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JOHNSTON

evangelical free church

BYLAWS OF THE JOHNSTON EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

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ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization is the Johnston Evangelical Free Church (JEFC) of Johnston, Iowa.

ARTICLE II – AUTHORITY & AFFILIATION

A. Authority: The Congregation, defined as “Adult Members,” at its regular and special meetings, is the governing body of this organization. The legal signatories of the church are the Elder Board Chairman, and at least one executive staff member designated by the Elders.

B. Affiliation: This church is affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America, and supports their mission, uniting in efforts to further the Gospel of Christ in the way that the church itself decides.

ARTICLE III – STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Statement of Faith of this organization shall be the same as the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America, which reads as follows:

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 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.

In addition to the Evangelical Free Church Statement, our Statement of Faith includes the following:

Marriage: We believe that marriage is the exclusive, covenantal union of one biologically born man and one biologically born woman, which union was designed by God. Genesis 2:24 states, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." Jesus Christ affirmed this in Matthew 19:4-6. Therefore, we will faithfully follow this scriptural definition of marriage in the teachings and practices of this church.

ARTICLE IV – PURPOSE

The mission of the Johnston Evangelical Free Church is to glorify God by proclaiming Jesus Christ so that people might come to know Him personally and be equipped with the necessary skills to serve Him effectively in every area of life.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)

ARTICLE V – COVENANT

As members of Johnston Evangelical Free Church, we commit ourselves to the doctrine, mission, and values of this church. We commit to advancing Christ-centeredness, Redemptive Community, and Missional Living in our lives, families, and church. We will express this commitment by seeking to live by grace, grow in the Word & prayer, serve in the body, engage in relationships, practice faithful stewardship, and advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the local community and around the world.

ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP

JEFC invites those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, express a commitment to grow in their faith, and agree to uphold the Statement of Faith to become members.

A. Categories of Membership

1. Adult Membership

Adult members must be 18 years of age and may vote on all congregational matters. They may serve in any capacity for which they are qualified in the ministry of JEFC.

2. Youth Membership

We encourage youth who are younger than 18 and wish to participate actively in the life of the congregation to apply for Youth Membership, with parental permission. Parents can use this category of non-voting membership to prepare their children to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Adult Membership as soon as they are eligible. Youth apply for membership by following the normal membership requirements and upon reaching 18 years of age become Adult Members.

B. Admission of Members

Individuals may become members by:

1. Attending worship services at JEFC for at least two consecutive months.
2. Attending a membership class.
3. Completing a membership application, which includes their personal testimony of faith in Christ and a commitment to the doctrine, mission, and values at JEFC.
4. Interviewing with an Elder or Elder-designee, who is a member. After the interview, the congregation will be notified of prospective members and given two weeks to express any concerns to the Elders.
5. Receiving approval by a two-thirds majority vote of the Elders.
6. New members may be welcomed during a church service, congregational meeting, or through a form of church communication.

C. Responsibilities of Members

We expect members to:

- Meet together in fellowship to worship Jesus Christ, study and apply the Word of God, pray, and observe communion. Members should attend weekly corporate worship services and strongly consider participation in Community Groups.
- Support the ministry and vision of the church by practicing good stewardship of their finances, time, and spiritual gifts.
- Grow in maturity in Christ by seeking to understand and live out the Gospel of grace, exhibiting moral purity and the fruit of the Spirit, and encouraging fellow believers in the faith.
- Actively share the gospel of Jesus Christ by engaging the community through compassion, relationships, and communicating God's truth.

- Participate in the operation of the church by attending congregational business meetings.
- Seek spiritual help in times of need and communicate prayer requests as needed.
- Inform the Elders of a decision to leave JEFC.

D. Discipline of Members

It is right, and in harmony with Scripture, to exercise church discipline toward any member who holds or teaches false doctrine, lives in a manner inconsistent with Christianity, purposely and consistently violates biblical morals, or intentionally disturbs the unity and peace of the church.

