

Faith and Practice

EFC Southwest



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2011 Edition
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OUR BELIEFS

Historical Introduction

The Friends Church began in England in the mid-seventeenth century and spread within a few decades throughout the British colonies that bordered the Atlantic Ocean. As an extension of the Protestant Reformation, Friends emphasized a direct, personal encounter with Christ, typified in the experience of its most prominent and enduring leader, George Fox.

Founder George Fox

Born in 1624, Fox participated regularly in the Church of England with his parents until the age of nineteen. During these years he observed an empty formalism and a dead religion that failed to quench his spiritual thirst. He also became deeply disturbed and depressed over the presence of sin in his own heart. Fox wandered from place to place, seeking help from various people and also from reading his Bible.

Finally, in 1647, when his hope was nearly gone, Fox found the answer to his spiritual restlessness through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that made his heart “leap for joy.” Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, he discovered that Jesus is a living Savior who overcame temptation, sin, and Satan, and that through Christ’s power and grace, so could he.

A Growing Movement

Fox was not alone. Scores of others in England had experienced the same spiritual longings. As he began to talk and preach about his new-found faith in Christ, Fox encountered many eager listeners and sometimes attracted great crowds that quickly turned into a growing movement. Within ten years, from about 1650 to 1660, the Friends grew to an estimated 50,000 followers. During this period, they were the fastest growing religious group of any kind in the English-speaking world.

An early distinctive of Friends was their emphasis on evangelism and missions. Fox explained that God had called him to “turn people from darkness to light, that they might receive Christ Jesus,” and he encouraged other Friends to join him in this great cause. Both men and women traveled as missionaries throughout England, among the British colonies, and to various other nations. They preached the gospel to anyone who would listen and, at times, even to those who refused. Obviously, it was both an evangelical and an evangelistic movement.

Early Names

This Friends movement held a number of names in the early years. Prompted undoubtedly by their evangelistic efforts, one of their early labels was “Publishers of Truth.” They not only printed and distributed thousands of tracts, they also “published glad tidings” - telling people far and near about the truth of the gospel message. Another early name was “Children of Light” (referring to the light of Christ in the gospel of John). A derogatory nickname that they received from outsiders was “Quakers,” a label that many ended up embracing as a term of endearment. The official name that they finally chose for themselves, however, remains in place today. The term *Friends* is taken from Jesus’ own words.

Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends for everything that I learned from my father I have made known to you. (John 15:13-15)

Welcoming Persecution

Not only were Friends a rapidly growing movement in the seventeenth century, they also carried the distinction of suffering more persecution than other English Protestant groups. In general, they refused to run away from persecution, and sometimes they seemed to run *toward* it, as if the threat of maltreatment sounded a trumpet call to advance to the spiritual battle line. Rather than hiding underground, Friends insisted on meeting openly in their usual places, and accepted arrest, fines, imprisonment, and even death as a part of their testimony and calling. Between 1660 and 1689, an estimated fifteen thousand Friends went to prison in England, of whom four hundred and fifty paid for their convictions with their lives.

By 1661 in America, authorities had already whipped, branded, imprisoned and deported a number of Friends missionaries, while four of them—William Robinson, Marmaduke Stephenson, William Ledra, and Mary Dyer—concluded their ministries at the end of a noose in Boston. Persecution was an ever-present threat for Friends, if not a reality, until the Act of Toleration passed in 1689, ensuring some of the religious freedoms that we still enjoy.

Attractive Testimonies

From an early period, Friends became known for various “testimonies” or beliefs evidenced in their behaviors, demonstrating to the world their priorities and matters of conscience. One testimony emphasized honesty, plain speech, and the consequent rejection of all swearing and oath taking. They took seriously Jesus’ instruction to let your “yes be yes, and your no, no.” As a result, they concluded that if they swore that they were telling the truth, even in a court of law, it implied that they might be lying if they did *not* swear. They gained a reputation that their word was as good as their bond.

Another early testimony for Friends emphasized the importance of peace. They maintained convictions against violence, war, and abuse of all kinds, and that God had called believers to live in peace with everyone. Friends traditionally stressed simplicity of life and equality among all peoples. These concerns could be seen in their plain clothing (dressing alike as common folk), their respect and care for Native Americans, and their significant leadership role as abolitionists. As a general rule, Friends freed their slaves long before the Civil War and some served as the chief conductors of the Underground Railroad.

Early Organization

The Friends’ first efforts at organization led to the development of local churches, or *Meetings*, which combined to form larger regional gatherings for worship and business, convening monthly, quarterly, and yearly. This system allowed for a formalized reporting structure, group decision making by coming to unity in obedience to the Holy Spirit, church and ministerial accountability, and the development of approved leadership. British Friends started to meet annually in 1671, the same year that the first large regional grouping or Yearly Meeting of Friends in America became organized in New England. Early leaders were known as elders, overseers, or ministers. With an understanding that God alone ordains, Friends recognized those individuals whom God had chosen by “recording” them as ministers, a practice continued today. Friends also acknowledged the role of women in ministry from an early period, affirming many who served as missionaries, ministers, and leaders as called by God. The first paid pastors for Friends began to serve in America in the 1870s.

Influence in America

The message of Friends spread throughout colonial America as the result of missionary efforts that began in 1656 with the ministries of Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, climaxing in 1672 with the visit of George Fox and other key leaders. Friends lived in almost every colony but were prominent in a few, especially in Rhode Island, the Jerseys, and the Carolinas where some of their members served as governors, legislators, judges, and in other positions of influence. In 1682, King Charles II gave a large grant of land in America to a prominent Friend, William Penn, as repayment for a debt owed to his father. The region was named “Penn’s

Woods” (or “Pennsylvania”) in honor of William’s father, and Friends exercised a controlling political influence there until the 1750s.

Nineteenth Century Divisions

Although Friends have always desired to maintain unity, some sharp divisions occurred in the nineteenth century. In 1827, a split took place over theological issues. One branch, the *Hicksites* followed the teachings of Elias Hicks, a New York farmer/preacher who espoused false doctrines, discounting important Christian beliefs such as the authority of Scripture, the virgin birth and the atoning blood of Christ. In contrast to Hicks, *Orthodox* Friends held to the kinds of evangelical Christian beliefs discussed later in this section of *Faith and Practice*. Joseph John Gurney, one of the most influential of the evangelical leaders, emphasized the importance of Bible study and contributed to evangelistic efforts among Friends.

In 1845, another rift opened among Orthodox Friends in America, this time over matters of tradition. Some followed the lead of John Wilbur and wanted to maintain traditional Quaker practices in dress, speech, and ministry, the *Wilburites*. However, others followed the continuing impulse of Gurney and became influenced eventually by the Holiness revivals that swept across America, especially in the West.

Umbrella Groups Today

The divisions in the nineteenth century led to several, mutually exclusive groupings of Friends which exist to this day. The Friends General Conference represents the most liberal theological group of Friends and they are the visible remnant of Hicks’ beliefs. Some of them would not even claim to be Christian. The Conservative Friends are the direct theological descendants of John Wilbur. These groups reside mostly in the Midwest and eastern United States. Another group, the Friends United Meeting, founded in 1902, is an organization that attempts to appeal to a variety of Christian Quaker expressions.

Evangelical Friends Church Southwest is a member of the fourth group, Evangelical Friends International, which began in the early 1960s. EFI aims to make more and better disciples for Jesus through church planting and active missions efforts throughout the world. Today, EFI includes over 1,000 local churches in twenty countries, while Friends of all types live in forty-six countries on six continents.

Local Origins

The first Friends in California came with scores of others as a part of the “gold rush” of 1849. With the advent of the transcontinental railroad in 1867, more Friends moved west, carrying with them the spirit of the holiness revivals occurring at that time in their previous churches. Evangelical Friends Church Southwest began officially in 1895 as an outgrowth of Iowa Yearly Meeting. The original name of “California Yearly Meeting of Friends Church” was changed in 1986 to Friends Church Southwest Yearly Meeting to reflect the growing geographic region of our denominational group. Friends in the Southwest include local churches in California, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. From the outset, Southwest Friends emphasized the dual priorities of evangelism and education. By 1900, they had started eleven new churches, two new mission fields in Alaska and Central America, and the “Training School for Christian Workers” which later became Azusa Pacific University. These continuing concerns are reflected today in four Faith Boards-New Church Development, Missions, Friends Center at Azusa Pacific University, and Quaker Meadow Camp started in 1939 to “win and train youth and adults for Christ.” The current name, Evangelical Friends Church Southwest, was adopted in 2001.

Faith and Practice

As early as the seventeenth century, Friends maintained guidelines for their religious practices and concerns in official lists. By the eighteenth century, after collecting, adding to, and amending these writings, Friends began to publish them in books of *Discipline*. Combined with statements about history and theological beliefs, these publications became known eventually as *Faith and Practice* books, one of which you are now reading. The purpose of this book is to provide current, new and potential members an overview of the basic beliefs and organization around which we unite. We invite you to join us in the continuing history and vision of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest.

An Affirmation of Faith

These biblical beliefs, briefly and simply stated, express our understanding of the Christian faith, which we hold in common with other believers.

1. We believe in the one and only God, who exists eternally in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that all humans, male and female, were created by God, in his image, to be loved and known by him. We were made to glorify and enjoy God, but our relationship with him and our very nature has been broken by sin, which has made us all subject to God's judgment.
3. We believe that all of our world, physical and spiritual, visible and invisible was created by God. We believe our world is also broken by sin and remains in corruption and rebellion and in need of God's redemption.
4. We believe that God's gift of his Son is the only and all-sufficient way we can be saved from the guilt, power, and eternal consequences of our sin and restored to a full relationship with him. We believe we receive this salvation only through our repentance and faith in the atoning death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. We believe that Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient for salvation because he is truly God's Son - fully human and fully divine. We believe Jesus' humanity and divinity are demonstrated through both his death and resurrection and his sinless and miraculous life.
6. We believe that the Holy Spirit will lead those who believe in the Lord Jesus into transformed lives. This radical and divinely empowered transformation happens as we come to see Jesus more clearly, know him more intimately and follow him more closely. This life is marked by increasing conformity to Christ's goodness and holiness, as we die to our sin and self-seeking. We believe this transformation is accomplished through obedience and self-denial by the believer and empowerment and cleansing by the Holy Spirit.
7. We believe in one universal Church, which is made up of all who have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ and who seek to serve, love, and obey him.
8. We believe that human history will come to an end when Jesus returns and this world is redeemed through the creation of a new heaven and new earth. We believe that all will be raised from the dead, the saved to eternal life with God, the lost to God's eternal condemnation.
9. We believe the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired and authoritative written Word of God. We believe the Bible is entirely trustworthy in all that it teaches and reveals, that we are obligated to obey its teaching and that all of our doctrines and practices are subject to its authority.

Fervent Convictions

While we fully affirm the unity of the true Christian church, we also affirm God's use and blessing of the many different kinds of Christian bodies, commonly called denominations. We believe that one of the ways that God uses denominations is through each group's distinctive articulation of the Christian faith. We believe that the Christian message is best proclaimed when each denomination humbly but confidently articulates its perspective concerning the issues upon which Christians have a diversity of views. Traditionally Friends called these "testimonies," but they are not personal experiences shared in church or depositions given in court. Testimonies are fervent convictions of the heart. What follows are our convictions, derived from biblical reflection and experience with the living Christ, regarding seven important issues.

1. The Nature of and Gifts for Ministry

We affirm that every believer in Jesus has the capacity and responsibility to know and experience God directly. No mediation by any other than Jesus Christ is ever required to find God's direction or to experience his presence. Christian ministry is the privilege and responsibility of every believer, graciously given as a gift by God through his Holy Spirit. This ministry cannot be restricted to a special class within the church, nor can the authority for ministry be passed on by any other than the Holy Spirit.

We believe the Holy Spirit's calling and gifting of a person are never limited by mere human factors such as sex, ethnicity or social status, that God wants his Church to recognize, affirm, and train all whom he has called, and that we are disobedient to the Holy Spirit if we do otherwise. We want to be especially clear regarding the role of women in leadership. From our very beginnings, we have found no scriptural basis for limiting certain leadership and ministry roles to men. Today, we continue to affirm, not as a concession to modernity but in obedience to the Bible and the Holy Spirit, that the Lord is calling both women and men to serve as leaders and pastors in his church. (Acts 2:17-18; Eph 1:17; 1 Tim 2:4; 1 Cor 7:7; Eph 4:8; Gal 3:28; Rom 16:3,7)

2. The Indwelling and Gifts of the Spirit

We affirm that every believer receives the Holy Spirit at the point of their conversion, and not as the result of any rite, such as water baptism or the laying on of hands. We believe that the only essential biblical sign that one has been baptized with the Spirit is a transformed life. As the Spirit of Christ dwells within us, he is fully present to lead us and directly teach his will to us. One benefit of the Spirit's indwelling is that all believers are given spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church and the world. We affirm that these gifts are given for service and the glorification of God, and that no gift is ever meant to serve as a necessary sign of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of the believer. We affirm with the Scriptures that not every gift has usefulness in every situation, and that some gifts, such as tongues and prophecy, have biblical guidelines on their use in public worship. We do not, however, find any biblical assertion that these gifts have ceased, and we want to be careful not to place any non-biblical boundaries on their use (2 Cor 1:22; Gal 5:22; 1 Cor 12:7; 1 Cor 12:30; 1 Cor 14:1ff; 1 Cor 14:39).

3. Baptism and Communion

We affirm that there is only one baptism, in the Holy Spirit, for all believers, and that all believers share a continuing communion or collective experience of Christ's presence. Jesus is always and ever present among his people because of his promise to do so, and no rite or ritual can make him more so. We believe the Bible regards our entire lives as the intended settings for God's working and presence, so that no particular practice should be regarded as uniquely "sacramental." The sign or distinguishing mark of a Christian can never be contained in any rite or ritual alone, but rather is always a life conformed to Christ. At the same time, we observe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper with the elements of bread and wine can sometimes be helpful to believers to experience the already established presence of Christ. (See Elements Statement adopted in 1994, pages 29-31).

Our perspective comes solely from our desire to conform our practices and beliefs to the Scriptures. We recognize that many Christians view their particular practice as the simple continuation of New Testament observances. We humbly assert that another look at the Bible would suggest otherwise. In the first three gospels Jesus clearly intended for his Jewish disciples to celebrate the Passover from that point onward in memory of his death rather than Israel's Exodus from Egypt. But it is not at all clear that Jesus intended to create a new ritual for all believers. Instead, he appears to be "Christianizing" an already existing practice-which is exactly what we assert that Paul is doing with his regulations for the "love feast" in Corinth.

We recognize as well, that water baptisms occur in the Bible, but we also note that no particular mode is specified. More importantly, water baptism is never established as a required ritual in the New Testament. This leads us to believe that the broader biblical statements about baptism refer to our common baptism in and by the Holy Spirit, and not to the practice of water baptism.

Our study of the Bible leads us to conclude that the practice of the rituals of water baptism and communion with the elements were never meant to be regarded as necessary for the salvation or sanctification of the believer. Again, while we recognize that some may find these practices helpful, we do not believe that the Bible ever considers them necessary acts of obedience or essential aspects of Christian discipleship (Eph 4:5; John 15:4ff; Matt 28:20; John 14:16; Luke 22:7ff; 1 Cor 11:17ff).

4. Leadership, Decision-making, and the Church

We believe that all who truly follow and trust Jesus are the members of one body, and that each local church is a manifestation of that body. We recognize that God calls and equips particular men and women to be leaders in his church, and it is the role of every member to affirm and cooperate with that calling, while maintaining their own responsibilities for service and leadership as well.

We fully affirm that Jesus is the head of the church, not as a metaphor, but as a matter of practical reality. This makes the church different from all other institutions. While all members are equally part of a local church, the church is not a democracy. Jesus Christ himself is the leader of each church. This means that decision-making in a local church is primarily a task of spiritual discernment. While it is our task to weigh options and discuss various proposals and ideas, we believe that by humbly and prayerfully submitting our opinions and perspectives to the Holy Spirit's direction, the Lord will guide us to unity regarding his direction for a particular decision. This unity cannot be discerned by voting, nor is it merely human consensus, which is arrived at by compromise and mediating conflicting opinions. Rather, unity in decision-making is a gift our Lord Jesus gives his church when they collectively seek his will as its head. (Eph 3:6; 1 Cor 12:28; Heb 13:17; Col 1:18; Acts 15, esp. v. 28)

5. Love, Peace, and Violence

We believe God desires reconciliation with all peoples and between all peoples, having made peace with sinful humanity through his cross. As our gracious salvation has taken away any enmity between God and believers, so also we believe God calls his people to exemplify love in our relationships with each other and the world.

As Jesus did in his own life, we believe that we are called to bear witness to God's love for us and his love for our enemies by suffering for them, if necessary, even unto death. We believe God calls his people to practice peacemaking as a basic element of Christian obedience and discipleship. Violence, in its essence, is evil and inhumane, and contrary to the gospel of love and peace. Consequently, our new life in Christ calls us to rid ourselves of violence in its many and different forms, refusing to use it as a tool for good. With regard to military service we encourage prayerful and conscientious study and obedience to our Lord's call to peacemaking. While each person must live out his or her understanding of Scripture, the time-tested Friends' counsel is to decline to serve, or where the state allows, to give alternative service. In keeping with the teachings and example of Jesus, we are each called to oppose war and violence, to alleviate suffering, work for reconciliation, and promote justice in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of his love (Matt. 26:51-54; Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:14-21; 1 Cor. 6:7; 1Tim. 2:1-8; 1 Peter 2:19-24; Is. 2:4).

6. Salvation, Transformation, and Sanctification

We believe that it is God's purpose and desire to save us from our sins and to transform us into his likeness. We believe this salvation is offered to everyone, and is available to any who will receive it. We believe that God is greatly grieved when people refuse his gift of salvation, but that his power and rule are in no way diminished when they do so.

We believe that when a person receives Jesus Christ in faith, a genuine transformation takes place in both the person's status before God and in his or her very nature. We believe this happens because God makes the repentant believer righteous. Our righteousness before God is not the result of any meritorious actions on our part, but neither are we righteous merely because God considers us to be so. We believe God radically transforms us in salvation, actually making us righteous before him and at the very core of our selves. We receive a new life, one that is now entirely capable of faith, obedience, and love. This new life transforms and restores our relationship with our Lord, enabling us to know and experience Jesus in our daily lives.

We believe this transformation is not completed when we receive Jesus. From the moment of our conversion until our glorification, God is continually at work in us, conforming us to the image of his Son. This grace-filled work of the Holy Spirit that makes us Christ-like in character and conduct is often called sanctification—it is God making us holy as He is holy.

We believe that sanctification is a process through which, by grace, the believer cooperates with the Holy Spirit in his or her own transformation. The Spirit of God empowers, convicts, and encourages each believer to pursue holiness. Our freedom from sin is increasingly manifested in our actions and our very natures. More importantly, our very selves and our behavior become increasingly Christ-like. We believe this transformation is genuine and radical, and that no part of the human life and spirit is unchangeable or unreachable by God's sanctifying grace. As a result of this transformation, we believe that in every situation we can do what is right and effectively carry it out by the grace of God.

We believe our role in sanctification is to love God, live in Christ, and respond to the Holy Spirit. God calls us to fully commit, or consecrate, ourselves to him. We do this by confessing and turning from sin, purifying ourselves from everything that contaminates our bodies and spirits. Moreover, our Lord calls us to live out his truth, to set our minds on what is excellent and praiseworthy, and to obey his commands turning toward our new lives in Christ.

