the South Church family function?

Ultimate authority in the church resides in the membership of the South Church family. They approve Biblically qualified elders who carry on the routine operation and government of the church. Elders elect from its members the following officers each year: Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary. These men serve as the corporate officers/trustees of the church family.

### Leadership of the South Church family

#### What are the qualifications of elders & deacons who serve the South Church family?

Elders & deacons are members of South Church who manifest the qualifications stipulated by the Scriptures (elders: 1 Ti 3.1-7, Ti 1.5-9; deacons: 1 Ti 3.8-13) and have been elected by the members of South Church. In case of question as to whether any man meets these requirements, the elders will decide.

#### How are South Church elders & deacons selected?

According to Acts 6, the Holy Spirit selects leadership. Therefore, selection will be made on the basis of spiritual leadership.

Elders will submit their selections for any additional elder(s) to the congregation for affirmation prior to a family meeting where they are approved or disapproved.

At any time, members of the congregation may submit to the elders suggestions for additional deacon(s). Elders will prayerfully consider church family needs, as well as the qualification of each suggested candidate. As led by the Holy Spirit, elders will select qualified candidate(s) and inform church members prior to a family meeting where they are approved or disapproved.

#### How long do elders & deacons serve the South Church family?

Elders & deacons are affirmed by the congregation for a three year term. They may be reaffirmed for additional terms and may take a sabbatical for up to one year after serving each three year term. Any leader not fulfilling the qualifications or duties will be asked by the elders to resign.

#### How are South Church elders kept in line with the Lord?

Essentially Pv 9.10. "The fear of the Lord." Elders will evaluate their lives & the lives of the other elders. The elders are a self-disciplining body of leaders according to Mt 18.15-20; 2 Th 3.14-15; 1 Ti 5.19-20. However, the elders are directly accountable to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, for all their actions and decisions (Hb 13.17).

#### How do the elders serve the South Church family?

Elders have essentially a three-fold function: (1) To build and develop their own families in the Lord (1 Ti 3.4-5). (2) To feed, shepherd and pray for the flock of God (Jn 21.15-17; Ac 10.17-32; 6.1-4); this involves positive impartation of truth, refutation of error, and administration of discipline. Family members are expected to recognize the Biblical responsibility of their church elders, pray for and entrust themselves to their loving counsel & discipline for the edification of the Body of Christ at South Church. (3) To oversee and manage the entire ministry of South Church (Ac 20.28; 1 Pt 5.2-3); this involves assessing the needs of the entire body, planning, evaluating, and appointing those to assist in various areas of responsibility.

#### How do the deacons serve the South Church family?

Deacons monitor the needs of the church family, with a specific emphasis on the tangible, practical aspects of church ministry. Deacons meet monthly for prayer, devotion in God's Word, and to attend to church business, ever seeking the leadership of God's Holy Spirit. Serving in a variety of ways, deacons anticipate the needs of the congregation enabling the elders to concentrate on the ministry of God's Word & prayer (Ac 6.2).

In addition to meeting in their respective entities, elders & deacons will meet quarterly for prayer, devotion & direction.

### How do the elders make decisions for the South Church family?

A quorum of elders consists of a simple majority. Elders approach decisions in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit. They earnestly seek to reach a unanimous decision without coercion. (As a last resort, elders take a vote to reach a decision with a 75% majority.)

### When does South Church have family meetings?

Congregational meetings may be called at any time by the elders. These meetings, along with the stated purpose of the meeting, shall be announced publicly on two consecutive Sundays at proclaim weekend worship service(s).

### How does the South Church family make decisions?

On issues of constitution, bylaws, budget, property, etc., after an explanation has been offered to the congregation, a vote will be held. If 75% of the votes approve, the proposal will be adopted.

### What is considered a “quorum” at family meetings?

Voting privileges are extended to members of South Church. The voting members at any meeting which has been properly announced (2 consecutive weeks prior) constitutes a quorum. If elders determine the character of an individual does not support the stated purpose of South Church, his/her vote is not counted.

### When does the South Church fiscal year begin and end?

Our fiscal year begins January 1st and ends December 31st.

## Pastors

### How does the South Church family “call” a pastor?

Elders recommend qualified persons to the congregation. Candidates are members of the Body of Christ who are willing and qualified, if not already, to become members of the Ministerial Association of the EFCA. Once the elders determine a man to recommend as a candidate for a call, the South Church family will be invited to a special meeting. The recommendation will be presented with all the reasons for suggesting him as a candidate. The church family will vote whether or not to extend a call to the recommended candidate. He is required to receive a 75% majority vote. If not, the matter goes back to the elders.

### How does the South Church family terminate a pastor?

If a pastor should radically depart from the Word of God in his conduct or in doctrine as contained in the Statement of Faith, or demonstrates proven ineffectiveness in ministry, the elders will admonish him in love. Should this not have the desired result, the pastor will be discharged from his responsibility and ministry to the church family.

Pastoral discharge by the church family is subject to the following conditions: He may only be dismissed by the congregation at a family meeting called specifically for that purpose. After hearing the reasons for his recommended dismissal, he will be accorded the right of stating his position in the presence of the congregation. He (and his family) will be absent at the time of voting. A ballot vote of a simple majority of the church family present will make valid the termination of a pastor.

### What expectations does the South Church family have of its pastors?

Serving as a member of the elders, he will perform all Scriptural responsibilities of his office under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and oversee the entire ministry of the church family. He will abide by the Word of God in his life, teaching and preaching, taking great care in all his conduct so as to be an esteemed man of respect in the church family and community. He will hire, terminate and supervise staff in consultation with the elders. Pastors cannot moderate church family meetings. Elders will designate another elder to do so.

### How are necessary changes made to these bylaws?

Changes to the bylaws may be made at any family meeting by 75% majority vote when proposed changes have been presented in written form and discussed at a previous meeting.