When such a conflict occurs, our congregation and Elders in particular, are to follow the procedure in Matthew 18:15-16 of leading the erring individual to repentance and restoration. We do this in a spirit of humility and gentleness (Galatians 6:1), as well as loving honesty (Ephesians 4:25). The purpose of the process is three-fold: to protect the reputation of Jesus Christ, to safeguard the purity of the church, and to restore the erring member.

E. Termination of Membership

The Elders are responsible to remove from membership someone who refuses to respond appropriately to discipline after reasonable attempts at reconciliation, fails to attend JEFC for a period of six months without explanation, or fails to respond to reasonable attempts at contact.

ARTICLE VII – CHURCH GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

A. Authority & Accountability

1. Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and holds ultimate authority. This authority is communicated to the church through His written Word. Therefore, obedience to His Word is foundational to the governance of this church.

2. Congregation

The congregation elects the Elders of the church and approves certain decisions, as outlined below, to ensure accountability. The congregation is also encouraged to provide regular input to the Elders.

The following decisions require a two-thirds majority vote of the congregation for approval, except the calling and dismissal of the Lead Pastor, which requires a three-fourths majority vote:

- Changes to the Bylaws.
- The election and removal of Elders.
- The calling and dismissal of the Lead Pastor.
- The calling of executive staff (Executive Pastors/Executive Directors).
- Adoption of an annual budget.
- Any expenditure that exceeds 2% of the annual budget.
- The purchase or sale of land and buildings.

3. Elders

The Elders provide overall leadership and spiritual oversight for the congregation. They work closely with the Lead Pastor to ensure accountability, evaluate plans & ministries, and assess the vision for the church.

4. Lead Pastor & Staff

The Lead Pastor, working closely with the staff team and key lay leaders, directs the day-to-day ministries of the church. He reports regularly to the Elders to ensure accountability, effective ministry, and proper vision for the church. Each staff member reports to the Lead Pastor or his designee.

5. Deacons & Deaconesses

The Deacons and Deaconesses administer various ministries of the church so that the Elders and Staff may focus on their primary responsibilities outlined in the Bylaws.

B. Church Leadership

1. Elders

- a. **Composition.** The role of Elder is a ministry of oversight open to men. The Elder Team consists of the Lead Pastor and at least five men elected from the Congregation. Each year, the Elders decide who will serve as Elder Chairman. The role of the Elder Chairman is to direct the overall affairs of the Elder Team and to lead meetings. The Elder Chairman may serve for 3 consecutive years.
- b. **Meetings.** Regular meetings will be held at least once per month at a time and place designated by the Elders. A minimum of two-thirds of the voting Elders constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Elder Team. The Elders seek consensus for decisions. If a vote is necessary, the majority determines the outcome except in those cases where the Bylaws specify otherwise. Members of the Elder Team may not vote on items that affect their relatives' salaries, employment, discipline, or related matters. However, Elders with this conflict of interest may be requested to participate in discussions on such matters.
- c. **Qualifications.** Each member of the Elder Team must be an active, supportive member of the church for at least 18 months before being considered as an Elder. Elders must have demonstrated faithfulness in attendance, giving, and ministry. They must subscribe to the statement of faith, meet the scriptural criteria found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, and be recognized as carrying out the ministry of a leader.
- d. **Responsibilities.** The Scriptures teach that Elders are primarily responsible for the oversight of the congregation. We classify this responsibility into three areas: Doctrine, Direction, and Discipline.

1) Doctrine

- Oversee the preaching and teaching ministries of JEFC.
- Ensure the doctrine of the church remains biblical.
- Resolve doctrinal issues in the church.

2) Direction

- Diligently seek the Lord in prayer and cultivate an environment of prayer at JEFC.
- Provide for the leadership and overall shepherding of the congregation, including the vision and administration of all church ministries.
- Ensure financial integrity and good stewardship, including an annual review of church finances conducted by non-elder, non-staff persons.
- Delegate areas of responsibility that would hinder the Elders from fulfilling their primary responsibility of spiritual oversight.