We believe our task is to work out this transformation through our submission to God's Word in our daily lives and especially in response to fresh experiences of God and the Holy Spirit's leading. We do this by faith and by the power of the Spirit who resides within us. It is quite possible that the apostle Paul said it best "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Phil. 2:12-13)." (Deut 9:6; Luke 10:27; John 3:36, 17:17-19; Rom 5:17, 19, chapters 6-8, 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:18-20; 2 Cor 3:16, 18, 5:21, 7:1; Gal 2:20, 5:16; Eph 2:10; Phil 2:12-13, 4:8; Col 1:21-23, 3:1-4; 1 Thess 4:3-8, 5:23-24; Titus 2:11-12, 3:5; Heb 5:9, 12:1; 1 Pet 1:15-16; 1 John 1:5-2:2, 3:4-10)

7. Truthful and Gracious Speech

We believe our ability to communicate with one another was given to us by God. As our maker, He is the creator of speech and language. This gift, like every other gift from God, is to be guarded and used wisely. Friends have a testimony about how we are to speak. Following Jesus' command Friends decline to use oaths of any kind, even in legal settings, preferring to use a simple affirmation (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12). In earlier times, Friends refused to use the second person plural, "you," to address an individual of higher rank or social status, using the singular form, "thee" or "thou" to address all individuals.

Friends have had an earlier testimony about how we are to speak. Following Jesus' command, they refused to take oaths, and recognizing the essential equality of all people, they refused to use the formal form of address. They addressed all with the informal "thee" and "thou".

At the heart of this testimony was a belief that language was given to us to communicate truth. Taking an oath implied that somehow one's other words were not always as true; an abasement of language and an implied dishonesty. Formal address required bowing to a social convention based on a passing human reality, and not on the eternal values of the kingdom of God.

We believe the Lord is calling us to redeem our speech. Words were given to us to tell the truth. We should be very aware of the constant temptation to exchange clarity for what presents best and simplicity of speech for calculated expressions. When we disagree, we can and should express ourselves clearly and honestly, but we must be careful not to dishonor those with whom we disagree. Most of all, we must embrace the positive use of words. The Scriptures command us to bless, encourage, and honor each other. More than avoiding the misuse of words, the Lord is calling us to put speech to work for the gracious and beneficial purposes for which he created it.

Counsel on Contemporary Issues

Martin Luther is said to have remarked that “Any gospel which does not address the issues of its day is no gospel at all.” Friends have traditionally addressed this challenge in the form of “Advices”-spiritual counsel and biblical perspective on the issues of the day addressed to both the church and the larger community. We continue this practice regarding the issues below, although this is not an exhaustive list.

Abortion and Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide

We believe that all human life is a gift from God. We believe that Scriptures teach and common observation confirms that life begins at conception. God is as intimately concerned with the person inside the womb as with the person outside the womb. Moreover, we believe, with the Scriptures, that one’s life is never entirely one’s own. We belong to God, first of all, but in a very real way, we also belong to one another. As a consequence of this, we oppose the practices of abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide.

An abortion infringes the very principle of life, violating the love through which God creates and nurtures human life. It asserts an individual’s choice over the life of the child, and denies the child’s place in the community.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide have the appearance of compassion, but at their heart, these practices violate the basic principle of life. Any judgment about the potentiality or quality of one life is a diminishment of all life. We recognize that human suffering can be very real at the end of life, but we also affirm that God’s presence is just as real.

We believe our best answer to abortion and euthanasia is to value life profoundly and to embody Christ’s love completely in our communities, especially towards those who have undergone an abortion or have been part of an assisted suicide. We recognize that these sinful choices are frequently made under great stress and confusion. We realize as well, that while we must speak clearly against these practices, we must just as clearly proclaim God’s love and the availability of forgiveness to those who have done them.

Sexuality

The Scriptures clearly declare that God is the creator of humanity. The Lord’s creation of men and women, which is in the image of God, includes our sexuality, and by his own statement about all of creation, our sexuality is good. The Scriptures also declare that our sexuality, like every other aspect of ourselves, is subject to sin.

As a consequence of this, our sexuality is to be both celebrated and controlled. We believe that God has created sex as a complementary expression of our being made male and female, and intends our sexuality for mutual self-giving, and not for self-satisfaction. This means the only appropriate context for sexual activity is a publicly declared, legally binding marriage between one man and one woman. Sexual activity outside of marriage, premarital or extra-marital, homosexual or heterosexual, is sinful in that it rejects God’s plan.

Within marriage, sexual experiences that involve mental or emotional manipulation, coercion and abuse are always sinful, falling short of the purpose of mutual self-giving. Any involvement with pornography or explicit communication leading to lust is clearly a means of sexual self-satisfaction and falls short of this standard as well. All sexual sin undermines one’s relationship with God, one’s spouse and others, while destroying one’s self-respect. As with all sins, when we fall short of God’s standards for sexuality, we are called to repent, receive God’s forgiveness, and change our behavior.

As we affirm our sexuality, we also affirm that abstinence from sex in singleness is equally a gift from God. While sex is certainly an expression of love and self-giving within marriage, we must remind ourselves that sex is not the only, or even the best means of expressing love. The life of Jesus, who gave up even his own life so that we might live, is surely the best witness to this truth.

Marriage and Family

We believe that God created the family as a foundational institution of society. It is composed fundamentally of those persons who are related to one another through blood, marriage, or adoption.

Marriage is a committed union between one man and one woman that God intends to last for a lifetime, regardless of trials, financial pressures, sickness, or emotional distress. As a gift of God, a marriage covenant provides the framework for intimate companionship and is the only appropriate context for sexual fulfillment and procreation. When a husband and wife submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, loving and honoring one another, a marriage becomes a beautiful picture of the relationship between our Lord and his Church.

Divorce is a tragic end to a relationship that God intended to be permanent. In every case of divorce, one or both persons have been disobedient to the Lord. God hates divorce, in part because he understands the painful consequences of deviating from his best for our lives. The Scriptures indicate that God may tolerate divorce under certain circumstances. However, those who, in anticipation of God's forgiveness, proceed casually towards divorce do so as an act of rebellion and test his grace.

In cases of domestic violence or abuse, separation may be necessary and appropriate for the safety and health of the individual or family. In times of physical or emotional separation, as well as divorce, God's desire is for transformation and reconciliation.

Prior to any divorce or separation, we strongly encourage the pursuit and humble consideration of godly counsel and advice. Those who have suffered a divorce or separation can find hope, healing, and restoration in the body of Christ.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and gift from the Lord. As stewards, parents have the wonderful responsibility to raise their children to love and serve God, providing a safe and secure environment for them to grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. God's plan is for children to obey their parents, and they learn best through the example, nurture, discipline, and instruction of parents who love both God and them.

Wealth and Materialism

In his words recorded in the Gospels, Jesus addressed the problem of wealth more than almost any other issue, so we know that the danger presented by the abundance of possessions is not new. This is a long-standing concern of Friends as well. The earlier testimony of "plain" or "simple" dress was created in response to the growing affluence of Friends and their concerns about the effects of wealth on their Christian discipleship and witness.

We live in a society and under an economic system that has created unprecedented wealth, and in our particular era, our culture seems especially concerned with its pursuit. This creates tremendous possibilities as well as dangers for us, both for those who do possess wealth and those who do not. We observe that while the Scriptures seem to put no specific limits on the gaining of wealth, its teachings about money and possessions do run counter to the dominant values of our culture. We would like to highlight three.

First, the Bible boldly states that our possessions, wealth and the earth itself are not *ours*, they belong to God. We are merely stewards or caretakers of what we have earned and possess. What we have is never merely the result of our efforts. It is always and fundamentally a gift from God which we hold in trust for him. This means our financial values must be those of the Scriptures; regular generosity, sacrificial giving, and balancing what we have and keep with the needs of those who are without. It also means we are stewards and caretakers of God's creation.

Second, the Bible is very concerned about how wealth is produced. Our earlier Friends testimony of honesty in business is an expression of part of this concern. While affirming honest practices, the Scriptures also focus on fairness and justice to those who are the most vulnerable in the economic system. This concern creates more than just a responsibility to treat those who work for us well. These teachings also indicate that we cannot turn a blind eye to unjust situations elsewhere which lead to our own benefit. Our purchasing and investment patterns should reflect this biblical concern for the poor and the oppressed.

Third, in subtle ways the values of our economic system undermine or contradict biblical values. The Bible tells us we are valuable because we are made and loved by God. Our economy assigns value according to what we produce or the power and wealth we possess. Our society defines happiness by consumerism, inducing us to worry about the quality of our lives against a rising standard of affluence. The temptation to envy is virtually built into our economic system, both for those who have wealth and those who do not. The Bible says the quality of our lives is not in what we have, but in who has us. The Scriptures ask us to highly esteem our families and our churches. Our economic system goads us into longer hours, longer commutes, and obsessive competitiveness. We are told and we tell ourselves, that this is done “for our families”; while in fact it is precisely those practices which hurt our families and keep us from our churches.

We believe, with Jesus, that he intends for us to have an “abundant life.” But Jesus’ definition of abundance is seriously at odds with our culture’s viewpoint. We should rejoice when the opportunity for wealth comes our way, but never grasp for it at any cost, and always regard the Scriptures’ concerns about how wealth is gained and maintained. For all of us, whatever level of wealth we possess, we believe that God calls us to the continuing disciplines of generosity and sacrificial giving, and to maintain the values of the kingdom rather than those of the marketplace.

Christians and the Political Process

In recent years, many Christians have become involved in the political process. We believe this is good, and we rejoice that we live in a country that allows our participation. Several observations about the Bible inform our perspective. First, the Bible tells us that we are commanded to obey, respect, and pray for the government. These commands are not qualified according to whether we support the current government or not.

Second, the Bible never envisions or looks forward to a Christian state, or the establishment of a Christian nation. The kingdom of God is to be everywhere, and its success can never be wrapped up with the success or progress of a particular nation.

Third, the Scriptures tell us that our primary citizenship is in God’s kingdom. We are always to seek first the values and benefit of God’s kingdom over our country of residence or nationality, especially when the values and purposes of the kingdom might clash with those of our nation.

The Bible calls the church to speak the truth with boldness, and in our society we have three primary means of influence – voting, free speech, and participation in the political process. We believe every Christian should be an informed voter, committed to genuinely understanding the issues. We believe that God’s people can and should speak clearly to the issues of the day, but that our speech should always be respectful and persuasive, never merely angry or argumentative. We believe that God does call individual believers to seek elected, appointed and consultative positions in government.

We should be reminded that in God’s plan, no government can do what the church is intended to do. We are called to disciple all the nations. We are called to live out our faith in a way that transforms our culture and gives effective witness to the truth of the gospel. As we work for change in society, in some situations it will be appropriate to work with groups outside the church. But we must be careful. The success of the kingdom of God should never be identified with the success of a particular political movement or proposal. God’s purposes are always greater than the political process, and our primary task is always to be workers for the purposes of his kingdom.

Values

Values are a practical expression of our beliefs. They move us from a formal belief statement to a functional belief system. They help us put our faith into practice. These are not our only values, but rather ones that we hold as priorities in the life and practice of our churches. The following complement each other.

The Written Word of God and the Living Word of God

We value the Bible, the written word of God, as God's revelation and our final authority in all matters of faith and practice. We live in Christ because of the saving message of salvation through Jesus, our Lord and Savior. This value gives us respect for the authority of Scripture, a love for the teaching and preaching of the Bible and an intense desire to obey its teachings.

Along with the written Word of God we value the Holy Spirit of God, who inspired the Scriptures and illuminates our understanding. We believe that He teaches us to obey all that Jesus commanded, and grants us grace and power to live out the Word of God in daily life. Jesus said, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life (John 5:39-40)." We value the written Word because it leads us to the living Word, Jesus Christ. This value causes us to worship God in spirit and in truth. Christ, the living Word, teaches us himself, but never in contradiction to Scripture. We encourage our churches and people to spend time in silent listening to the Holy Spirit during both public and private worship.

The Great Commission and the Great Commandment

We value Christ's great commission to preach the gospel to every creature and to disciple all the nations. We believe the great commission begins at home, where we live, work, play and participate, and extends to every nation, culture and people group worldwide. We go in Christ's authority and with His presence. This value causes us to invest in cross-cultural missions, disciple making, church planting, pastoral training, and sending out missionaries and workers into the harvest.

Along with the great commission we value the great commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. This value causes us to honor and protect every individual, high and low, rich and poor, unborn and disabled, mentally ill and terminally ill, exceptional and institutionalized. We seek to obey the often-repeated commands in Scripture to love one another and to do good.

Leadership of the Elders and Priesthood of the Believers

We value the leadership of elders and pastors. We select our leaders on the basis of holy living, spiritual leadership, personal morality and ethical conduct. We hold our shepherds and leaders in high honor for their hard work, love of God's people and work in the ministry. This value leads us to select elders prayerfully and carefully. Then we listen to their wise counsel as we seek the mind of the Spirit. We record or commission pastors and staff members as we recognize their gifts and abilities and the call of God upon their lives for public ministry.

Along with the leadership of pastors and elders we value the priesthood of all believers; the people of God who pray, worship, teach, discern, witness, bless, encourage, love, give and serve. This value causes us to gather in church for worship, teaching, fellowship and service. We develop team ministries and speak up for Christ wherever we may scatter – home, neighborhood, school, work, recreation, travel.

Personal Intimacy with Christ and Corporate Consensus from Christ

We value personal intimacy with Christ. This personal, saving relationship comes from the cross, resurrection and outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us. We respond with a heart of devotion and listen to the voice of our good shepherd through God's Spirit, word, people and works. This value causes us to open ourselves to Him through the practice of spiritual disciplines, to discover our true identities as children of God, and to find our freedom in Christ Jesus.

Along with personal intimacy with Christ we value corporate consensus from the Holy Spirit. We believe that group guidance takes precedence over individual guidance. The body of Christ helps us open our eyes to self-deception and encourages us toward sound judgment, good sense and God's guidance. This value causes us to use Friends business procedures that pursue the mind of Christ. We come to unity in decision-making through prayer and discussion rather than by voting. When we do not find ourselves in unity, we believe that we are the ones who are confused. God is not confused because He has only one will.

Godly Character and Spiritual Gifts

We value all the biblical character qualities, believing that we are being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit produces a Christ-like life that lives above reproach in obedience to the Scriptures. This life flows from our daily connection with Christ as we respond to him by our repentance, faith, hope, and love. As we present our bodies and souls without reservation to God we experience life transformation, the filling and cleansing of the Holy Spirit and the renewing of our minds. This value causes us to hold one another accountable for holy living, gracious attitudes, loving actions, honest speech and enduring perseverance. Both formally and informally we hold expectations of living not for ourselves but for Christ. As we do so, we become more and more Christ-like.

Along with Godly character we value spiritual gifts given to each of us by the Holy Spirit. He decides who receives each gift, and in what proportion. These gifts become unique as they mix with our God-given personalities, talents and abilities. While using spiritual gifts is personally enjoyable, their main purpose is to build up the body of Christ and to serve others in our work and witness. This value causes us to invite everyone in the church to find a ministry, to work together in teams and to reproduce workers, leaders, groups, classes and churches.

Accountability questions

Friends have a tradition of reading "Queries." These probing questions stimulate individuals, leaders, or people in church business meetings to ask themselves how well they are doing. The goal is to stimulate one another to love, good works and Christ-like living. A modern term for "Queries" is accountability questions.

Leaders Accountability Questions

1. Have we prayerfully listened for the voice of the good shepherd, discerned what God was doing and guided our church body where its head, our Lord Jesus Christ, led us?
2. Have we served others by doing good? Have we proclaimed the gospel, fulfilling the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment?
3. Have we obeyed the Scriptures, by giving correction to those who have gone astray?
4. Have we built unity for important steps of faith, asking for church-wide prayer and congregational feedback?
5. Have we tried to squelch gossip, and instead encouraged the disgruntled to talk to the right person in the right spirit?
6. Have we dealt fairly with conflict and tried to bring about biblical reconciliation?
7. Have we stayed active, personally and corporately, in sharing our faith, making disciples and developing leaders? Have we encouraged all of our people to use their unique spiritual gifts?
8. Have we faithfully taught the word and truth of God, including those testimonies which we as Friends have been called to uphold?

Individual Accountability Questions

These questions are designed primarily for groups of two or three who meet weekly for accountability, Bible study and prayer. Some were taken from questions used by Neil Cole who in turn adapted them from Charles Swindoll and Howard Hendricks. Others were adapted from "queries" used by Friends for many years. Please note that some emphasize what we should do, while others emphasize what we should not do.

1. Have you verbally shared your faith in Christ this week?
2. Have you found joy in the Lord through prayer, Bible reading, public worship, and a lifestyle of giving thanks in all circumstances? Were you in worship last Sunday and faithful in ministry to your church this week?
3. Have you given Christ control of all your activities, entertainment and imagination?
4. Have you forgiven everyone who hurt you or disappointed you, seeking to resolve any conflict with love and understanding?
5. Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face to face? Have you kept away from racist jokes and comments?
6. Have you avoided emotional or sexual intimacy outside of marriage this week? Have you engaged in lustful attitudes, pornography or sexually explicit communication?
7. Have you actively nourished your marriage, family and friends in Christ, making your home a pleasant, peaceful place? Have you kept marriage and family in balance with work and career?
8. Have you given to Christ all you own and all you influence? Have you been completely above reproach in your financial dealings, prompt in paying your debts, careful to live within your income, honoring Christ with tithes and offerings?
9. Have you succumbed to a bad habit, personal addiction or kept any kind of idol in your heart, such as greed for money? Have you abstained from the use of harmful substances such as alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs and from the abuse of good things, such as food and medications?
10. Have you deceived anyone, told half-truths or outright lies this week?
11. Have you taken a day of rest and restoration this week?

Congregation Accountability Questions

1. Have we witnessed effectively for Christ through our church's events, programs, retreats, camps, and organized evangelistic efforts? Have we assimilated new believers into our fellowship and helped them grow in the faith and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Have we built loyalty for placing weekly worship as a higher priority than pleasure, youth sports, business or recreation? Have we encouraged our people to worship and serve in one congregation rather than becoming consumers of programs offered by different churches?
3. Has our congregational life together revealed an intense desire to obey the written and living word of God?
4. Have we spent time in silent listening to the Holy Spirit in both personal and corporate worship?
5. Have we prayed publicly and often for God to send out workers from among us into his harvest fields?

6. Have we honored and protected those neglected by society – the unborn, poor, prisoners, orphans, widows, abandoned, disabled, disadvantaged, addicted, institutionalized, homeless, and/or hungry? Since we cannot do everything, have we done something?
7. Have we taught and practiced spiritual disciplines – Bible reading, prayer, fasting, witnessing, service, worship, silence, solitude?
8. Have we honored our pastors and staff with love and appreciation, making their ministry a joy, not a drudgery?
9. Have we honored the counsel of our elders and pastors? When we were not in unity, did we find the mind of Christ through discussion and prayer rather than through politicking and voting?
10. Have we encouraged and built each other up, speaking only what is helpful? Have we resolved conflict effectively by avoiding gossip and encouraging critics to talk with the right person in the right spirit?
11. Have we encouraged people in the church to use their spiritual gifts and to work together in teams for the cause of Christ?
12. Have we called for dedication to God of our time, talent and treasure, offering control of our money and our resources to Christ?
13. Have we prayed for those in authority? Have we encouraged people to vote and to carry out civic responsibilities in the name of Christ?
14. Have we taught and practiced non-violence? Have we placed the kingdom of God above the kingdom of this world, honoring the convictions of those who are conscientious objectors to war? Have we made every effort to live in peace with everyone, including those who have hurt us or with whom we disagree?

HISTORICAL FAITH STATEMENTS

Several approved historical faith statements of significance to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest are reproduced below, each with a brief historical introduction explaining something of the context in which it was written.

George Fox's Letter to the Governor of Barbados - 1671

In 1671, George Fox and 12 other Friends leaders traveled to Barbados to visit and strengthen the community of Friends on the island. During his three-month visit, he wrote this well-known letter to the governor of Barbados to refute those who falsely claim that Friends did not hold to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, particularly as related to God, Christ, and the Bible. Since that time, it has come to be widely recognized and reprinted (in extract form) as one of the plainest and most direct statements of early Friends faith directly attributable to George Fox.

At the time of Fox's letter, Friends did not oppose slavery as an institution but held to the New Testament standard of love and fair treatment toward slaves. Later, they were among the first to adopt a position that rejected the institution of slavery entirely, and made owning slaves an offense that could remove someone from membership.

The entire letter is reproduced below, in the English of the day.

Whereupon I, with some other Friends, drew up a paper, to go forth in the name of the people called Quakers, for the clearing truth and Friends from those false reports. It was after this manner:

"For the Governor of Barbadoes, with his council and assembly, and all others in power, both civil and military, in this island; from the people called Quakers.

"WHEREAS many scandalous lies and slanders have been cast upon us, to render us odious; as that "We deny God, and Christ Jesus, and the scriptures of truth," &. This is to inform you, that all our books and declarations, which for these many years have been published to the world, clearly testify the contrary. Yet, for your satisfaction, we now plainly and sincerely declare, that we own and believe in God, the only wise, omnipotent, and everlasting God, who is the creator of all things both in heaven and in the earth, and the preserver of all that he hath made; who is God over all, blessed for ever; to whom be all honour, glory, dominion, praise and thanksgiving, both now and for evermore! and we own and believe in Jesus Christ, his beloved and only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased; who was conceived by the holy ghost, and born of the virgin Mary; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the express image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, by whom were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers; all things were created by him. And we own and believe that he was made a sacrifice for sin, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; and that he was crucified for us in the flesh, without the gates of Jerusalem; and that he was buried, and rose again the third day by the power of his Father, for our justification; and we believe that he ascended up into heaven, and now sitteth at the right hand of God. This Jesus, who was the foundation of the holy prophets and apostles, is our foundation; and we believe there is no other foundation to be laid but that which is laid, even Christ Jesus who we believe tasted death for every man, and shed his blood for all men, and is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world: according as John the Baptist testified of him, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world". (John 1:29) We believe that he alone is our Redeemer

and Saviour, even the captain of our salvation, who saves us from sin, as well as from hell and the wrath to come, and destroys the devil and his works; who is the seed of the woman that bruises the serpent's head, to wit, Christ Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. That he is (as the scriptures of truth say of him) our wisdom and righteousness, justification and redemption; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved. He alone is the shepherd and bishop of our souls: he is our prophet, whom Moses long since testified of saying, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you: and it shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:22-23). He it is that is now come "and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true". And he rules in our hearts by his law of love and life, and makes us free from the law of sin and death. We have no life, but by him; for he is the quickening spirit, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, by whose blood we are cleansed, and our consciences sprinkled from dead works, to serve the living God. He is our Mediator, that makes peace and reconciliation between God offended and us offending; he being the oath of God, the new covenant of light, life, grace, and peace, the author and finisher of our faith. Now this Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly man, the Emanuel, God with us, we all own and believe in; he whom the high priest raged against, and said, he had spoken blasphemy; whom the priests and elders of the Jews took counsel together against, and put to death; the same whom Judas betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, which the priests gave him as a reward for his treason; who also gave large money to the soldiers to broach a horrible lie, namely, "That his disciples came and stole him away by night whilst they slept". And after he was risen from the dead, the history of the Acts of the apostles sets forth how the chief priests and elders persecuted the disciples of this Jesus, for preaching Christ and his resurrection. This, we say, is that Lord Jesus Christ, whom we own to be our life and salvation.

"And as concerning the holy scriptures, we believe they were given forth by the holy spirit of God, through the holy men of God, who (as the scripture itself declares, 2 Pet 1:21) "spoke as they were moved by the holy ghost". We believe they are to be read, believed, and fulfilled, (he that fulfils them is Christ): and they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, (2 Tim 3:16) and are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus". We believe the holy scriptures are the words of God; for it is said in Exod 20:1. "God spake all these words, saying", &c. meaning the ten commandments given forth upon mount Sinai. And in Rev. xxii. 18. saith John, "I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man addeth unto these, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy", (not the Word), & c. So in Luke 1:20 "Because thou believest not my words" And so in John 5:47, 15:7, 14:23, 17:47. So that we call the holy scriptures, as Christ, the apostles, and holy men of God called them, viz. the words of God.

"Another slander they have cast upon us, is, "that we teach the negroes to rebel"; a thing we utterly abhor and detest in our hearts, the Lord knows it, who is the searcher of all hearts, and knows all things, and can testify for us, that this is a most abominable untruth. For that which we have spoken to them, is to exhort and admonish them to be sober, to fear God, to love their masters and mistresses, and to be faithful and diligent in their service and business, and then their masters and overseers would love them, and deal kindly and gently with them; also that they should not beat their wives, nor the wives their husbands; neither should the men have many wives; that they should not steal, nor be drunk, nor commit adultery, nor fornication, nor curse, swear, nor lie, nor give bad words to one another, nor to any one else; for there is something in them that tells them they should not practise these nor any other evils. But if they notwithstanding should do them, then we let them know there are but two ways, the one that leads to heaven where the righteous go; and the other that leads to hell, where the wicked and debauched, whoremongers, adulterers, murderers, and liars go. To the one the Lord will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"; to the other, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels": so the wicked go into "everlasting

punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25). Consider, friends it is no transgression for a master of a family to instruct his family himself, or for others to do it in his behalf; but rather it is a very great duty incumbent upon them. Abraham and Joshua did so: of the first, we read the Lord said, Gen. xviii. 19. "I know that Abraham will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham the things that he hath spoken of him." And the latter, we read, said, (Josh 24:15) "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." We declare, that we esteem it a duty incumbent on us to pray with and for, to teach, instruct, and admonish those in and belonging to our families; this being a command of the Lord, disobedience whereunto will provoke his displeasure; as may be seen in Jer 10:25, "Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Now, negroes, tawnies, indians, make up a very great part of the families in this island; for whom an account will be required by him who comes to judge both quick and dead at the great day of judgment, when every one shall be "rewarded according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil"; at that day, we say, of the resurrection both of the good and of the bad, and of the just and of the unjust, when, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day." (2 Thess 1:8 &c. See also 2 Pet 3:3 &c)

This wicked slander (of our endeavouring to make the negroes rebel) our adversaries took occasion to raise, from our having some meetings amongst the negroes; for we had several meetings with them in divers plantations, wherein we exhorted them to justice, sobriety, temperance, chastity, and piety, and to be subject to their masters and governors. Which was altogether contrary to what our envious adversaries maliciously suggested against us.

As I had been to visit the governor, as soon as I was well able, after I came thither; so sometime after when I was at Thomas Rouse's, the governor came to see me, carrying himself very courteously.

Richmond Declaration of Faith - 1887

From Friday, September 23 through Tuesday, September 27, 95 delegates, visitors, and other observers from the Orthodox Friends Yearly Meetings met in Richmond, Indiana for the historic Richmond Conference of 1887. These Friends met "to consider matters appertaining to the welfare of our branch of the church, ...strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship, ...promote unity in important matters of faith and practice." The delegates at the conference appointed a committee of 12 to "prepare a statement of our Christian belief, as a branch of the Church of Christ."

This declaration made use of existing sources: scripture, yearly meeting disciplines, and early Friends writings. In the words of the conference chairman, "with great unanimity this Conference has adopted the Declaration of Faith that has been submitted." The delegates believed the Richmond Declaration was a fine and strong witness to the world of what Friends actually believed.

In 1902, eleven Yearly Meetings in North America, including California Yearly Meeting (now known as Evangelical Friends Church Southwest), adopted the Richmond Declaration of Faith as part of the Uniform Discipline when they formed the Five Years Meeting. The quotations from scripture are from the Authorized Version unless identified as from the Revised Version.

It is under a deep sense of what we owe to Him who has loved us that we feel called upon to offer a declaration of those fundamental doctrines of Christian truth that have always been professed by our branch of the Church of Christ.

Of God

We believe in one holy (Isa 6:3, 57:15), almighty (Gen 17:1), all-wise (Rom 11:33, 16:27) and everlasting (Ps 90:1-2) God, the Father (Matt 11:25-27), the Creator (Gen 1:1) and Preserver (Job 7:20) of all things; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, by whom all things were made (John 1:3), and by whom all things consist (Col 1:17); and in one Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son (John 15:26, 16:7), the Reprover (John 16:8) of the world, the Witness for Christ (John 15:26) and the Teacher (John 14:26), Guide (John 16:13), and Sanctifier (2 Thess 2:13) of the people of God; and that these three are one in the eternal Godhead (Matt 28:19; John 10:30; 17:21); to whom be honor, praise, and thanksgiving, now and forever. Amen.

The Lord Jesus Christ

It is with reverence and thanksgiving that we profess our unwavering allegiance to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him (John 1:18). In Him was life (John 1:4), and the life was the light of men (John 1:4). He is the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9), through whom the light of truth in all ages has proceeded from the Father of lights. (James 1:17) He is the eternal Word (John 1:1) who was with God and was God, revealing Himself in infinite wisdom and love, both as man's Creator (Col 1:13-16) and Redeemer (Col 1:14), for by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible. Conceived of the Holy Ghost (Matt 1:20), born of the virgin Mary (Matt 1:23-25; Luke 1:35), the word was made flesh (John 1:14), and dwelt amongst men. He came in the fullness (Gal 4:4) of the appointed time, being verily foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) that He might fulfill (Isa 11:1-5, Isa 52:13-15) the eternal counsel of the righteousness and love of God for the redemption of man (Isa 53). In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Col 2:9) Though He was rich, yet for our sakes, He became poor, veiling in the form of a servant (Phil 2:7) the brightness of His glory, that, through Him the kindness and love of God (Titus 3:4) toward man might appear in a manner every way suited to our wants and finite capacities. He went about doing good (Acts 10:38); for us He endured (Isa 53:4; Luke 12:50; Luke 19:41; Luke 22:44) sorrow, hunger, thirst, weariness, (John 4:6) pain, unutterable anguish of body and of soul, being in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). Thus humbling himself that we might be exalted, He emphatically recognized the duties and the sufferings of humanity as among the means whereby, through the obedience of faith, we are to be disciplined for heaven, sanctifying them to us, by Himself performing and enduring them, leaving us the one perfect example (1 Peter 2:21) of all righteousness (Matt 3:15) in self-sacrificing love.

But not only in these blessed relations must the Lord Jesus be ever precious to His people. In Him is revealed as true God and Perfect man (Eph 4:13) a Redeemer, at once able to suffer and almighty to save. He became obedient (Phil 2:8) unto death, even the death of the cross, and is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2); in whom we have redemption through His blood (Eph 1:7) the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. It is our joy to confess that the remission of sins which any partake of is only in and by virtue of His most satisfactory sacrifice and not otherwise. (Barclay's Apology, Prop. 5 and 6 par. 15, p.141). He was buried and rose again the third day (1 Cor 15:4) according to the Scriptures, becoming the first fruits (1 Cor 15:23) of them that sleep, and having shown Himself alive after His passion, by many infallible proofs. (Acts 1:3) He ascended into heaven, and hath sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, now to appear in the presence of God for us. (Heb 1:3, 9:24) With the apostles who beheld His ascension, we rest in the assurance of the angelic messengers, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11, and see 5:7) With the apostle John, we would desire to unite in the words, "Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev 22:20) And now, whilst thus watching and waiting, we rejoice to believe that He is our King and Savior. He is the one Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant (1 Tim 2:5, Heb 9:15) who makes peace and reconciliation between God offended and man offending; (Letter to the Governor of Barbados) the great High Priest whose priesthood is unchangeable. (Heb 4:14, 7:24) He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:25) All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. (Matt 28:18) By Him the world shall be judged in righteousness (Acts 17:31); for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. (John 5:22-23) All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil until the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29 RV)

We reverently confess and believe that divine honor and worship are due to the Son of God, and that He is in true faith to be prayed unto, and His name to be called upon, as the Primitive Christians did because of the glorious oneness of the Father and the Son; and that we cannot acceptably offer prayers and praises to God, nor receive from Him a gracious answer or blessing, but in and through his dear Son. (Declaration of 1693, in Sewell's Hist., vol. 2, 379)

We would, with humble thanksgiving, bear an especial testimony to our Lord's perpetual dominion and power in His church. Through Him the redeemed in all generations have derived their light, their forgiveness, and their joy. All are members of this church, by whatsoever name they may be called among men, who have been baptized by the one Spirit into the one body; who are builded as living stones upon Christ, the Eternal Foundation, and are united in faith and love in that fellowship which is with the Father and with the Son. Of this church the Lord Jesus Christ is the alone Head. (Eph 1:22) All its true members are made one in Him. They have washed their robes and made them white in His precious blood (Rev 7:14), and He has made them priests unto God and His Father. (Rev 1:6) He dwells in their hearts by faith, and gives them of his peace. His will is their law, and in Him they enjoy the true liberty, a freedom from the bondage of sin.

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is, in the unity of the eternal Godhead, one with the Father and with the Son. (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14) He is the comforter "Whom," saith Christ, "the Father will send in my name." (John 14:26) He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. (John 16:8) He testifies of and glorifies Jesus. (John 16:14) It is the Holy Spirit who makes the evil manifest. He quickens them that are dead in trespasses and sins, and opens the inward eye to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. (Eph 2:1) Coming in the name and with the authority of the risen and ascended Savior, He is the precious pledge of the continued love and care of our exalted King. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them, as a realized possession, to the believing soul. (John 16:14) Dwelling in the hearts of believers (John 16:7), He opens their understandings that they may understand the Scriptures, and becomes, to the humbled and surrendered heart, the Guide, Comforter, Support, and Sanctifier.

We believe that the essential qualification of the Lord's service is bestowed upon His children through the reception and baptism of the Holy Ghost. This Holy Spirit is the seal of reconciliation to the believer in Jesus (Eph 1:13,14), the witness to his adoption into the family of the redeemed (Rom 8:15,16); the earnest and the foretaste of the full communion and perfect joy which are reserved for them that endure unto the end.

We own no principle of spiritual light, life or holiness, inherent by nature in the mind or heart of man. We believe in no principle of spiritual light, life or holiness, but the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, bestowed on mankind, in various measures and degrees, through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the capacity to receive this blessed influence, which in an especial manner, gives man pre-eminence above the beasts that perish; which distinguishes him in every nation and in every clime, as an object of the redeeming love of God; as a being not only intelligent but responsible; for whom the message of salvation through our crucified Redeemer is, under all possible circumstances, designed to be a joyful sound. The Holy Spirit must ever be distinguished, both from the conscience which He enlightens, and from the natural faculty of reason, which when unsubjected to His Holy influence, is, in the things of God, very foolishness. As the eye is to the body, so is the conscience to our inner being, the organ by which we see; and as both light and life are essential to the eye, so conscience, as the inward eye, cannot see aright, without the quickening and illumination of the Spirit of God. One with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit can never disown or dishonor our once crucified and now risen and glorified Redeemer. We disavow all professed illumination or spirituality that is divorced from faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, crucified for us without the gates of Jerusalem.

The Holy Scriptures

It has ever been, and still is, the belief of the Society of Friends that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God; that, therefore, there can be no appeal from them to any other authority whatsoever; that they are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ. "These are written so that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." (John 20:31) The Scriptures are the only divinely authorized record of the doctrines which we are bound, as Christians, to accept, and of the moral principles which are to regulate our actions. No one can be required to believe, as an article of faith, any doctrine which is not contained in them; and whatsoever anyone says or does, contrary to the Scriptures, though under profession of the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, must be reckoned and accounted a mere delusion. To the Christian, the Old Testament comes with the solemn and repeated attestation of his Lord. It is to be read in the light and completeness of the New; thus will its meaning be unveiled, and the humble disciple will be taught to discern the unity and mutual adaptation of the whole, and the many-sidedness and harmony of its testimony to Christ. The great Inspirer of Scripture is ever its true Interpreter. He performs this office in condescending love, not by superseding our understandings, but by renewing and enlightening them. Where Christ presides, idle speculation is hushed; His doctrine is learned in the doing of His will, and all knowledge ripens into a deeper and richer experience of His truth and love.

Man's Creation and Fall

It pleased God, in His wisdom and goodness, to create man out of the dust of the earth, and to breathe into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul; formed after the image and likeness of God, capable of fulfilling the divine law, and of holding communion with his Maker. (Gen 2:7, 1:26-27) Being free to obey, or to disobey, he fell into transgression, through unbelief, under the temptation of Satan (Gen 3:1-7), and thereby lost that spiritual life of righteousness in which he was created; and, so, death passed upon him, as the inevitable consequence of his sin. (Rom 5:12) As the children of fallen Adam, all mankind bear his image. They partake of his nature, and are involved in the consequences of his fall. To every member of every successive generation, the words of the Redeemer are alike applicable, "Ye must be born again." (John 3:7) But while we hold these views of the lost condition of man in the fall, we rejoice to believe that sin is not imputed to any, until they transgress the divine law, after sufficient capacity has been given to understand it; and that infants, though inheriting this fallen nature, are saved in the infinite mercy of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Justification and Sanctification

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) We believe that justification is of God's free grace, through

which, upon repentance and faith, He pardons our sins, and imparts to us a new life. It is received, not for any works of righteousness that we have done (Titus 3:5), but in the unmerited mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Through faith in Him, and the shedding of His precious blood, the guilt of sin is taken away, and we stand reconciled to God. The offering up of Christ as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world is the appointed manifestation both of the righteousness and of the love of God. In this propitiation the pardon of sin involves no abrogation or relaxation of the law of holiness. It is the vindication and establishment of that law (Rom 3:31), in virtue of the free and righteous submission of the Son of God himself to all its requirements. He, the unchangeably just, proclaims Himself the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. (Rom 3:26) From age to age, the sufferings and death of Christ have been a hidden mystery, and a rock of offense to the unbelief and pride of man's fallen nature; yet, to the humble penitent whose heart is broken under the convicting power of the Spirit, life is revealed in that death. As he looks upon Him who was wounded for our transgressions (Isa 53:5), and upon whom the Lord was pleased to lay the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:6), his eye is more and more opened to see, and his heart to understand, the exceeding sinfulness of sin for which the Savior died; whilst, in the sense of pardoning grace, he will have joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Rom 5:11)

We believe that in connection with Justification is Regeneration: that they who come to this experience know that they are not their own (1 Cor 6:19) that being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we are saved by His life (Rom 5:10); a new heart is given and new desires; old things are passed away, and we become new creatures (2 Cor 5:17), through faith in Christ Jesus; our wills being surrendered to His holy will, grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 5:21)

Sanctification is experienced in the acceptance of Christ in living faith for justification, in so far as the pardoned sinner, through faith in Christ, is clothed with a measure of His righteousness and receives the Spirit of promise; for, as saith the Apostle, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor 6:11) We rejoice to believe that the provisions of God's grace are sufficient to deliver from the power, as well as from the guilt, of sin, and to enable His believing children always to triumph in Christ. (2 Cor 2:14) How full of encouragement is the declaration, "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matt 9:29) Whosoever submits himself wholly to God, believing and appropriating His promises, and exercising faith in Christ Jesus, will have his heart continually cleansed from all sin, by His precious blood, and, through the renewing, refining power of the Holy Spirit, be kept in conformity to the will of God, will love Him with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, and be able to say, with the Apostle Paul, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8:2) Thus, in its full experience, Sanctification is deliverance from the pollution, nature, and love of sin. To this we are every one called, that we may serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. (Luke 1:74-75) It was the prayer of the apostle for the believers, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it." (1 Thess 5:23, 24) Yet the most holy Christian is still liable to temptation, is exposed to the subtle assaults of Satan, and can only continue to follow holiness as he humbly watches unto prayer, and is kept in constant dependence upon his Savior, walking in the light (1 John 1:7) in the loving obedience of faith.