3) Discipline

- Guard the purity of the church, the reputation of Christ, and the perseverance of church members.
- Administer, in love and humility, the biblical process of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-20 and Galatians 6:1-5).

e. Selection

- 1)** The congregation recommends qualified men through a written recommendation form.
- 2)** The Elders identify nominees from the list of recommended men.
- 3)** Upon mutual agreement, the nominee undergoes a period of self-examination, as well as an examination by the current Elders, regarding his suitability for the position, according to the scriptural criteria.
- 4)** If the nominee and the Elders agree on the nominee's suitability for the position, the Elders publicly announce the man's nomination and seek input from members of the church body. We allot 30 days in which members can speak personally with the nominee. If a member is aware of any disqualifying characteristics and the matter remains unresolved, the Elder, the nominee, or the member should approach the Elders and request that the nominee's name be withdrawn from consideration.
- 5)** Following this period of public and private examination, the Elders vote on the nominee. A two-thirds majority vote of the Elders is required to proceed.
- 6)** Upon approval, the Elders bring the nominee before the congregation as a candidate for election. A two-thirds majority vote of the congregation is required to confirm the Elder.

- f. Tenure.** Elders are elected for staggered terms of three years each, for no more than two consecutive terms. However, an Elder may be re-elected following a one-year break. Each Elder's term starts immediately after the meeting at which they are elected and terminates following the annual meeting at the end of their term period; or until resignation or removal by resolution of the Elder Team as described in Article VII > B > 1 > g.

- g. Removal.** Membership on the Elder Team may be terminated by resolution of the Elder Team, and adopted by at least two-thirds majority vote of the Congregation. The reason for termination must clearly be presented prior to voting. Grounds for termination include: delinquency in Elder duties, teaching doctrines that are contrary to the Statement of Faith, or maintaining a lifestyle that is contrary to I Timothy 3:1-7. Discipline will be carried out by the Elder Team in accordance with I Timothy 5:17-20. The Elder Team considers accusations against an Elder if two or more witnesses submit the accusation in a written testimony (I Timothy 5:19-21), and only after the process described in Article VI, Section D, has been followed, yet failed to resolve the issue. The accused Elder may meet with his accusers to hear the charges against him. If the Elders determine he has erred in doctrine or conduct, they will either establish a period of documented counseling or recommend termination.
- h. Vacancies.** An Elder may resign from the Elder Team at any time by giving notice to the Elder Team. An individual to fill the vacancy will be nominated by the remaining Elders and submitted to the Congregation for approval as in a regular election. An Elder elected to fill a vacancy serves the remainder of the vacant term.

2. Church Staff

- a. Composition.** The church staff consists of the Lead Pastor, other pastors, directors, and support staff. We consider *ministry staff* to be those staff members that direct, shepherd, or lead specific areas of ministry (children, youth, adults, women, etc.). Within the ministry staff, the *executive staff* consists of the Executive Pastors/Executive Directors. *Support staff* includes assistants, building & grounds, bookkeeper, and other supportive roles. Additional levels of church staff may be developed as deemed necessary for the ministry of the church.
- b. Qualifications.** Each staff member will have a written job description with qualifications appropriate to that position. Pastors must demonstrate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, meet the qualifications for Elders listed in 1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1, and subscribe to the Statement of Faith. Ministry staff must demonstrate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, display spiritual maturity appropriate to their position, and subscribe to the Statement of Faith. Pastors (and spouse) and ministry staff become members upon hire at JEFC.
- c. Development.** Staff members are vital to the health and ministry of the church; therefore, they will receive a written annual review and regular verbal development and assessment from the person to whom they report. The intention of this process is to encourage the staff and help address areas of weakness. The Lead Pastor and Elder Team determine the reporting structure and oversee the staff review process. The Elders conduct the Lead Pastor's review.
- d. Selection.** The Lead Pastor is elected by a three-fourths majority vote of the congregation. Executive staff is elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the congregation. Other staff is hired by the Lead Pastor or his designee with approval from the Elder Team.