The Resurrection and Final Judgment

We believe, according to the Scriptures, that there shall be a resurrection from the dead, both of the just and of the unjust (Acts 24:15), and that God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ whom He hath ordained. (Acts 17:31) For, as saith the apostle, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor 5:10)

We sincerely believe, not only a resurrection in Christ from the fallen and sinful state here, but a rising and ascending into glory with Him hereafter; that when He at last appears we may appear with Him in glory. But that all the wicked, who live in rebellion against the light of grace, and die finally impenitent, shall come forth to the resurrection of condemnation. And that the soul of every man and woman shall be reserved, in its own distinct

and proper being, and shall have its proper body as God is pleased to give it. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44); that being first which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual. And though it is said, "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:53), the change shall be such as will accord with the declaration, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor 15:50) We shall be raised out of all corruption and corruptibility, out of all mortality, and shall be the children of God, being the children of resurrection. (Luke 20:36) (See also Declaration of 1696, Sewell's History, vol. II, 383-384)

"Our citizenship is in heaven" (RV), from whence also we look for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. (Phil 3:20-21)

We believe that the punishment of the wicked and the blessedness of the righteous shall be everlasting, according to the declaration of our compassionate Redeemer, to whom the judgment is committed, "These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt 25:46 RV)

Baptism

We would express our continued conviction that our Lord appointed no outward rite or ceremony for observance in His church. We accept every command of our Lord in what we believe to be its genuine import, as absolutely conclusive. The question of the use of outward ordinances is with us a question, not as to the authority of Christ, but as to His real meaning. We reverently believe that, as there is one Lord and one faith, so there is, under the Christian dispensation, but one baptism (Eph 4:4-5), even that whereby all believers are baptized in the one Spirit into the one body. (1 Cor 12:13 RV) This is not an outward baptism with water, but a spiritual experience; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh (1 Pet 3:21), but that inward work which, by transforming the heart and settling the soul upon Christ, brings forth the answer of a good conscience towards God, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the experience of His love and power, as the risen and ascended Savior. No baptism in outward water can satisfy the description of the apostle, of being buried with Christ by baptism unto death. (Rom 6:4) It is with the Spirit alone that any can thus be baptized. In this experience the announcement of the Forerunner of our Lord is fulfilled, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matt 3:11) In this view we accept the commission of our blessed Lord as given in Matthew 28:18, 19 and 20th verses: "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (RV) This commission, as we believe, was not designed to set up a new ritual under the new covenant, or to connect the initiation into a membership, in its nature essentially spiritual, with a mere ceremony of a typical character. Otherwise it was not possible for the Apostle Paul, who was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostle (2 Cor 11:5), to have disclaimed that which would, in that case, have been of the essence of his commission when he wrote, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." (1 Cor 1:17) Whenever an external ceremony is commanded, the particulars, the mode and incidents of that ceremony, become of its essence. There is an utter absence of these particulars in the text before us. Which confirms our persuasion that the commission must be construed in connection with the spiritual power which the risen Lord promised should attend the witness of his apostles and of the church to Him, and which, after Pentecost, so mightily accompanied their ministry of the word and prayer, that those to whom they were sent were introduced into an experience wherein they had a saving knowledge of, and living fellowship with, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Supper of the Lord

Intimately connected with the conviction already expressed is the view that we have ever maintained as to the true supper of the Lord. We are well aware that our Lord was pleased to make use of a variety of symbolical utterances, but he often gently upbraided His disciples for accepting literally what He had intended only in its spiritual meaning. His teaching, as in His parables or in the command to wash one another's feet, was often in symbols, and ought ever to be received in the light of His own emphatic declaration, "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63) The old covenant was full of ceremonial symbols; the new covenant, to which our Savior alluded at the last supper, is expressly declared by the prophet to be "not according to the old." (Jer 31:32, Heb 8:9) We cannot believe that in setting up this new covenant the Lord Jesus

intended an institution out of harmony with the spirit of this prophecy. The eating of His body and the drinking of His blood cannot be an outward act. They truly partake of them who habitually rest upon the sufferings and death of their Lord as their only hope, and to whom the indwelling Spirit gives to drink of the fullness that is in Christ. It is this inward and spiritual partaking that is the true supper of the Lord.

The presence of Christ with His church is not designed to be by symbol or representation, but in the real communication of His own Spirit. "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, who shall abide with you forever" (John 14:16), convincing of sin, testifying of Jesus, taking of the things of Christ, this blessed Comforter communicates to the believer and to the church, in a gracious, abiding manifestation, the REAL PRESENCE of the Lord. As the Great Remembrancer, through whom the promise is fulfilled, He needs no ritual or priestly intervention in bringing the experience of the true commemoration and communion. "Behold," saith the risen Redeemer, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me." (Rev 3:20) In an especial manner, when assembled for congregational worship, are believers invited to the festival of the Savior's peace, and in a united act of faith and love, unfettered by any outward rite or ceremonial, to partake together of the body that was broken and of the blood that was shed for them, without the gates of Jerusalem. In such a worship they are enabled to understand the words of the apostle as expressive of a sweet and most real experience: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor 10:16-17)

Public Worship

Worship is the adoring response of the heart and mind to the influence of the Spirit of God. It stands neither in forms nor in the formal disuse of forms: it may be without words as well as with them, but it must be in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) We recognize the value of silence, not as an end, but as a means toward the attainment of an end; a silence, not of listlessness or of vacant musing, but of holy expectation before the Lord. Having become His adopted children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our privilege to meet together and unite in the worship of Almighty God, to wait upon Him for the renewal of our strength, for communion one with another, for the edification of believers in the exercise of various spiritual gifts, and for the declaration of the glad tidings of salvation to the unconverted who may gather with us. This worship depends not upon numbers. Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ there is a church, and Christ, the living Head, in the midst of them. Through His mediation without the necessity for any inferior instrumentality, is the Father to be approached and reverently worshiped. The Lord Jesus has forever fulfilled and ended the typical and sacrificial worship under the law, by the offering up of Himself upon the cross for us, once for all. He has opened the door of access into the inner sanctuary, and graciously provided spiritual offerings of the service of his temple, suited to the several conditions of all who worship in spirit and in truth. The broken and the contrite heart, the confession of the soul prostrate before God, the prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, the earnest wrestling of the spirit, the outpouring of humble thanksgiving, the spiritual song and melody of the heart (Eph 5:19), the simple exercise of faith, the self-denying service of love, these are among the sacrifices which He, our merciful and faithful High Priest, is pleased to prepare, by His Spirit, in the hearts of them that receive Him, and to present with acceptance unto God.

By the immediate operations of the Holy Spirit, He as the Head of the church, alone selects and qualifies those who are to present His messages or engage in other services for Him; and, hence, we cannot commit any formal arrangement to any one in our regular meetings for worship. We are well aware that the Lord has provided a diversity of gifts (1 Cor 12:4-6) for the needs both of the church and of the world, and we desire that the church may feel her responsibility, under the government of her Great Head, in doing her part to foster these gifts, and in making arrangements for their proper exercise.

It is not for individual exaltation, but for mutual profit, that the gifts are bestowed (1 Cor 12:7); and every living church, abiding under the government of Christ, is humbly and thankfully to receive and exercise them, in subjection to her Holy Head. The church that quenches the Spirit and lives to itself alone must die.

We believe the preaching of the Gospel to be one of the chief means, divinely appointed, for the spreading of the glad tidings of life and salvation through our crucified Redeemer, for the awakening and conversion of sinners, and for the comfort and edification of believers. As it is the prerogative of the Great Head of the

church alone to select and call the ministers of His Gospel, so we believe that both the gift and the qualification to exercise it must be derived immediately from Him; and that, as in the primitive church, so now also, He confers spiritual gifts upon women as well as upon men, agreeably to the prophecy recited by the apostle Peter, "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17), respecting which the apostle declares, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39) As the gift is freely received so it is to be freely exercised, (Matt 10:8 See Also Acts 20:33-35) in simple obedience to the will of God.

Spiritual gifts, precious as they are, must not be mistaken for grace; they add to our responsibility, but do not raise the minister above his brethren or sisters. They must be exercised in continued dependence upon our Lord and blessed is that ministry in which man is humbled, and Christ and His grace exalted. "He that is greatest among you," said our Lord and Master, "let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve. I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22:26-27)

While the church cannot confer spiritual gifts, it is its duty to recognize and foster them, and to promote their efficiency by all the means in its power. And while, on the one hand, the Gospel should never be preached for money (Acts 8:20, 20:33-35), on the other, it is the duty of the church to make such provision that it shall never be hindered for want of it.

The church, if true to her allegiance, cannot forget her part in the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) Knowing that it is the Spirit of God that can alone prepare and qualify the instruments who fulfill this command, the true disciple will be found still sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening that he may learn, and learning that he may obey. He humbly places himself at his Lord's disposal, and when he hears the call, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" is prepared to respond, in childlike reverence and love, "Here am I, send me." (Isa 6:8)

Prayer and Praise

Prayer is the outcome of our sense of need, and of our continual dependence upon God. He who uttered the invitation, "Ask and it shall be given you," (Matt 7:7) is himself the Mediator and High Priest who, by His Spirit, prompts the petition, and who presents it with the acceptance before God. With such an invitation, prayer becomes the duty and the privilege of all who are called by His name. Prayer is, in the awakened soul, the utterance of the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), and, at every stage of the believer's course, prayer is essential to his spiritual life. A life without prayer is a life practically without God. The Christian's life is a continual asking. The thirst that prompts the petition produces, as it is satisfied, still deeper longings, which prepare for yet more bounteous supplies, from Him who delights to bless. Prayer is not confined to the closet. When uttered in response to the prompts of the Holy Spirit, it becomes an important part of public worship, and, whenever the Lord's people meet together in His name, it is their privilege to wait upon Him for the spirit of grace and supplications. (Zech. 12:10) A life of prayer cannot be other than a life of praise. As the peace of Christ reigns in the church, her living members accept all that they receive, as from His pure bounty, and each day brings them fresh pledges of their Father's love. Satisfied with the goodness of His house, whether as individuals, in families, or in congregations, they will be still praising Him (Ps 84:4), heart answering to heart, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." (Ps 103:1)

Liberty of Conscience in Relation to the Civil Government

That conscience should be free, and that in matters of religious doctrine and worship man is accountable only to God, are truths which are plainly declared in the New Testament; and which are confirmed by the whole scope of the Gospel, and by the example of our Lord and His disciples. To rule over the conscience, and to command the spiritual allegiance of his creature man, is the high and sacred prerogative of God alone. In religion every act ought to be free. A forced worship is plainly a contradiction in terms, under that dispensation in which the worship of the Father must be in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)

We have ever maintained that it is the duty of Christians to obey the enactments of civil government, except those which interfere with our allegiance to God. We owe much to its blessings. Through it we enjoy liberty and protection, in connection with law and order. Civil government is a divine ordinance (Rom 13:1, 1 Pet 2:13-16), instituted to promote the best welfare of man, hence magistrates are to be regarded as God's ministers who should be a terror to evildoers and a praise to them that do well. Therefore, it is with us a matter of conscience to render them respect and obedience in the exercise of their proper functions.

Marriage

Marriage is an institution graciously ordained by the Creator Himself, for the help and continuance of the human family. It is not a mere civil contract, and ought never to be entered upon without a reference to the sanction and blessing of Him who ordained it. It is a solemn engagement for the term of life (Matt 19:5-6), designed for the mutual assistance and comfort of both sexes, that they may be helpmeets to each other in things temporal and spiritual. To this end it should imply concurrence in spiritual as well as temporal concerns, and should be entered upon discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of the Lord.

Peace

We feel bound explicitly to avow our unshaken persuasion that all war is utterly incompatible with the plain precepts of our divine Lord and Law-giver, and the whole spirit of His Gospel, and that no plea of necessity or policy, however urgent or peculiar, can avail to release either individuals or nations from the paramount allegiance which they owe to Him who hath said, "Love your enemies." (Matt 5:44, Luke 6:27) In enjoining this love, and the forgiveness of injuries, He who has brought us to Himself has not prescribed for man precepts which are incapable of being carried into practice, or of which the practice is to be postponed until all shall be persuaded to act upon them. We cannot doubt that they are incumbent now, and that we have in the prophetic Scriptures the distinct intimation of their direct application not only to individuals, but to nations also. (Isa 2:4, Micah 4:1) When nations conform their laws to this divine teaching, wars must necessarily cease.

We would, in humility, but in faithfulness to our Lord, express our firm persuasion that all the exigencies of civil government and social order may be met under the banner of the Prince of Peace, in strict conformity with His commands.

Oaths

We hold it to be the inalienable privilege of the disciple of the Lord Jesus that his statements concerning matters of fact within his knowledge should be accepted, under all circumstances, as expressing his belief as to the fact asserted. We rest upon the plain command of our Lord and Master, "Swear not at all" (Matt 5:34); and we believe any departure from this standard to be prejudicial to the cause of truth and to that confidence between man and man, the maintenance of which is indispensable to our mutual well being. This command, in our persuasion, applies not to profane swearing only, but to judicial oaths also. It abrogates any previous permission to the contrary, and is, for the Christian, absolutely conclusive.

The First Day Of The Week

Whilst the remembrance of our Creator ought to be at all times present with the Christian, we would express our thankfulness to our Heavenly Father that He has been pleased to honor the setting apart of one day in seven for the purposes of holy rest, religious duties, and public worship; and we desire that all under our name may avail themselves of this great privilege as those who are called to be risen with Christ, and to seek those things that are above where He sitteth at the right hand of God. (Col 3:1) May the release thus granted from other occupations be diligently improved. On this day of the week especially ought the households of Friends to be assembled for the reading of the Scriptures and for waiting upon the Lord; and we trust that, in a Christianly wise economy of our time and strength, the engagements of the day may be so ordered as not to frustrate the gracious provision thus made for us by our Heavenly Father, or to shut out the opportunity either for public worship or for private retirement and devotional reading.

In presenting this declaration of our Christian faith, we desire that all our members may be afresh encouraged, in humility and devotedness, to renewed faithfulness in fulfilling their part in the great mission of the Church, and through the Church to the world around us, in the name of our Crucified Redeemer. Life *from* Christ, life *in* Christ,

must ever be the basis of life *for* Christ. For this we have been created and redeemed, and, by this alone, can the longings of our immortal souls be satisfied.

Friends Church Southwest Elements Statement - 1994

On Friday, January 28, 1994, Friends Church Southwest adopted an Elements Statement proposed by its Board of Spiritual Life. This statement was the result of over five years of discussion, with wide participation from across the Yearly Meeting. All of those involved sought to honor our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to find the best way to serve His purposes in defining our Yearly Meeting's operating policy regarding the elements. This statement was the result of that recent, but historic effort - allowing freedom to use the elements with spiritual oversight, guidelines and limits for their use.

The time has come to state our biblical convictions about baptism and communion. Although each local church seems content about its own use or non-use of the elements, we do not all agree with each other about our individual church practices. We do agree in substantial measure about our Friends faith as taught in the Scriptures. Therefore the Board of Spiritual Life recommends to the Representatives that all of our churches teach the following truths.

The All-Sufficient Christ

We affirm that the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is all sufficient in providing for us everything we need for salvation, worship, life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him. (2 Pet 1:3; Eph 1:3; Phil 3:3)

Baptism

We affirm that the essential baptism is with the Holy Spirit. (Matt 3: 11; 1 Cor 12: 13)

We affirm that the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 is the same as being baptized into Christ, baptized into His name, baptized into His death, baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:19; Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27)

We affirm that the one baptism does not necessitate the use of water. (1 Cor 1:13-17 and references above)

We affirm that the water, in water baptism, has no cleansing quality upon the inner spirit. (1 Pet 3:21)

We affirm that we are saved only by grace through faith. No outward rite or ritual is necessary for salvation or mandated in scripture. (Eph 2:8-9; 2 Tim 1:9)

We affirm that those who are baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, without the use of water, are biblically baptized and need nothing more. We recognize that the use of water baptism has been genuinely meaningful to some. We also recognize that it has hindered some from seeing the true nature of salvation through Jesus Christ. (See references above).

Communion

We affirm that the experience of living communion with the Lord Jesus Christ involves our entire person and life, and cannot be restricted to a particular ritual or physical observance. (John 6:47-69, especially 63)

We affirm that in our Lord's last Passover meal with His disciples, He poured new meaning into the annual Jewish observance, namely that they must do it in remembrance of Him. (Matt 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-20, especially 19)

We affirm that living communion with Christ does not necessitate the use of the physical breaking of bread and drinking of the wine. (1 Cor 12:13; Phil. 2:1; Rev 3:20)

We affirm that any meal that we share with other Christians can serve to proclaim our Lord's death until He comes, and reminds us of our dependence on Christ for spiritual life. We do not find this mandated for Christian worship. (Acts 2:42, 46; 1 Cor 10:14-22, 11:17-34, especially 26)

We affirm that we are saved by grace through faith and we continue in Christ in the same way. No rite or ritual is necessary for discipleship or Christian maturity, nor is mandated in Scripture. (Eph 2:8-10; Col 2:6; 2 Tim 1:9)

We affirm that those who enjoy living in communion with Christ, without the use of the elements of bread and wine, need nothing more. We recognize that the use of the elements in observing the Lord's Supper has been genuinely meaningful to some. We also recognize that it has hindered some from seeing the true nature of communion with Jesus Christ. (Rom 14:17-18; Col 2:16-17 and references above)

We affirm the truths that the living Christ has revealed to Friends by the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, but we deny any sense of spiritual superiority that would claim to make us better than other members of Christ's universal church.

Guidelines for Use of Water Baptism and Communion

Guidelines for the use of water baptism and communion with the elements by Friends Churches in Southwest Yearly Meeting.

Friends Church Southwest Yearly Meeting permits the provision of water baptism and communion with the elements by our churches. This permission does not require any of our churches to provide them nor does it constitute a recommendation to do so. We believe the best policy will be one that strongly upholds the truth that these ceremonies form no essential part of Christian worship, and that the reality to which they point is immeasurably more satisfying.

The adoption or continued use of water baptism and communion with the elements should occur after approval and discussion by the pastoral leadership and the local body of elders. Pastors and elders should take care to preserve unity in the local church. The decision to practice water baptism and communion with the elements should be made in accordance with the Criteria and Queries on the Elements. The Yearly Meeting Elders shall be informed of the local church's decision and any further changes in practice.

The Yearly Meeting Superintendent, elders or approved representatives may counsel any pastor, teacher, group or local church whose teaching appears to not be in accordance with this document and the approved Elements Statement. Further action will be determined by the elders.

When teaching on baptism or communion in a Friends church or other group associated with Friends, pastors and teachers may not deviate from the intent of the approved Elements Statement. Written documents or statements of faith may not deviate from the intent of the approved Elements Statement.

In public announcements and written advertisements for the use of the elements, care should be taken that these are not presented as required activities for church attendees, and that participation or nonparticipation is completely voluntary.

Each participant shall receive adequate explanation of the Friends belief that neither water baptism nor communion with the elements is necessary or sufficient for salvation, worship, discipleship or the Christian life, in accord with the approved Elements Statement and *Faith and Practice*.

Since such a wide diversity of practices for the use of the elements exists among Bible believing Christians, no single format or method may be adopted by any local Friends church as the "best" or "most correct."

Any use of the elements shall be done in a way to provide non-use in the same service. The service is to be conducted in a way that makes neither those who use the elements, nor those who do not use them, feel out of place.

Criteria and Queries on the Elements

To evaluate any proposed or ongoing use of water baptism or communion with the elements in our churches, we offer the following criteria and queries as our standard.

Criteria

1. Neither water baptism nor communion with the elements should be practiced because other Christian churches or denominations use them.
2. Neither water baptism nor communion with the elements should be practiced because some present attendees or members of a congregation may choose to leave the church if they are not used.
3. Neither water baptism nor communion with the elements should be practiced to quiet the criticism of those Christians who claim that those who do not practice them are spiritually immature, disobedient to Christ or unsaved.
4. Neither water baptism nor communion with the elements should be practiced as a rite or ceremony in the church that distracts from the spiritual nature of our worship or from our spiritual relationship with the living Christ.
5. Neither water baptism nor communion with the elements should establish two classes of Christians in the church - those who use them and those who do not. Neither the use nor non-use may be a requirement for membership or leadership

Queries

1. Is any proposed use of water baptism or communion with the elements due to the moving of the Holy Spirit among members of the congregation? Is any provision for water baptism or communion with the elements under the ongoing leadership of Christ?
2. Will the practice of water baptism or communion with the elements build the unity of the congregation? Will ample opportunity for participation in worship be provided without the use of the elements?
3. Will the Friends' testimony on the spiritual nature of baptism in Christ, and communion with Christ, be clearly evident in the life, teaching and worship of the congregation?
4. Is the practice of water baptism, or communion with the elements, in response to a felt need of the local congregation rather than a continuation of a familiar form or habit?
5. Will the practice of water baptism, or communion with the elements, strengthen the living relationship of those in the congregation with Christ?

REGIONAL ORGANIZATION

Evangelical Friends Church Southwest (*EFC-SW* or Yearly Meeting) consists of the members of its local churches. Every individual who joins a local Friends church automatically becomes a member of the denomination, the Yearly Meeting. Although it is no longer part of our official name, the term Yearly Meeting may be used as an equivalent of *EFC-SW*. Friends, from earliest times, have sought to foster fellowship and cooperation in advancing the cause of Christ in the world. To this end, they have formed connected bodies of churches which live in mutual subordination and accountability. These bodies were comprised of Friends churches, in particular national or geographical regions, who gather together at least once a year for worship and business. The name for this gathering was “Yearly Meeting.” The term also came to be applied to the various regions, including both churches and members.

Friends’ history shows that each Yearly Meeting held final authority, making it almost a separate denomination. Larger groupings of Yearly Meetings provided shared ministries, but each had its own *Faith and Practice*, including its own statement of faith. For some years most shared the Richmond Declaration of Faith (see Chapter 2, Historical Documents). But in time each developed its own, and made various revisions. While the evangelical Friends movement has much in common, some differences in polity, and a few minor variations in doctrine, do exist among Yearly Meetings.

Final Authority

Under the headship of Christ, Evangelical Friends Church Southwest is the highest authority among our churches (and members) in all matters of *faith and practice*. Thus *EFC-SW* holds the spiritual and legal power among its churches to decide all such matters, including, without limitation, all organizational and operational matters. Its decisions are final. It can counsel, admonish, discipline, dismiss, or close its subordinate churches. It can make administrative decisions and apply church discipline to any of its pastors, staff, elders, members, and/or attendees.

At the same time, each local church exercises considerable discretion in its organization and operation. Many are organized as separate nonprofit religious corporations, with their own Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, which must acknowledge their subordinate relationship to *EFC-SW*.

We recognize that the vast differences in size and age of our churches make a “one- size-fits-all” approach to church polity simply impossible. Thus, *Faith and Practice* allows flexibility when the term “may” is used. “Must” indicates a mandatory requirement. The more common “will” used throughout *Faith and Practice* indicates our normal procedure.

The main function of the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest is to equip and enable our churches and people to do together what they cannot do alone. It will serve through its staff and volunteers who organize into boards, related organizations, task forces and other ministries, programs and efforts. Ministries include missions, new church development, camping, theological education and much more. The rest of this chapter will give some idea of the scope of activities. The funding comes from several sources, local church First Fruits giving, additional gifts given by churches to specific ministries or projects, and individual gifts and bequests.

Friends Way of Doing Business

Friends have a unique way of doing business. We do not vote. Instead we discuss and prayerfully reach agreement on what we believe is the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is sometimes called “the sense of the meeting” or simply “consensus.” It is more than simply reaching the lowest common denominator of agreement. At its best, it is discerning the mind of Christ and his direction as the head of the Church. For this reason, all business meetings begin with a period of worship. The intent is that the participants will continue to pray for guidance as they conduct the business in the spirit of worship. Spiritual life and business are two sides of the same coin and should never be separated. The goal is to submit to the rule of God’s kingdom as we serve him together. (See *Leadership, Decision-making and the Church* under “Convictions,” on page 9).

In *EFC-SW* business meetings the Presiding Clerk guides the sessions. This person is often chosen because of fairness, ability and mature character. After presentation of the topic, often by a board or executive staff member, the Clerk gives time for careful and deliberate consideration by the Representatives. When it appears to the Clerk that the Representatives have reached a decision, he or she states clearly what appears to be the consensus or “sense of the meeting.” Then the Clerk calls for approval, or sometimes, disapproval. When the group can proceed in substantial unity, the Representatives say “approved,” and the matter is firmly decided. When the members give approval, a minute is written summarizing the decision.

When a significant minority does not agree, the Clerk may call for a time of silent waiting on the Lord, postpone the item, or refer it back to a board or committee for review or revision. While each person is urged to seek the mind of the Lord, Friends believe that something unique happens as we try to discern God’s direction together. Therefore, corporate guidance takes precedence over the guidance of the individual in discerning the consensus or sense of the meeting. The Clerk has the right to call any person, or the proceedings themselves, “out of order” if an unproductive argument or a wrong spirit should emerge.

Decisions do not need to be unanimous, but they do need substantial unity. Members who disagree with an action may “stand aside;” that is, agree to let the others proceed without their agreeing with the action taken. Those who stand aside are also agreeing not to become divisive and not to oppose the implementation of the decision. On rare occasions, when the issue is grave and a decision must be made, those who disagree may ask to have their names registered in the minutes as opposing the action.

The Friends method of doing business is sometimes slow, but it does build unity. At its best, it is beautiful to watch the Holy Spirit bring a group to unity. That’s why the Spirit of authentic worship and seeking the mind of Christ Jesus who is always present, is so vital.

Annual Conference Business Sessions

General sessions for business must be held at least once a year, and are open to all members. The purpose of the business sessions of *EFC-SW* is to make decisions that affect the whole organization. Various boards supervise and carry out our shared ministries and concerns. Other benefits of our gatherings include leadership training, worship, fellowship and current reports. Our life together in Christ builds unity and mutual accountability of our churches.

Business decisions on the *EFC-SW* level are made by Representatives named by the local churches. However, all members have the privilege of attending and participating, even in the discussion of business. An annual meeting for business will convene on dates approved by the Elder Board and publicized well in advance. The Presiding Clerk, consulting with the Superintendent, arranges the agenda for the sessions. Other business may be introduced from any of the local churches, Elder Board, and other boards, committees and task forces of *EFC-SW*.

Clerks/Officers

A Presiding Clerk, Associate Clerk, Recording Clerk and Assistant Recording Clerk are nominated by the General Nominating Committee annually and must be approved by the Representatives. Their tenure of office shall not exceed ten years, but they do hold office until their successors are appointed. They must be members of one of our local *EFC-SW* churches.

The Presiding Clerk will open the annual business sessions (or Annual Conference). In the absence of the Presiding Clerk, the Associate Clerk will preside. If neither is present, the Recording Clerk will open the session; and a Clerk may be named from the floor.

The Associate Clerk automatically becomes the chairperson of the *EFC-SW* Board of Elders, and is designated as the Chief Executive Officer of *EFC-SW* under California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law. The Elder Board will designate the Corporate Secretary and the Chief Financial Officer of *EFC-SW* under the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law.

In addition to presiding over the sessions, the Clerk and Associate Clerk are always welcome to attend meetings of all *EFC-SW* boards and committees whenever needed, or whenever it might seem appropriate.

Sessions

Representatives constitute the official body of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest, to consider and act upon various items of business that come before it. Each church should exert effort to have their Representatives present. Business sessions of the Representatives are also known as the Representative Session of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. Participation in discussion shall be open to all members and, upon approval by the Clerk, to guests of the sessions. Representatives only take action by responding "approved" or "disapproved." Representatives may meet in closed sessions at their request or by request of the Clerk or Associate Clerk.

Additional sessions of the Representatives may be called at the request of the Elder Board. Notice of such sessions, and the proposed agenda must be announced at least thirty days in advance.

At all business sessions of the Representatives, the Representatives present shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Representatives

Three people from each church become Representatives automatically because of their position - the Senior Pastor, Clerk/Presiding Officer and chairperson of the local Elders/Ministry and Counsel. In smaller churches where the offices of Clerk/Presiding Officer and chairperson of the local Elders/Ministry and Counsel are held by the same person, the church may select a third person to serve as a Representative. Additional Representatives will be appointed by each church on the basis of average weekend worship attendance as follows:

churches with 1- 50 = 1 additional Representative
churches with 51-100 = 2 additional Representatives
churches with 101-150 = 3 additional Representatives
churches with 151-200 = 4 additional Representatives
churches with 201-300 = 5 additional Representatives
churches with 301-500 = 6 additional Representatives

One additional representative will be appointed for each additional 300 average worship attendance.

Representatives are to serve in an active capacity. Alternates are to be appointed by each church, and they shall serve when it is impossible for the duly appointed Representatives to be present for any session. Alternates may be named at the Yearly Meeting business sessions by members of their local church who are present.

Appointed Representatives begin service in January for terms of three years, not to exceed six consecutive years. Upon resignation or vacancy in the office of any Representative, the Local Church shall appoint a successor to complete the unexpired term.

Essential Business of Representatives

The final decisions and actions on the following must be approved by the Representatives.

- Consideration and action on any proposed changes in *Faith and Practice*
- Consideration and action on the proposed Church Health and Growth Budget
- Consideration and action on the proposed annual First Fruits giving percentage
- Consideration and action on incurring indebtedness on behalf of *EFC-SW* (not including local churches and related organizations)
- Consideration and action on the annual reports of nominations made by the General Nominating Committee and the Elder Board
- Consideration and action upon recommendations from the Elder Board regarding calling or dismissing of the Superintendent
- Consideration and action upon business presented to the Representatives by the Elder Board

Conduct of Representatives Sessions

The Representatives sessions will use the Friends way of doing business. (See page 46.) The names of Representatives and alternates should be sent promptly to the *EFC-SW* office in writing. Changes may be accepted at the time of the meeting. Representatives' attendance will be taken and recorded. *EFC-SW* Superintendent, staff and boards will, at appropriate times, use the opportunity to report to the Representatives, who in turn should keep their churches informed of *EFC-SW* affairs.

First Fruits Covenant Giving (The second pilot was approved in 2009)

"First Fruits Covenant is the method our churches have chosen to provide financial resources for the Church Health and Growth budget (formerly General Operating budget)."

"This approach allows the churches to: (1) participate in the support of the regional office and staff (excluding Faith Board employees); (2) allow individual congregations to promote and model a spirit of generosity within their congregations; (3) allow for individual congregations to partner with other churches in ways they would not otherwise be able to do."

"The Church Health and Growth budget is funded through giving from each local church. Each year at Annual Conference, the churches approve this budget. The Representatives will also approve the percentage of their general giving income which will serve to fund the CHG budget. All churches will be encouraged to give at the same percentage."

"This would be a three year pilot program. This also removes the cap."

Assessment

An annual Fair Share Assessment will be assigned to each local church by *EFC-SW*. The income supports the regional office and staff, excluding Faith Board employees. It provides a predictable level of support for the personnel and services of the Yearly Meeting. It allows our churches to help one another in ways that they might not otherwise be able to do.

The point formula to determine the amount of the Fair Share Assessment for each church is approved by the Elder Board and the Representatives. The Fair Share Assessment formula may be obtained from the *EFC-SW*

office. The Fair Share Assessment is never to exceed 10% of the church's General Fund income. Local churches must pay their Fair Share Assessment, and are encouraged to do so in a timely manner.

General Nominating Committee

The Elder Board shall appoint the General Nominating Committee from among the list of Representatives submitted by the local churches. Each church will name a lead Representative to assist the General Nominating Committee from among their Representatives (including Pastor, Clerk and Clerk of Ministry and Counsel). Local church lead Representatives have the responsibility of submitting the names of qualified persons who might serve on boards or committees of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest.

A total of twelve Representatives or alternates will serve on the Nominating Committee, four to be appointed each year for a maximum of two three-year terms, and with no more than two members from any one church. The General Nominating Committee will nominate persons to fill vacancies in offices and boards with the exception of those who have been appointed by the respective boards. Their task is to nominate a full slate of officers and board members for appointment at the next session of the Representatives.

The General Nominating Committee will nominate three-fourths of the members of each board, while each board itself will nominate one-fourth, unless otherwise specified. These nominations will be made on a three-year cycle so that each year one-third of the board retires or becomes eligible for a second term.

The General Nominating Committee will present all nominations to the Elder Board for their approval, thus making it possible for boards to affect tentative organization prior to final approval by the Representatives. Members of the General Nominating Committee shall serve until their successors are appointed. Vacancies on the General Nominating Committee will be filled by the Elder Board.

Executive Staff

Evangelical Friends Church Southwest shall have a Superintendent and such other executive staff as determined from time to time by the Superintendent and the Elder Board. The Elder Board will serve as a personnel committee for the nomination of the Superintendent. Their nomination for Superintendent will be forwarded to the Representatives for consideration and approval or disapproval.

Executive staff members will be called on a continuous service basis. The work of the executive staff will be evaluated each year. The Elder Board will conduct the evaluation of the Superintendent. The Superintendent will conduct the evaluation of other executive staff and report to the Elder Board.

Superintendent

The Superintendent will serve as an additional member of all Boards and Committees and may attend board meetings, committees and task forces as is appropriate. The Superintendent will be accountable to the Elder Board who, in turn, is answerable to the Representatives. The Superintendent will give general oversight of the work of all other executive staff members and coordinate the total program of *EFC-SW*.

The duties of the Superintendent will include the following:

- Stimulate fulfillment of the great commission in the spirit of the great commandment.
- Develop a vision for Evangelical Friends Church Southwest in cooperation with others.
- Lead Evangelical Friends Church Southwest toward:
 - a. Spiritual health
 - b. Numerical growth
 - c. Financial stability
- Take proactive steps to build health, strength and vitality into Evangelical Friends Church Southwest and its mission fields.

- Lead in overcoming the inevitable setbacks and casualties that result from human failure and our spiritual battle with the adversary.
- Implement the decisions, policies and beliefs of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest.
- Supervise the executive staff, field staff, and office staff of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest.

The Superintendent will insure that proper and correct accounts of all property, business, and financial transactions are kept and reported. The Superintendent will see that a financial review of the books, vouchers and records is made annually by an independent agent approved in advance by the Elder Board and presented to the Elder Board.

Other Executive and Field Staff

Other executive and field staff will be members of the boards and committees that are appropriate for their specific job descriptions or as assigned by the Superintendent. They will serve under the supervision of the Superintendent.

Job Descriptions

The Superintendent, in consultation with appropriate boards, will prepare a job description for each member of the executive staff. All job descriptions and any major revisions will be approved by the Elder Board.

Organization of Boards

Meetings and Quorum

Regular meetings will be held at least four times per year, unless otherwise specified. Additional meetings may be called by the chairman at the request of the executive committee or at the request of three members of the board. The chairman must give five days notice to all members, along with the agenda of business to be considered. A quorum shall consist of half the board, but not less than five.

Organization

All board meetings are open except those of the Elder Board or any board when it is meeting in executive session. The Elder Board may declare any of their sessions an open session.

Each board will organize during the annual business session or after all new members have been tentatively approved by the Elder Board. New members, officers and committees will assume their responsibilities at the close of the sessions. Each board will use the Friends way of doing business. (See page 46). It shall have an executive committee of at least three to care for the work of the board throughout the year with the following membership: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. The executive committee will act as an agenda committee for meetings. It will also act for the board between meetings. Any action taken by the executive committee must be reported to the full board for approval.

Each board may appoint from its membership those other committees needed to accomplish its ministry. Committees may enlist others from outside the board with special talents, resources or abilities to assist them in their work.

Individual board members may be given responsibility by its board or its executive committee to implement specific decisions. However, individuals acting on behalf of a board should act only in accordance with the decisions and policies as recorded in their minutes. Outside of board meetings, individuals do not supervise staff or speak for the board.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Each board is responsible for its ministry, even if it is implemented by a staff member or volunteers. The action of the board should represent, as far as possible, the principles and beliefs of Friends and the constituency of *EFC-SW*. Proposed projects or actions should have the approval of the board before being implemented.
2. Each board will prepare a budget annually.
3. Each board will cooperate with the *EFC-SW* Superintendent and staff in the preparation of materials for publication and distribution.
4. Each board will encourage cooperation with other organizations that are in harmony with the *Faith and Practice of EFC-SW*.
5. Each board will report periodically to the Elder Board about their plans, programs and calendar of activities.

Inactive Board and Committee Members

Inactive members of boards or committees may be dropped by the Elder Board. Those who move away from the Yearly Meeting or are entering other fields of service will be discontinued. Those who have two consecutive unexcused absences may be notified by the board or committee that their membership may be withdrawn.

Membership and Terms

EFC-SW boards and committees will consist of between nine and twenty-four members. Board and committee members should be members of a local church. At least three-fourths of members will be nominated by the General Nominating Committee unless otherwise specified. The remainder will be nominated and appointed by the board or committee itself. Unless otherwise specified, terms will be three years, with a limit of six consecutive years.

The General Nominating Committee will fill vacancies that occur during the year, with the exception of those who have been appointed by the individual board.

Strategy Forum

This group is an inspirational, vision-casting, communicating group rather than a policy-making body. It includes the Elder Board, Faith Board Chairpersons, Program Board Chairpersons and Organizational Board representatives. Each local church that does not already have a member on the Strategy Forum is invited to name a person from among its Representatives (including Pastor, Presiding Officer/Clerk and Elders/Ministry and Council Chairperson).

The Strategy Forum will meet at the call of the Superintendent and the Elder Board.

Elder Board

The Elder Board seeks to discern the Holy Spirit's direction and work with the Superintendent in providing leadership to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. The Elder Board functions as the Representatives out of session. As such, they are the only Board with power to act between Representative Sessions for *EFC-SW* as a whole. The Elder Board will give godly counsel to the Superintendent. It will elicit reports from Board, ministries and staff as needed.

In case of conflict, the Elder Board is the only body with the authority of the Representatives to resolve problems between boards. The Elder Board will listen to the issues involved and take the necessary action to resolve the issue. Whenever it is deemed wise or necessary, they will make recommendations to the Representatives. The Elder Board shall serve as the Board of Directors of the Corporation within the meaning of the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law.

Composition

The Elder Board is a nine-member Board. Qualifications include, but are not limited to biblical character qualities (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1), spiritual giftedness, ministry effectiveness, wisdom, vision and commitment to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest.

The Presiding Clerk and Associate Clerk will be members of the Elder Board. The Associate Clerk will serve as chairman of the Elder Board. The Superintendent and at least one other executive staff person will meet with the Elder Board regularly. The Superintendent acts as an additional member of the Elder Board except when the board is acting as the Personnel Committee for the Superintendent.

Six members will be nominated by the General Nominating Committee and one member by the Elder Board itself. The Representatives must approve all nominations.

The Nominating Committee will prayerfully discern the Lord's will for the best people to serve regardless of locality or other position. Terms of the seven members will be for three years, with a two-term limit before taking at least one year off. Each member of the Elders Board must be an active member of an *EFC-SW* church, and normally a present or recent member of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel, or a pastor, staff member or spouse who is elder-qualified.

Elder Duties and Responsibilities

The Elder Board acts as the official body of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest while the general sessions of Representatives are in adjournment. The Elder Board conducts all items of business requiring attention by a governing body between sessions of the Representatives and business that is not clearly the responsibility of some other board or committee. Reports of all important actions will be given to the Representatives at the next session.

The Elder Board will seek the mind of Christ for the present and future of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. Its primary duty is to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church and to obey God's word.

Resolutions, recommendations or statements that might be construed to speak officially for Evangelical Friends Church Southwest must meet with the approval of the Elder Board or with the Representatives if they are in session.

The Elder Board will be the final clearinghouse for the calendar, activities, programs and policies of the other boards and related organizations and for Evangelical Friends Church Southwest as a whole. Any conflicts in schedule or policy will be referred to the Elder Board for discussion, discernment, recommendation and, when appropriate, action. When deemed wise or necessary, recommendations for final action will go to the Representatives.

The Elder Board may appoint task forces or special committees for the good of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest, for items that are not clearly the responsibility of some other body.

The Elder Board may extend advice and assistance to persons suffering for their Christian testimonies, as each case may require, and petition governments or appropriate agencies or people in authority on behalf of those who suffer.

Meetings of the Elder Board will normally be held on a monthly basis. They may be called by the chairperson or at the request of any three members. The presence of one-half of the members is required to transact business.

The Elder Board shall encourage faithful adherence to, and full experience of the historic biblical witness of *EFC-SW* as reflected in *Faith and Practice*.

Personnel Duties

The Elder Board will keep a record of proceedings and present its actions and recommendations to the Representatives.

The Elder Board serves as the personnel committee for the Superintendent and the *EFC-SW* executive and field staff. Most staff management responsibilities are delegated to the Superintendent, but they will hear cases of appeal or grievance. The Elder Board will make recommendations to the Representatives regarding the employment or dismissal of the Superintendent. The Superintendent, in consultation with appropriate boards, will make recommendations to the Elder Board regarding employment or dismissal of other executive staff.