- e. **Dismissal & Resignation.** The Lead Pastor may be dismissed by a resolution proposed by the Elder Team and adopted by a three-fourths majority vote of the congregation. Staff members may be dismissed by a three-fourths majority vote of the Elder Team. Grounds for dismissal include: unsatisfactory performance, delinquency in duties, teaching doctrines that are contrary to the Statement of Faith, maintaining a lifestyle that is contrary to Scripture, or changes in organizational structure or needs. Staff may resign at any time and should notify the Lead Pastor or Elders at least 30 days prior to their resignation.

3. Deacons & Deaconesses

- a. **Composition.** The role of Deacon (men) and Deaconess (women) is a biblical ministry of service.
- b. **Qualifications.** Deacons and Deaconesses must meet the spiritual qualifications listed in I Timothy 3:8-13, Romans 16:1, and Acts 6:1-7 and be an Adult Member of JEFC.
- c. **Responsibilities.** Deacons and Deaconesses are appointed to administer various ministries of JEFC so that the Elders may focus on their primary responsibilities.
- d. **Selection.** To meet the changing needs of JEFC, the process for identifying this role is dynamic in nature. The Elders determine which ministries require Deacons and Deaconesses and appoint qualified candidates to administer those ministries. The Elders may also seek congregational recommendations to determine qualified candidates. Upon appointment, the Elders provide a ministry description and assign an Elder or staff member to coordinate with the Deacons or Deaconesses.
- e. **Tenure.** Deacons and Deaconesses serve for a one-year period, which may be renewed annually for up to six years. They may serve again after a one-year break. Since Deacons and Deaconesses may be appointed at any time in the year, service in any portion of a year is considered a full year of service. This allows the Elders to renew appointments in January of each calendar year.

4. Teams

- a. **Purpose.** In order to carry out the ministry of the church and to provide a broad-based advisory group for major church decisions, the Elders or staff members may establish teams.
- b. **Types.** These teams may be a *ministry* team designed to assist the leadership in planning and implementing ministry in the church (i.e. Missions Team, Women's Ministry Team, etc.), or an *advisory* team designed to provide input on major church decisions (i.e. Bylaws Advisory Team, Advisory Search Team, etc.).

ARTICLE VIII – CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A. Regular & Special Meetings

There will be a minimum of two regular meetings of the congregation each year.

1. **Annual Meeting.** This meeting will be held in January by the Elders with a time of reflection on the previous year, vision casting for the coming year, and voting on the church budget, open Elder positions, and any other church business.
2. **Mid Year Meeting.** This meeting may be held anytime after May in order to update the church on major initiatives and conduct any pertinent business.
3. **Special Meetings.** Special meetings may be called by the Elders. Congregation members may request a special meeting at the discretion of the Elders. All calls for special meetings will clearly state the purpose of the meeting.

B. Meeting Protocol

1. **Notice of Meetings.** Notification of the time and place of all congregational meetings will be announced at least two weeks prior to the meeting. This requirement may be waived in extenuating circumstances.
2. **Representation at Meetings.** Persons entitled to vote in all meetings are Adult Members. Each Adult Member shall be entitled to one vote in person. Voting by proxy is not allowed.
3. **Quorum.** At any meeting, twenty percent of the Adult membership eligible to vote constitutes a quorum.
4. **Conduct at Meetings.** Robert's Rules of Order will be the standard for conducting meetings of the church.
5. **Action.** A majority of the votes cast will be required to take action on a motion brought to the Congregation unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS & DISSOLUTION

A. Amendments

Amendments to the Bylaws may be made at an annual, mid year, or special meeting of the church by a two-thirds majority vote, provided the proposed amendments have been presented in written form and discussed at a meeting at least three months prior to the time of adoption.

B. Dissolution

Upon the dissolution of Johnston Evangelical Free Church, its assets remaining after payment, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities will be distributed to a nonprofit fund, church, foundation or corporation which is organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational and/or religious purposes and which has established its tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3).