The Elder Board is responsible for direct supervision of the Superintendent, giving counsel and advice as they discern the Lord's will. It will determine compensation and personnel policies, setting the salaries for the Superintendent and other executive staff. It will carry out the annual performance review of the Superintendent.

Trustees

Evangelical Friends Church Southwest, through nomination by the Elder Board, will appoint five Trustees annually. Trustees may be named from among the members of the Elder Board and the executive staff of the *EFC-SW*. They will serve for a one-year term.

The Trustees have responsibility for the property, financial and legal matters of *EFC-SW* and such other matters as may be referred to them by the Representatives or by the Elder Board. The Trustees report to the Representatives and the Elder Board, and all actions of the Trustees are subject to review and approval by the Elder Board.

Execution of Documents

The Elder Board, except as otherwise provided in *Faith and Practice*, may authorize any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of and on behalf of *EFC-SW*. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized by the Elder Board, no officer, agent, or employee shall have any power or authority to bind *EFC-SW* by any contract or agreement, or to pledge its credit, or to render it liable for any purpose or to any amount.

Subject to the provisions of applicable law, any note, mortgage, evidence of indebtedness, contract, conveyance, or other instrument in writing and any assignment or endorsement thereof executed or entered into between *EFC-SW* and any other person, when signed jointly by the Chief Executive Officer and the corporation Secretary of *EFC-SW* shall be valid and binding on *EFC-SW* in the absence of actual knowledge on the part of the other person that the signing officers had no authority to execute the same.

Faith Boards

Faith Boards express our united efforts to fulfill the great commission in the spirit of the great commandment. Each local church must be involved in this activity in its own setting. However, these boards provide us a means of ministry together for the common cause.

The Faith Boards consist of nine to twenty-four members, appointed by the Nominating Committee of *EFC-SW* and the board itself. Normal terms of office are three years, with a maximum of two terms or six consecutive years.

The Faith Boards do not receive any First Fruits funds from *EFC-SW* or its churches. All funds they raise are on a voluntary basis. They are free to raise money, grant scholarships and expend what finances they raise, within the purposes of the particular Faith board. Each chairperson or related executive staff member will give periodic reports to the Representatives in session and to the Board of Elders.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent, the Elder Board will hire the executive staff for the Faith Boards. In their daily responsibilities each Faith Board, executive staff members will be accountable to the Superintendent or person designated by the Superintendent. The Elder Board normally will consult with the Faith Board in the selection process. With board approval, the executive staff member or Faith Board may

hire other staff as necessary and, as finances allow, to carry out its ministry. Any such staff shall fall within the organizational structure of *EFC-SW* as either executive staff or field staff unless otherwise indicated. (See “Executive Staff”, pages 36-37).

Presently we have three Faith Boards. These include Missions, New Church Development and the Friends Center. The following section contains the purpose statement of each of these Faith Boards. Each board has a manual or an organizational procedure that describes in more detail their strategy, operational procedures or objectives. These are available in the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest Office.

FRIENDS CENTER

The purpose of the Friends Center is to serve Friends Churches in recruiting and equipping evangelical leaders to minister more effectively for Jesus Christ and his Church. In partnership with the School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University, the Friends Center serves students in ministerial training. The Friends Center also serves *EFC-SW* and the Friends movement in its larger leadership development needs, both locally and internationally.

MISSIONS

The purpose of the Board of Missions is to work under the direction of Jesus Christ in planting and shepherding disciples and churches related to *EFC-SW* in those areas of the world where we are specifically called to work. Our goal is to proclaim Christ, to bring people to know him and to form these believers into an Evangelical Friends Church that shares the goal of taking Christ to the world. We also seek to minister to physical and economic needs as the Lord directs.

NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of the Board of New Church Development is to enable local churches to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ through facilitating the planting and shepherding of prayerful and reproducing *EFC-SW* churches among the various cultures represented in the southwestern United States.

Service Boards

Service Boards express our united efforts to serve those who attend our churches. Their activity may take the form of providing assistance to our local churches, or in addressing an area of mutual concern. Each local church may well be involved in this activity in its own setting.

The Service Boards consist of nine to twenty-four members, appointed by the Nominating Committee of *EFC-SW*. Normal terms of office are two 3-year terms with a maximum of six consecutive years.

The Service Boards receive funds from *EFC-SW* as a part of the First Fruits giving to the Church Health and Growth budget. They may also raise other funds as necessary to carry out their approved programs. Each board is expected to give periodic reports to the Representatives in session and to the Board of Elders.

RECORDING AND COMMISSIONING

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Board of Recording and Commissioning is to observe, evaluate and encourage the developmental process as a person prepares for ministry as a candidate for either Recording or Commissioning.

Duties and Responsibilities

Upon recommendation of the Ministry and Counsel/Elders of the local church, the Board of Recording and Commissioning will interview candidates for acceptance and then supervise the progress until Recording or Commissioning is complete. (See Chapter 7, *Recording and Commissioning*).

The board may plan Call to Ministry Conferences, or other gatherings, designed to stimulate people to listen for God’s call and respond with their whole hearts. Coaching and mentoring may be part of the equipping process.

The board may contact, encourage and pray into ministry Evangelical Friends students in seminaries, Bible colleges and universities, as well as those showing extraordinary gifting in local church ministry.

Membership

At least two-thirds of the board's members must be recorded Friends ministers or members of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel in local churches at the time of their appointment.

Related Organizations

Related organizations are separately incorporated, but still connected to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. In every case EFC-SW has a formal, recognized affiliation. Usually it nominates some or all of the members of the board of the related organization.

CALIFORNIA FRIENDS HOMES

California Friends Homes (CFH), a non-profit corporation incorporated September 7, 1962, is under the sponsorship of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest.

Objectives

The objectives of CFH include establishing, building, equipping, maintaining, conducting, and operating one or more establishments or homes to provide, for a fee, facilities and services to meet the spiritual, physical, social and psychological needs of elderly persons. CFH will supply those persons with shelter, care, protection, love, understanding, companionship and other essentials to a full and devoted life.

Membership

The board consists of members serving no more than two consecutive three-year terms. Each year the General Nominating Committee will appoint one member. Three members will be appointed by the Board of Directors of CFH at the time of the annual meeting of the board.

The current Superintendent, Presiding Clerk, Associate Presiding Clerk, and one executive staff member appointed by the Superintendent of *EFC-SW* shall be ex-officio members of the Board of Directors. They will receive notice of, and may participate in, board meetings but may not approve or disapprove actions.

Responsibilities

The management, business and concerns of California Friends Homes shall be exercised by, and vested in, the Board of Directors as provided for in the CFH by-laws and/or Articles of Incorporation.

EVANGELICAL FRIENDS INTERNATIONAL

On June 23, 1995 the Representatives approved joining Evangelical Friends International (EFI). Evangelical Friends Church Southwest names its allotted quota of delegates to the various commissions of EFI North America and pays its allotted share of the EFI assessment.

Evangelical Friends International is affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals but is not a part of the National Council of Churches nor the World Council of Churches. The Statement of Faith and Constitution of EFI are available through the *EFC-SW* office.

Dual Affiliation

To preserve unity of purpose, member churches of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest must not hold corporate affiliation or membership in Friends organizations independent of *EFC-SW*. However, individuals who are members of our local churches may seek personal membership and ministry in other Friends organizations as an expression of what they determine to be God's calling for themselves.

EVANGELICAL FRIENDS MISSION

Evangelical Friends Mission began in 1978 and is currently the missionary sending agency of Evangelical Friends International-North America. Its board is one of the commissions of EFI-NA and is appointed from the constituent Yearly Meetings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of Evangelical Friends Mission is to plant living, maturing churches that glorify God and witness to his kingdom, especially among unreached people groups. These national churches, in turn, produce evangelists, pastors, church planters and missionaries to spread the gospel to people groups beyond themselves.

Entry into the living church of Jesus Christ is by conversion; so evangelism, discipleship and leadership development are essential parts of missionary activity. Missionary effort includes nurturing believers and ministering to their needs and building them up in the faith, so that they represent Christ authentically in their own land and beyond.

SOUTHWEST FRIENDS FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Board of Benevolence, (dba) Southwest Friends Financial Development Corporation, is to provide a financial resource for churches and other organizations of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. The board acts as trustee and advisor for annuities, trusts and other funds placed in its care.

Incorporation

In 1920 the Board of Benevolences (today called Southwest Friends Financial Development Corporation) was incorporated under the laws of the State of California, following action by the Yearly Meeting, now named Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. The board is a California nonprofit religious corporation which does not issue stock, pays no dividends and may not distribute any part of the corporation's income to members, officers or directors except as reasonable compensation for services rendered.

Objectives

The objectives of the Southwest Friends Financial Development Corporation are numerous, and its authority as provided for in its Articles of Incorporation is broad. Its primary function is to establish and maintain annuities and trusts. The board can receive and administer wisely any money or property through gifts, wills, bequests and other financial instruments. It may issue annuities or other charges or trusts, and create such annuities or trusts.

It may also buy, sell, lease or otherwise acquire real estate and buildings and personal property suitable for its purposes. It can lend and borrow money and issue bonds or debentures.

With its funds the board may help extend the ministries and message of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. It may contribute toward the establishment of churches, schools, colleges, libraries or hospitals.

Membership

The board consists of seven members nominated by the General Nominating Committee and approved by the Representatives. Each term is five years, not to exceed ten consecutive years. The presence of four members constitutes a quorum.

QUAKER MEADOW CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

The purpose of the Quaker Meadow Board is to operate Quaker Meadow Camp in a manner through which the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. The camp is dedicated to winning and training youth and adults for Christ.

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP

The Women's Missionary Fellowship is an organization of women of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest who assist in missionary education and involvement. Its president is a member of the Board of Missions.

UNIVERSITY AFFILIATIONS

George Fox University

George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon has a long relationship with *EFC-SW*, dating back to the early years of this century. Members of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest have attended George Fox since the 1920s, and served on the Board of Trustees since at least the 1950s. Many of our pastors and staff members are alumni. We encourage students to attend, and potential faculty to consider it as a place of employment. *EFC-SW* holds a cooperative agreement with George Fox University as an affiliated school. The University may make written or oral reports at our Representatives Business Sessions.

Azusa Pacific University

Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California was originally started by Friends, and although today it is interdenominational, we continue as one of the sponsoring denominations. It is the location of our Friends Center as part of the C.P. Haggard Graduate School of Theology. One or more members of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest have served on the Board of Trustees and also on the Council of Church Leaders for many years. We encourage students who remain in this area to attend APU, and potential faculty to consider it as a place of employment. The University may make written or oral reports at our Representatives Business Sessions.

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

The Evangelical Friends Objective

The objective of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest is to glorify, love, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ as the only head of the Church. Evangelical Friends recognize that we are a part of Christ's universal Church composed of genuine disciples from all generations and from all over the world.

EFC-SW also seeks to observe the biblical standard of equality of all members (Galatians 3:26-28, I Corinthians 12:13). Opportunity, privilege and responsibility are to be given to all regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or class. All are to have opportunity to share in Christ's name, participating in ministry through his church according to their spiritual gifts (Acts 2:17, 18, Ephesians 4:11-13, I Corinthians 12:4-7).

Membership

Evangelical Friends receive into membership only those who declare and live out their faith in Christ Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord, and who are in agreement with the teachings of faith taught in the Scriptures and held by Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. The effectiveness of the local church depends upon the faithfulness of its members as they depend upon the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Expectations of Members

We recommend that individuals applying for membership make these goals and commitments.

- I will endeavor to attend worship regularly and participate in other meetings of the church.
- I will contribute cheerfully to the expenses of the church and for the spreading of the gospel to the world.
- I will serve with my time, talent and spiritual gifts in ministry to others as God instructs, watching over others in care and prayer and offering aid when they are in sickness or distress.
- I will seek to be loving and courteous in speech, to be slow to take offense and to be always ready for reconciliation. It is my desire to cooperate with the leadership of our church and the proceedings of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest.
- I will endeavor to maintain regular times of personal prayer and Bible study, to provide my children with Christian instruction and to seek the salvation of others.
- I will endeavor to live above reproach in the world, to be just in my dealings and exemplary in my conduct and to avoid practices harmful to my personal witness and to the testimony of our church.
- I understand that my name may be removed from membership if I discontinue attending for a period of twelve months. If I move beyond commuting distance from this church, I will seek the Lord's guidance about uniting with another church where I can carry out the spirit of this fellowship and the principles of God's Word.

Meaning of Membership

Membership is like a partnership in which the members are contributors and owners who share in responsibility and workload. It is like a team in that the members belong to one another, share a specific cause and contribute to the good of the whole group. It is like a marriage, in that members commit themselves to Christ as their bridegroom and to the good of his bride, the Church.

Membership is *not* for those who are outside of Christ. Membership is *not* a means to salvation, but it is helpful for a Christian to declare commitment to Christ and to the local church. It means personal agreement with basic Christian beliefs as practiced by the local congregation of the body of Christ. When a group of Christians commit themselves to membership and to loyalty to the church, it enables them together to accomplish more for the glory of God.

Membership allows participation in decision making according to this *Faith and Practice*. Membership does not give any member any proprietary or voting rights in the local church or *EFC-SW*, is not assignable by any member, and cannot be passed to any personal representative or heir.

Application for Membership

Application for membership in the local church will be made in writing to the local Elders/Ministry and Counsel. Application forms will be provided by the local church. The Elders/Ministry and Counsel for the congregation will act upon the application for membership.

Positions Requiring Membership

Some positions of leadership in our local churches require church membership: Pastoral Staff, Elders/Ministry and Counsel, Nominating Committee, Officers, Trustees/Finance and chairpersons of committees.

Transfer of Membership

Members moving to an area served by another Evangelical Friends Church are to become a member by following the membership process of the new church. The ones who transfer should request the former church to drop their names from membership.

Affiliated Members

Churches may accept as affiliated members any believer temporarily residing in their community who is still a member of another church. Those who seek such affiliation should follow the local church's requirements for membership. Such membership is not to be included in statistical reports of membership. This affiliation automatically ceases when the believer leaves the community, unless otherwise requested and approved.

Resignation or Discontinuance

Resignation of one's membership shall be made in writing to the local church, and the church may exercise its discretion in accepting the resignation.

The Elders/Ministry and Counsel should carefully review membership for nonattendance or for disciplinary reasons about once a year.

Business Meetings

Organization

As an organization, a local church is made up of all who are listed as members. The local church is duly organized after it has named a Pastor, Elders/Ministry and Counsel and required committees and after it has appointed a Clerk/Presiding Officer to conduct the business meeting. It must also be officially recognized by Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. The local church will designate officers to sign legal documents on behalf of the church, in accordance with the laws in the jurisdiction where it is located.

Conduct of Business

Business meetings are to be held in the spirit of worship, seeking to perceive and to do God's will. Time is permitted for careful consideration and participation by church members present. When it seems to the Clerk/Presiding Officer that the meeting has reached a decision, he or she will state what appears to be the "sense of the meeting." The Clerk/Presiding Officer will ask for a verbal approval; and if it is approved, the item will be included in the minutes. No vote is taken, but actions are approved only when the group can proceed in substantial unity.

If the Clerk/Presiding Officer senses a time of unproductive discussion, he or she may call for a time of quiet prayer. The item may be postponed or referred to a committee if there is still not a sense of unity. It is possible for any who might disagree to “stand aside” in order to allow the meeting to reach a decision. We believe in both individual and corporate guidance, yet corporate guidance takes precedence over individual guidance in discerning the consensus or sense of the meeting. (See *Leadership, Decision-making and the Church*, page 9, and *Friends Way of Doing Business*, page 33).

Frequency of Business Meetings

The minimum frequency for having a congregational business meeting is one time per year, yet more frequent meetings may be set by the congregation.

Essential Business

Some items require congregational business meeting approval.

- Calling or dismissing the senior pastor
- Approving the annual budget and other budgets so delegated
- Purchasing or selling real estate property
- Approving major building projects
- Incurring long-term indebtedness
- Approving all nominations

The Elders/Ministry and Counsel or designated committees may deal with all matters other than the items listed above.

Called Business Meetings

The Elders/Ministry and Counsel will schedule any called business meeting that is not set on the church calendar by the congregation’s regular business meeting. An individual request for a special called business meeting must be approved by the Elders/Ministry and Counsel.

Notice of a called or a regular business meeting must be given at a regular church service at least seven days prior to the meeting, stating the subject(s) for the meeting. It is recommended that the meeting also be announced in print, by fax, e-mail or other means of communication. No other business is to be transacted except the announced item(s).

Officers

Office of the Pastor

The Bible speaks of pastors as elders, overseers, leaders and shepherds, among other roles. They are called and gifted by Christ to lead his Church and equip God’s people for works of service (Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Jesus is the Great Shepherd and his pastors serve with him to feed the sheep and take care of the flock (Heb. 13:20; John 21:15-17). The whole church is to respect pastors and elders and “hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work” (1 Thess. 5:12-13). Also see Chapter Six, Friends Pastors.

Elders/Ministry and Counsel

The elders oversee the spiritual life of the church. Together they will be called the Ministry and Counsel, or simply the Elders. Each must be a member of the church in good standing and be called of God to spiritual leadership as an elder (see Ephesians 4:12). Pastors in the church and members of Ministry and Counsel are each considered to be an elder by Evangelical Friends and also in I Timothy 3:1-7. All elders must respond affirmatively to God’s call to live above reproach. Their prayerful concern for the spiritual welfare of the

people in the church and in the universal body of Christ may require frank and open discussion. However, they are to keep all meeting discussions in confidence.

Authority of Elders

Except for decisions required to be made by the congregational meeting, the Elders/Ministry and Counsel will be the final point of appeal for all matters of unresolved disagreement involving staff, committees and other entities within the congregation. The Elders/Ministry and Counsel also serve as directors of the corporation according to the laws of their jurisdiction.

Clerk/Presiding Officer

The Clerk/Presiding Officer must be nominated by the local church nominating committee and approved by the congregation. He or she is to be a member in good standing, evidencing spiritual maturity and spiritual discernment. Careful listening and humble leadership are essential characteristics for this position.

The Clerk/Presiding Officer will preside over the church's business meetings or an Associate Clerk/Associate Presiding Officer will preside in his/her absence. It is often helpful for the Clerk/Presiding Officer to attend the meetings of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel on an ad hoc basis.

Recording Clerk/Recording Officer

A member in good standing selected by the nominating committee and approved by the congregation will be assigned to record the minutes of the business meetings. A copy of the minutes will be available to the people of the church, signed and dated by the Clerk/Presiding Officer and by the Recording Clerk/Officer.

The Recording Clerk/Officer will maintain a record of legal documents and of business meeting minutes, including decisions and memberships. All financial decisions must be explicit and detailed in the minutes. These records are to be kept in a safe yet accessible place, and a back-up set of records are recommended for the minutes and legal documents.

Treasurer

The local church must appoint a treasurer, selected by the nominating committee and approved by the congregation, who is a member in good standing, who will automatically become a member of the finance committee. The treasurer shall keep and maintain, or be responsible for, the accounting of all receipts, expenditures and financial transactions of the local church. The treasurer must make a regular report of the financial transactions and of the current status of funds. The treasurer will be responsible for overseeing the depositing of all money, securities and other valuables in the name of and to the credit of the church. An annual review of the financial records is strongly recommended.

Property and Finance (Trustees)

The local church must appoint three or more members in good standing as a committee to act according to the authority given to them by the congregational meeting. They will be selected by the nominating committee and approved by the congregation. One-third of the trustees are to be appointed each year for a three-year term. The essential business actions listed on page 64 require a decision approved by the congregational meeting.

Corporate Organization

All jurisdictions in which local *EFC-SW* churches are located require the designation of (1) a chief executive officer, president, or chairman of the board, (2) a corporate secretary, and (3) a chief financial officer or treasurer, although the names of these offices may vary from one jurisdiction to another. Normally the clerk of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel is designated as the chief executive officer. The local congregation, acting upon recommendations of its nominating committee, will designate the persons who will hold these offices under state law, and their terms of office will be one year or until their respective successors are appointed.

Representatives

The local church must choose representatives with Christian maturity and spiritual discernment. They will be selected by the nominating committee and approved by the congregation. The number of representatives for each church will be based on its annual average of weekend worship attendance, as set forth in chapter 3 (page 34).

Committees

As long as these functions are met they may be called by whatever names the local church desires. Some use teams or task forces. Some have alternate names for the various groups. For uniformity we will call them committees.

Elders/Ministry and Counsel

The Elders/Ministry and Counsel will give guidance to the operations of the church. They will be involved in visiting applicants for membership, reviewing their personal salvation and exploring opportunities for ministry. Members of Ministry and Counsel are to be committed to pray for the pastor(s), to counsel and to assist the pastors, and to be their encouragers and co-workers in the service of the Lord Jesus.

One-third of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel must be nominated each year for a three-year term. Members will be limited to two consecutive terms before being required to take at least one year off. The chairperson may be selected annually by either the Elders/Ministry and Counsel or the Nominating Committee. Another member will be selected to record the minutes.

It may be advisable for churches with large staffs to limit attendees to the Elders/Ministry and Counsel to one or two pastors if the individual church so desires. Others may be invited at times to meet with the Elders/Ministry and Counsel. The Elders/Ministry and Counsel, in consultation with the Finance Committee, will be responsible for recommending that the pastors and staff members are adequately compensated in salary, retirement and benefits.

Finance

The Finance Committee will prepare the budget of the church and submit it to the congregation for approval. They will provide training in stewardship, administer fundraising programs and encourage an emphasis on giving. They will review and document expenditures compared to the budget. The committee will serve as consultants to Elders/Ministry and Counsel on salaries, retirement, insurance and other benefits paid to the pastoral staff. They will be selected by the Nominating Committee and approved by the congregation.

Nominating

Members of the Nominating Committee prayerfully consider people's gifts and skills and confer with the pastor who meets with them. The committee reviews the responsibilities of the position being discussed and evaluates each nominee's willingness to serve. The Nominating Committee then submits the list of nominees for the various positions to the congregational meeting for approval. The Elders/Ministry and Counsel, Church Officers and Yearly Meeting Representatives must be so nominated and approved. Other committees and ministry teams may be filled in alternate ways if the local church congregational meeting so approves.

The Nominating Committee must be appointed annually or reassigned annually at a congregational meeting. All members of the Nominating Committee are to be members of the church and should represent a variety of ages and interests. Members of the church may suggest names for consideration by the committee. This committee is important to the spiritual vitality of the church and is to function throughout the year as openings occur in the offices and committees.

Missions

One member of the committee will be selected to serve as the chairperson for an unspecified time, and another member will be selected to record their meeting minutes. The committee will draft and oversee the church's mission budget and will seek to keep missions and the missionary mandate of Matthew 28:18-20 before the congregation. They will be selected by the Nominating Committee and approved by the congregation.

Others

Each local church is to appoint other committees or teams as needed to carry out its ministry most effectively. Each committee is to give a report to the first congregational meeting held each calendar year.

New Churches and Organization

When a church intends to start a new church, it must notify the Board of New Church Development. The board will be helpful in the area of assessment, coaching and training of the new church planter and core leadership. The board will remain involved at differing but appropriate levels until the planted church grows and is approved for fully organized status.

A church will be recognized as fully organized when it is self-governing, self-sufficient financially and self-propagating.

Self-governing will be measured by a fully-developed system of functional structures. This would include at least the Elders/Ministry and Counsel, a group that oversees finances and a method for developing leaders, including the formation of members.

Self-sufficient means that the group meets all of its financial obligations, including 100 percent of its full First Fruits giving to *EFC-SW*. This would also include an ongoing commitment to giving towards missions and church planting.

Self-propagating will be measured by reproduction. This will be seen in the planting of another church or by the sending out of "home grown" leaders such as pastor, church planter or missionary.

Once a new church fulfills these requirements, it will notify its sponsoring church. If the sponsoring church, after examining the new church's progress, feels that the church is ready to become fully organized, it will so recommend to the board. The board will review the recommendation and grant the status, if appropriate.

Property Titles

All real property of local churches, whether incorporated or not, including parsonages and schools, must be held in the name of *Evangelical Friends Church Southwest*, except as provided below. Holding property titles in the name of *EFC-SW* increases the borrowing power of each local church because the pooled net worth is higher. It also discourages hostile takeovers, insuring that Friends churches remain Friends.

Local churches that have held property titles in the name of the local church for over 40 years are not required to transfer title to *EFC-SW* unless they so desire. Local churches that hold title in one of the earlier legal names of *EFC-SW* are not required to change the title to the most current name unless requested to do so.

Each local church must insure local church property for hazards and liabilities and to limits established by *EFC-SW* from time to time, whether title is held in the name of the local church or *EFC-SW*, must name *EFC-SW* as an additional insured under insurance policies, and upon request must provide *EFC-SW* a current certificate of insurance evidencing compliance with this requirement.

Property of Discontinued Churches

Closures

When a church whose title is held by *EFC-SW* or one of its prior legal names closes, its assets, property and investments automatically revert to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. The assets will be invested in New Church Development to start new churches, unless otherwise designated by the Elder Board or Representatives.

Mergers

A merger with another local church in *EFC-SW* is not considered a closure, and the assets remain with the merged congregation. However a merger with a church outside of *EFCSW* is considered a closure, and all assets revert to *EFC-SW*.

Memberships

Memberships from a closed Friends Church become the responsibility of the members. They are free to move membership to another Evangelical Friends Church, always being careful to meet the membership requirements of the new church.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Church discipline is the process of confronting Christians in the church who err in doctrine or who engage in conduct that violates scripture, as determined by the elders, seeking their repentance and restoration to fellowship. The purpose of church discipline is twofold. First, it is to carry out the ministry of reconciliation in restoring a Christian brother or sister caught in sin (Gal. 6:1). The goal is not to expose the sin, but to win back the offender. Second, it is to maintain the spiritual health of the church (Acts 5:1- 11; Heb. 12:10-12; 1 Cor. 5:1-5).

The Bible specifically names disorderly conduct, divisiveness, sexual immorality, false teaching, drunkenness, abusive speech, swindling and idolatry as issues requiring church discipline (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 1:20, 2 Tim. 2:17-18; Rev. 2:14-16). This list is not all-inclusive.

Church discipline is a painful and touchy subject, yet the church dare not ignore what the Bible teaches. To pray passively, asking God to do what he has already commanded the church to do is to fail in God-given responsibilities.

Who is Disciplined?

Church discipline is directed toward professing Christians. In the broadest sense, this means the body of Christ as a whole. In the context of the local church, it means the members and other professing Christians who attend or fellowship with the local church.

Individual Responsibility

The exercise of church discipline is in the first instance the responsibility of individual believers. While we are not to judge when the issue is a speck in a brother's or sister's eye (Matt. 7:1-5), each of us is commanded to initiate private confrontation at times (see, for example, Matt. 18:15-16).

Corporate Responsibility

When individual confrontation does not result in repentance and restoration, church discipline becomes the corporate responsibility of the church (Matt. 18:17). In *EFC-SW*, this means that the exercise of church discipline beyond individual confrontation is the responsibility of the pastors and elders.

The Extent of Discipline; Restoration

Most matters of church discipline are settled by private, individual confrontation when the offending person repents and is reconciled with those against whom the offense was committed. Some matters require private, corporate confrontation by the pastors and elders, and a few require public confrontation and even dismissal from membership or fellowship as directed by the Elders/Ministry and Counsel.

Repentance includes confession. The circle of confession should be the same as the circle of sin. Offenses against individuals require confession to those individuals. Offenses against a group of people or the church as a whole require confession to the group or to the church as a whole.

Restoration includes accountability and may include restitution. Restoration to fellowship does not necessarily include restoration to ministry. Sometimes it is necessary to remove a pastor, elder, or staff

member from office. In some cases of illegal conduct such as child abuse, threats of violence and criminal sex offenses, or other conduct that endangers the health or safety of others, even a total ban from church property may be necessary.

A key to the application of church discipline is whether the offender is responding to discipline and is moving toward Christ or is not responding and is moving away from him. New Christians, in particular, struggle to change their former way of life as they grow in grace, and the wise application of discipline will take their stage of growth into account.

Appeal Process

Any person disciplined by the Elders/Ministry and Counsel of a local Friends church in *EFC-SW*, paid or unpaid, may appeal the disciplinary decision to the Board of Elders within two months of notification of the decision. The appeal may be either in writing or in person. When the Board of Elders reviews the decision, the Elders/Ministry and Counsel may also present its viewpoint, either in writing or in person. When considering appeals, all involved are to seek the mind of Christ in a spirit of fairness and civility. No further appeal will be allowed.

The members of a local church and all other professing Christians who attend or fellowship with a local church agree that there must be no appeal to any court because of any disciplinary action, including dismissal or public statements made to the church as part of the public stage of church discipline.

Legal Issues

The possibility of a church being taken to court by those against whom church discipline is imposed raises some important questions. The Bible says, “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders” (Col 4:5; see also 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Peter 3:16-17).

People who sue churches because church discipline is imposed usually base their case on a violation of their right to privacy or their right to freedom from defamation. The following guidelines are intended to help reduce the risk of suit and the risk of an unfavorable verdict. Because these risks may be increased by well-intentioned but inappropriate actions, *EFC-SW* recommends that cases of public church discipline, and cases involving the dismissal of any church employee, be reviewed by a Christian attorney experienced in such matters before the discipline is imposed.

Slander, libel and defamation.

Statements communicated to others that damage a person’s reputation, even if true, may result in civil liability. It is not slander or libel for the pastor or Elders/Ministry and Counsel to confront a church member privately about a sin or a conflict. It may be slander or libel if they communicate the statements to others.

Invasion of privacy

Church discipline is not an invasion of privacy if carried out appropriately. Even so, caution is needed. Any public statements, written and oral, should be prepared carefully and fall in line with scripture. A description of the offense in general terms is usually appropriate. Here is a sample letter:

“It has come to the attention of [the Elders/Ministry and Counsel] that one of the members of [said church] has violated the rules for voluntary membership and the standards of scripture. All of the facts of the case have been confirmed by two or more witnesses. Careful discussion with [name] has been undertaken to bring about reconciliation and restoration, but without success. Therefore, according to our stated procedures in Faith and Practice, [name] has been dropped from membership [or the Elders/Ministry and Counsel recommends that he or she be removed from membership] until reconciliation occurs. This means that the disciplined member will not be allowed to participate in any way except [spell out any exceptions, such as attendance at worship]. We earnestly ask that this not become a matter for personal offense or private gossip. If you have any questions, please talk to the pastor and elders in private.”

Inflicting a detrimental effect on a person's economic status.

Dropping a person from church employment, membership and fellowship is legal if carried out appropriately. Inflicting economic harm by asking people not to do business with the person may result in civil liability. The caution here is for churches not to go beyond their biblical limits of discipline.

False imprisonment.

A person may not be held in a room, office, church or home without the person's consent except by a law enforcement officer acting under the law or except by a private citizen acting in extraordinary circumstances, usually involving serious harm or risk of serious harm to person or property. Each person must be free to leave when the person desires.

Monitoring electronic mail, voice mail, internet usage, or files stored on computers

When conducted according to generally accepted practices in the field of human resources, the monitoring of church provided computer and telecommunication equipment is not considered an invasion of privacy.

Wise Precautions

Church disciplinary matters are not to be settled in public courts (see 1 Cor. 6:1- 11). Nevertheless, people occasionally ignore this admonition and file a lawsuit against the church or its leaders. A local church can do a few things to reduce the risk of suit as well as the risk of losing a suit by taking precautions, including the following:

- Publish standards of conduct and church discipline and periodically communicate them to all members, attendees and staff.

- Communicate what steps of disciplinary action the local church may take and in what kinds of cases (see, for example, 1 Cor. 5:1-15; 6:9-11; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; Rev. 2:14-16).

- Limit the number of people who are part of the disciplinary process and give only general information to others (Gal. 6:1; Eph. 5:15-16; James 5:19-20).

- Purchase worker's compensation, liability and directors and officers insurance (sometimes called errors and omissions insurance) with an employment practices endorsement that extends coverage to claims arising from employment practices.

- Coordinate employment applications, employment contracts, employee handbooks and policies and procedures for consistency in policy and application. A legal review of these documents is recommended.

Include the following statements in job descriptions, employment contracts, employment handbooks, policies and procedures and other similar documents:

- Each member of the local church staff, paid and unpaid, is engaged in church ministry and must manifest by precept and example the highest Christian virtue and personal decorum, serving as a **Christian role model** (1 Tim. 4:12), both on and off the job, and as an example to fellow staff, the church body and the community at large in judgment, dignity, respect and Christian living. This includes but is not limited to refraining from such activities as the use of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs and vulgar or profane language (Col. 3:17; Tit. 2:7-8; 1 Thess. 5:18, 22-23; and Jas. 3:17-18).

- Each member of the local church staff, paid and unpaid, must agree that the Bible dictates the standards for sexual behavior. All homosexual conduct, other deviant sexual behavior, promiscuity and pre and extra-marital sexual relations are forbidden and as such violate the bona fide occupational requirements of being a **Christian role model**. The unique roles of the male and female are clearly defined in Scripture.

Romans 1:24-32 states that homosexual activity is sinful disobedience to God. Deviation from scriptural standards is grounds for termination of employment and membership (Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:9- 20; Eph. 4:1-3, 5:3-5; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2: 19-22; 1 Pet. 1:13-16, 2:15-17; 1 John 3:1-3).

Churches must practice due diligence in selecting and screening volunteer workers, especially for children and youth ministry positions. It is crucial to follow generally accepted principles in the field of safety and human resources with regard to the mandatory screening and background check processes for volunteers engaged in working with minors. Regular training of volunteers with regard to appropriate behavior and adequate protection of children should be conducted. Resources are readily available in the human resource field and should be utilized to fulfill this obligation.

PASTORAL ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Evangelical Friends have long felt the need for pastoral leadership. Friends began with traveling ministers rather than with paid pastors in local congregations. In the great revivals of the last half of the nineteenth century Friends began a pastoral system. Today nearly all Evangelical Friends congregations have pastors. Some are paid, some volunteer, but all hold the office and authority of the pastor.

Authority

God gives the pastor spiritual authority through gifted ministry, persuasion, character and the power of the Holy Spirit. Through faithfulness, integrity and longevity the pastor gains influence which adds personal authority. Through Recording or Commissioning as a Friends Minister the church recognizes the pastor's God-given authority to lead and influence. All of these, and more, combine to give the pastor significant authority in the church.

The pastor is one of the elders, a member of Ministry and Counsel. In as far as possible, the pastor should be present at all meetings of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel.

The pastor is also a vital member of the Nominating Committee, and this group must not meet without the pastor being present.

A pastor is to keep cooperative relationships with all church committees. The pastor is a member of all committees and will attend most of the major committee and ministry meetings. Because of time limitations, a pastor may determine which ones require personal attendance and which to delegate to pastoral staff members or to other elders. A pastor need not do everything or know everything, but should be kept informed of what is happening throughout the church. A pastor will be active in pursuit of the heart of God in prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship and other spiritual disciplines. (1 Tim.1:11-2:8, 3:1-13; Heb. 4)

Limits on Authority

God only has one will. When a pastor and the elders do not agree, someone is confused, and obviously it is not God. The pastor and the elders need to take time to seek the unity that the Holy Spirit brings in making decisions.

No pastor has all the spiritual gifts, lives a perfect life or serves without shortcomings. All pastors face limitations set by God, self and others. In our Friends form of government pastors do not hold positions such as chairperson of Elders/Ministry and Counsel, but rather serve as fellow elders. Their office and role in the church should gain pastors a special hearing in all meetings. At the same time, a wise leader will understand that the united voice of the elders takes precedence over the pastor. The relationship ought to be mutually beneficial.

Pastoral leadership gains more credibility and influence through the advice and counsel of the members of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel. This is not to be a competitive exchange but rather a cooperative seeking of the mind of Christ, desiring to know and to do his will. The church's business meeting and the Superintendent and others appointed by *EFC-SW* are additional resources to confirm and clarify the way the Lord is leading the pastor and the church.

Roles

The role of pastor has four main components: Christian character, leadership, communication, and people skills. Along with education, training and experience, these vital roles should be considered before extending a call. They may also serve as a basis of annual or occasional review or evaluation as determined by the elders. (*EFC-SW* has samples of additional review forms for both pastors and elders.)

Christian Character

Pastors and all Christian leaders set an example and model the Christian life. (1 Cor 10:33-11:1; Heb 13:7-8) Pastors demonstrate Christ's presence by modeling God's grace, truth, love, power and holiness in everyday life.

When married, their families and homes especially demonstrate their character and the application of living in union with Christ. Pastors' marriages and families are not perfect. However, their marriage and family relationships model ministry in a way that others cannot help but observe. (1 Tim 3:5) The ideal is to demonstrate mercy, wisdom, compassion, fidelity and perseverance.

Single pastors, too, should demonstrate the reality of Christ in their closest relationships, so others can see their prudence, discretion, chastity and good judgment through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Character is essential in effective ministry. Integrity becomes evident when a person displays consistency of motives that are integrated in good habits, attitudes, words and conduct. Honesty, reliability and trustworthiness go hand in hand with servant leadership.

Leadership

The pastor may lead through organization, inspiration, motivation, or just plain hard work. Motivators are seldom organizers, and organizers are rarely motivators. Pastors are to be accepted as God created them, and others in the church are to step forward to make up for weakness. By whatever methods or means they use to influence, pastors must build confidence and the desire in others to minister in Christ and for Christ.

Pastors will use their God-given abilities and spiritual gifts to lead the church in guiding the people's vision and values for a preferred future. The goal is to fulfill the great commission in the spirit of the great commandment, especially through this local church and its daughter churches. (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 12:30-31; Acts 9:31) This harvest movement includes communion with Christ, compassion for the lost, commitment to make disciples, care for Christ's church and call for kingdom workers.

Pastors hold a key role in evangelism, discipleship and leadership development for the harvest. Whether or not these are areas of strength, their personal involvement will stimulate others. A priority goal of every pastor and church must be to pray for workers for the harvest and to release missionaries, church planters, evangelists, teachers, and others for ministry.

Communication

Preaching and teaching are highly valued in Scripture, worthy of double honor. (1 Tim. 5:17) Pastors are to preach and teach God's word, communicating it effectively and applying it to their hearers' lives. Preaching the word of God and teaching the scriptures are God-given means of building up the church. (1 Tim 4:1-2; Heb 4:12-13) Pastors must take sufficient time for study and preparation for preaching and teaching, so they can feed the flock with the best from God's word and apply it to daily life. Friends pastors are expected to teach and preach in harmony with our theology as expressed in *Faith and Practice*. Pastors' ability to communicate with individuals and groups throughout the church greatly affects their fruitfulness.

People Skills

Pastors' and spouses' ability to get along well with others is essential in ministry. Visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, counseling the troubled, encouraging the discouraged, helping the weak, setting captives free from spiritual bondage, and standing by those in crisis are much-appreciated functions of the pastor. Long after people have forgotten the sermons and the programs, they will recall the time the pastor stood by them in crisis or conflict. The best pastors have hearts of compassion reflecting their Lord, offering healing and stimulating faith among the forgotten, the lonely, and the hurting.

Since a pastor can adequately care for only a limited number of people, it is incumbent to develop classes and small groups as well as expand pastoral staff as a church grows. Weddings, funerals, and child dedications provide opportunities not only for families, but also for relatives and friends who may not attend services except on these special occasions. Making the gospel clear, compelling, personal and appropriate is a worthy goal for all.

Relationships

Calling Pastors

The calling of a pastor means that the church recognizes the person's gifts and God's call to ministry. The Elders/Ministry and Counsel, other church committees, the congregation and its leaders shall recognize the spiritual authority of the office of pastor and give their heartfelt support. It is difficult for a pastor to be effective without loyalty, cooperation, counsel and support from the church. This support should be spiritual and financial. The words from Hebrews apply to pastors and others. "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Heb 13:17)

The Elders/Ministry and Counsel will appoint or serve as the search committee to call a new pastor. The search committee will consult with the Superintendent or other persons assigned such service by the Yearly Meeting. Recorded Friends pastors are first choice. Preaching pastors who are not recorded must pursue Recording. Likewise, pastoral staff members who are neither recorded nor commissioned need to pursue either Recording or Commissioning.

The normal procedure is for the Elders/Ministry and Counsel to receive names from the *EFC-SW* office. They may pursue other candidates, but must ask them to work with the Superintendent in filling out information forms and other screening and hiring procedures.

After securing resumes and information forms the Elders/Ministry and Counsel reviews the candidates and talks with references (including their last Superintendent and chairman of the Elders). Then it selects some for phone interviews. If the candidates live close enough, personal interviews are obviously better. Preaching tapes are often helpful.

After the interviews, the Elders/Ministry and Counsel selects one candidate and family to come for a weekend to interview extensively and allow the candidate to interview them. They will want the candidate to meet as many people in the church as possible, and to preach. Financial arrangements will be discussed and communicated clearly. Either that Sunday or the next, the church will have a called Congregational Business Meeting. If the church issues a call and the candidate accepts, they have a new pastor. *EFC-SW* recommends that the pastoral year be from July 1 to June 30.

If the candidate does not accept the call then the search process begins again with the next candidate. It is not uncommon to go through several candidates before securing a pastor.

In larger churches, hiring of additional pastoral staff may be done by the Senior Pastor with the approval of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel. In cases of disagreement about hiring decisions, both the Senior Pastor and the Elders/Ministry and Counsel must approve. If either disapproves, the decision does not go forward. The goal is to find unity in this important decision. All staff members answer to the Senior Pastor and then to the Elders/Ministry and Counsel in the line of authority. While they may work with other committees in the church, only the Senior Pastor and the Elders/Ministry and Counsel have the authority to hire and dismiss, unless the Congregational Business Meeting specifically gives this authority to another.

Financial Arrangements

Pastors who work full time for the church need to be paid generously so that finances are not a distraction to their ministry. Their financial package should allow them to live and provide for their families in the community where they serve. Churches and pastors will enter into a written financial agreement that specifies retirement, medical insurance, disability insurance, housing allowance and salary. Currently the law requires pastors to pay self-employment Social Security tax, but also allows them to deduct the actual expenses used in housing, upkeep, decor, maintenance and repair.

The written financial agreement will state vacation policy, sick leave, holidays and days off. It will indicate availability for service on boards of *EFC-SW*, participation in Annual Conference, Yearly Meeting and Pastors' Retreat, continuing education, and involvement with Quaker Meadow Camp or other ministry projects. It will state any other mutually agreed upon arrangements, including termination and settlement of disputes. (Financial arrangement forms are available from the *EFC-SW* office.) No pastor should preach the first regular Sunday without this written agreement signed by both officers of the church and the pastor. A copy is to be sent to the *EFC-SW* office.

Pastoral agreements may be for one year or on a continuous service basis. In either case, the suggested pastoral year is from July 1 through June 30. When the agreement is on a continuous service basis it is not necessary to be approved by the business meeting each year.

Resignation

Pastors who plan to resign must submit the resignation in writing to the Elders/Ministry and Counsel. All resignations are final and do not need the approval of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel or the congregation. The pastor must not resign publicly without submitting it to the elders first. The Elders/Ministry and Counsel may announce the resignation to the congregation or work out a mutually satisfactory way for the pastor to announce the news.

It is best to follow the pastoral year of July 1 to June 30 by resigning 90 days prior, namely March 30. If the resignation comes outside of this regular cycle, the pastor or staff member still must give 90 days notice. Normally the pastor will serve during the 90 days and the prior written financial agreement will be followed. If the Elders/Ministry and Counsel decides that the pastor should depart before the end of the 90 days, it must honor their financial agreement by compensating the pastor throughout the remainder of the 90 day period. In cases of church discipline of the pastor, the contract should have specified in advance that all financial obligations cease. However, for legal reasons the written church contract must be followed.

Termination

When the Elders/Ministry and Counsel believes that a pastor's work is nearing completion, it should consider the matter in executive session without the pastor, staff members, or other employees present. When the elders feel sufficient unity in the matter, they should discuss it with the pastor and offer him the opportunity to resign. If the pastor chooses not to resign, the Elders/Ministry and Counsel may recommend to the Congregational Business Meeting that they terminate the relationship. Senior Pastors are not to be hired or dismissed without the recommendation of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel and action by the Congregational Business Meeting.

Pastoral staff members may be released by action of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel and the Senior Pastor. In the case of church discipline, the pastor's Recording or Commissioning may be rescinded by action of the Elders Board. Commissioning ends automatically when the pastor is no longer employed by a local church or an Evangelical Friends Church Southwest board. A local church may not rescind Recording on its own without approval from the *EFC-SW* Elder Board.

It is advisable to have a written termination agreement when the pastor or staff member is first hired. This should be part of the initial written financial arrangements. The termination agreement should include how long the pastor stays after the resignation, agreements about severance pay, health care, and retirement plans.

Whenever a staff member is terminated, either for cause or for a reduction in force, documentation of the termination process shall be collected and kept for future reference. It is imperative to follow generally accepted practices in the field of human resources addressing formal warnings, performance plans, notification of termination, and appropriate communication to the church body.

In the case of moral failure, embezzlement of funds, child abuse, blatant violations of scriptural conduct or any other equivalent matter (this list is not exhaustive but rather suggestive), the pastor must be terminated immediately. Such conduct breaks all covenants and contracts, written or verbal. However, written contracts regarding finances must be honored. The Elders/Ministry and Counsel, in consultation with the Superintendent, will determine what disciplinary action is best in such cases. (See Chapter 5, Church Discipline).

Settling Disputes

When pastors and elders cannot reach an agreement, either party may call on the Superintendent and executive staff, or the *EFC-SW* Elder Board for counsel and help in resolving the conflict and working toward reconciliation.

Both pastors and elders are forbidden by Scripture to take other believers to court. (1 Cor 6:1-7) Likewise, this *Faith and Practice* here and now forbids any pastors or elders to take each other or the church to court, or to file lawsuits against one another. Instead, if all *EFC-SW* avenues fail to resolve the dispute, outside professional Christian conflict resolution services are highly recommended. If this fails, all disputes are to be subjected to final and binding Christian arbitration.

Pastors' or Elders' Appeal to *EFC-SW*

When disagreements arise over doctrinal matters, non-biblical teachings, or anything that is contrary to the truth and teaching of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest, either pastors or elders have the right to protest.

Such protest shall be made in writing and considered first by the local Elders/Ministry and Counsel, who shall take action in the matter. If necessary the Elders/Ministry and Counsel will refer it to the

Superintendent, Elder Board of the Yearly Meeting. If the matter is not resolved through other means, the Elder Board will make the final decision together.

If the pastor or local church elders cannot accept the decision of these combined boards of *EFC-SW*, those disagreeing shall resign rather than promote discord. Should the final decision be refused, or the disagreeing elders or pastor refuse to resign, the Elder Board of *EFC-SW* may remove them from office. If those disagreeing endeavor to influence others against the Yearly Meeting, they will be considered insubordinate and dismissed from membership as well as every office in the church.

Professional Relationships Between Pastors

All pastors and elders are to honor one another above themselves (Romans 12:10). Retired pastors or other pastors in the congregation are to be supportive of the church's pastor and staff and respect their positions. Likewise the pastor and staff will show due respect for other Recorded Friends ministers in the church. Recorded Friends pastors are not members of the Elders/Ministry and Counsel unless so named by the Congregational Business Meeting through the usual nominating process.

Former pastors normally do not attend the same church unless the new pastor specifically asks them to do so. When requests for funerals or weddings come to former pastors, they should consult with the present pastor. Normally, former pastors defer to the new pastor in what they recommend to the family. (Families make the decisions about who officiates at their weddings and funerals).

When the elders or pastors from one church desire to interview or hire a staff member from another church, a professional contact is in order. The pastor or the Elders/Ministry and Counsel chairperson should phone the Senior Pastor of the other church before making any contact with that church's staff member. While this is a courtesy, it also serves as a reference check for the potential candidate and an opportunity to pray together for God's will for the staff person.

Community Involvement

The church is never limited to the facility where it meets together. Both individually and corporately the people of God are to penetrate the community with good works and the saving witness of Christ Jesus. We are called to be lights in the darkness. Networking with other denominations, churches, Christian organizations, and likeminded believers can show the unity of the body of Christ and bring great blessing upon the community. Prayer, witness, good works, social justice and teamwork with other Christians all work together in God's kingdom so that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

CHAPTER 7

RECORDING AND COMMISSIONING

Note: At the 2010 Representative session a three year pilot program was approved. Go to www.friendschurchsw.org for the pilot version of the Recording and Commissioning Handbook.

The Board of Recording and Commissioning will look for the following outcomes in ministry preparation. (Also see Chapter 4)

1. The person should demonstrate competencies in leadership, communication and people skills.
2. The person should demonstrate character development in communion with Christ, ethics and integrity.
3. The person should demonstrate a level of cognitive knowledge in the basic disciplines of biblical studies, theology, Evangelical Friends Church theology and history, ministry training and practical field experience.
4. The person should demonstrate an integration of faith into life through the use of ministry gifts.

Principles for Recording

Friends believe that only God ordains a minister. His people recognize God's ordination and record those called and gifted for public ministry. For legal purposes and tax requirements, the term Recording is interchangeable with the term "ordination."

Friends also believe that ministers may be called by God in a single instant, but they develop over time. They need Godly character, biblical knowledge, and ministry skills to maximize their effectiveness. The local church and its leaders play a significant role in discerning God's gifting, equipping for ministry and encouraging those called to lifelong calling.

The Board will consider alternate pathways to ministry preparation.

EFC-SW recommends a Masters degree for most candidates. Undergraduate training for ministry is sometimes appropriate, especially from institutions that specialize in ministerial education. Leadership Development Training Classes are helpful for some candidates, especially those not released for ministry as full-time paid staff members of a local church. On the few occasions when it is fitting and helpful, the board will consider the life experience of the candidate. A Recording/Commissioning Handbook is available through the *EFC-SW* office.

After testing and interviewing, the Board will recommend to the Representatives those candidates who demonstrate competency in character, ministry skills and necessary disciplines for recorded, life-long Christian service.

Guiding Principles

God's Call

An inner conviction that the Lord wants the person in ministry is essential.

Competence

The ministry requires competence in basic abilities such as communication, leadership and people skills.

All Christians need to share their faith in Christ, help others toward maturity in Christ and pray for God to send out workers into the harvest. Those going into the ministry need to show proficiency in evangelism, discipleship and multiplying leaders.

Progress

Like seeds or babies, growth takes time - and it is observable. God has prepared in advance good works for his people to do. (Eph 2:10) Those whom he has called to serve in the church will show progress in communion skills, leadership skills, communication skills and people skills. A gifted and trained servant of the Lord, along with God's sovereign work, will prepare his people for works of service so the body of Christ may be built up and become mature. (Eph 4:11-13)

Flexibility

Friends from their beginning recognized that scholarship and education alone do not make a minister. Friends provide multiple paths to the goal of becoming equipped for Recorded ministry. Some will pursue academic studies, others will learn with on-the-job study and training, and still others will be motivated as self-learners. The validation of the path is reaching the destination - the ability to minister biblically, accurately, helpfully.

Results

Discernment is seeing from God's point of view what is actually happening. Not all who say they feel called by God belong in the ministry. With the diversity of jobs, situations and needs it takes the spiritual eyes and ears of many to verify God-given call and ability. The local church elders and the Board of Recording and Commissioning are especially charged with testing the candidate to see if the intended results are happening in other people's lives and in the church.

Great Commission

Our great goal given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ is to fulfill the great commission in the spirit of the great commandment. (Mark 12:30-31; Matt 28:18-20) Jesus intends for us to join him in God's great purpose of gathering people to himself from every people group, language and nation. With a spirit of love for God and others we are to disciple all the ethnic groups, beginning with our family, church and community and going to the uttermost parts of the earth. As we consider candidates for ministry, this purpose must remain uppermost in our minds.

Spiritual Gifts

Whomever God calls, he also gives the spiritual gifts, abilities and strengths to fulfill the call. While the gifts may vary, others must recognize that they make the person competent for public ministry. Recording is not a reward for being well-liked, but a recognition of effectiveness, faithfulness and spiritual gifting from the Holy Spirit.

Character

Christ-like character demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit and is full of love, grace, truth, power, holiness and related qualities. Character flaws are a red flag in the Recording/Commissioning process, requiring further growth and a delay until progress is made.

Expectations of the Candidate

In addition to these guiding principles, becoming a Recorded Minister brings expectations and responsibilities for the future.

Doctrinal Beliefs

Recorded pastors uphold the doctrines, teachings and interpretations of Friends as stated in *Faith and Practice*, and reflect these convictions in their character and ministry. While absolute conformity with every minor interpretation of Scripture is not necessary, recorded pastors should be easily identifiable as

evangelical Friends in their teachings and ministry. Historically, Recorded pastors have held one another accountable for faithfulness in doctrinal beliefs.

Service

Part of being a Friends minister is seeing the larger picture of our life together and the broader kingdom of God. Recorded pastors attend and serve in conferences, camping, missions, starting new churches, equipping future leaders, serving on teams, committees and boards. Friends pastors get outside of themselves for the sake of God's kingdom.

Loyalty

Recorded Friends ministers intend to remain with the Friends Church unless God specifically directs them elsewhere. They show loyalty to those over them, both to the elders in the local church and to the Superintendent and staff of the Yearly Meeting.

Vision

God puts a passion in the hearts of his leaders. Recorded Friends pastors have vision for God's people and their future. Joining God in what he is doing is a priority responsibility of every pastor and leader.

Fulfillment

While God's leaders often suffer in following Christ, the ministry also brings joy and satisfaction. The fear of God and the love of Christ compel God's servants onward in the best and worst of times. Ministry should produce a growing sense of fulfillment witnessed by our Lord himself and by his people.

Specific Steps to Recording

The initiative to begin Recording can come either from the candidate or from the Elders/Ministry and Counsel. Christ commands all Christians to pray for God to send out workers into his harvest field. Elders, pastors and staff members in particular should look for people with Christ-like character who are called and gifted for ministry. Bringing these gifted people to the point where they are ready to begin the Recording process is a major responsibility of every church leader. *Who else in our church should we be talking with about ministry?*

1. Fill out the "Answering the Call." Send the completed paperwork to the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest office.
2. In conjunction with the Superintendent or executive staff member, and the local church Elders/Ministry & Counsel, the candidate will schedule a meeting to ascertain their call to ministry. Questions will be asked about the candidate's/spouse's testimony, calling and Evangelical Friends beliefs. Recommended reading includes *An Affirmation of Faith* and *Fervent Convictions* on pages 7-10 and *Friends Church Southwest Elements Statement 1994* on pages 29-31 of *Faith and Practice*. The candidate will present copies of their Answering the Call to each member of the local Elders/Ministry and Counsel in advance of the meeting.
3. When approved by the Elders/Ministry and Counsel, Form A of the handbook will be signed by the Clerk of Elders/Ministry and Counsel and sent to the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest office.
4. The candidate will be responsible for contacting the chairman of the Board of Recording and Commissioning for his/her initial interview with this board.
5. The candidate will forward all transcripts to the EFC-SW office, which shows any Bible, theology, church history or ministry courses.

6. The candidate will contact the EFC-SW office and initiate the Psychological Evaluation for Evangelical Friends Church Southwest Recording candidates.
7. The Board of Recording and Commissioning interviews the candidate and reviews the Answering the Call. The candidate now comes under the care of the Board of Recording and Commissioning for at least two years, with the two-year period starting with the date of the initial interview. The candidate is assigned a sponsor by the board to assist them in the Recording process.
8. The candidate must complete the required courses as listed on Form G. The candidate will schedule a meeting with the director of the Friends Center to determine their path of study.
9. The Candidate has two more appearances before the Board of Recording and Commissioning to take the Comprehensive Exam. The first part is oral, the second written.
10. The BRC recommends the candidates approval to the EFC-SW elders. Upon approval by the Representatives, the candidate and spouse will take part in a formal service of Recording.
11. The Superintendent of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest receives the completed Answering the Call for filing as a permanent record. The Superintendent issues an annual Certificate of Ministry as long as the pastor is in good standing.

QUESTIONS

Sample Questions to the Elders

God's Call

Do you see in the candidate's behavior evidence of 1) having accepted Christ as Lord and Savior, 2) God's call to a life of ministry and 3) commitment to our local church and Evangelical Friends Church Southwest?

Competence

How does this candidate show competence in the following areas? Christ-like character? Evangelism? Discipleship? Multiplying leaders?

Progress

From strongest to weakest, how would you rank these three ministry skills in this candidate? Leadership skills? Communication skills? People skills?

Flexibility

Given the age and development of the candidate, what path do you as elders recommend for this candidate to achieve full competency? Seminary or Bible school? Non-accredited teaching and on-the-job study and training? Self-study? What resources (opportunities, coaches, money) are available from your church for the candidate?

Results

Given the discernment of spiritual eyes, what do you observe happening in people's lives as a result of this candidate's current ministry? Can you verify God-given abilities? Lasting fruit in others? Results in ministry?

Great Commission

In your best judgment, what will the candidate contribute toward fulfillment of the great commission? Christ's harvest movement? Does this person have a heart for communicating the gospel to every tribe and language and people and nation here, and around the world?

Character

Is this candidate full of integrity? Are high ethical standards evident in the candidate's life and ministry? Do you see this person's character as full of love? Grace? Truth? Power? Holiness? Related character qualities? What character flaws do you see in this candidate?

Spiritual gifts

What spiritual gifts, strengths, and abilities do you see in this candidate? What are the greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?

Sample Questions to the Candidate

Since you are choosing Recording in an Evangelical Friends Church, loyalty and service are part of our expectations of you.

Doctrinal Beliefs

Where do you agree with Friends beliefs as stated in *Faith and Practice*? Where do you disagree? Why?

Service

What are you doing to serve missions, ministries and the broader kingdom of God outside of your local church? If nothing presently, where do you anticipate serving?

Loyalty

If you are recorded as a Friends minister, is it your intent to serve faithfully with the Friends Church? Will you be loyal to those in authority over you?

Vision

What is your God-given passion for the future? If your ministry could make one major contribution, what would it be?

Fulfillment

What do you enjoy most about your present ministry? What do you find the least satisfying? What keeps you awake nights? What compels you to keep going in the hardest times?

Sample Questions to the Spouse

On a scale of 1-10 how fully do you support your spouse's ministry?

Do you consider yourself a full partner, a supporter, or a tag-along in ministry?

What sacrifices does the ministry require of you? How does it affect your home life?

On a scale of 1-10 how well do you get along with people?

What kind of situation in people relationships is most difficult for you?

Approval

Upon completion of the questions, the candidate should step outside while the elders consider two important questions. First, is everyone agreed that this is the *right timing* to begin the Recording process for this candidate? Second, if the timing is right, are we ready to approve that the candidate enter the Recording process?

Once approval is given, the candidate is informed, the Portfolio of Record is signed, and the Superintendent explains the next steps the Candidate should take. These include transcripts of ministry courses taken, a psychological test, the appointment for the first meeting with the Board of Recording and Commissioning, and distribution of the Portfolio of Record.

Commissioning

Similarities and Differences of Recording and Commissioning

Both Recording and Commissioning require Christ-like character and spiritual gifts for ministry. Both grant the legal right to perform all ministerial functions such as weddings, funerals, jail visits and any other services restricted only to recognized pastors, ministers or clergy.

Recording is intended to be for life. It can be rescinded only under the conditions stated in *Faith and Practice* (See “Rescinding of Recording or Commissioning” later in this chapter). In contrast, Commissioning lasts only as long as the person is serving in a recognized ministry position with *EFC-SW* or an approved Christian mission. It is automatically discontinued when the person is no longer serving in such a recognized staff or ministry position. It is not for life, and does not continue into retirement.

Recording requires extensive testing of competence in Bible, theology and ministry skills. In contrast, Commissioning requires only testing on Friends theology, history and polity. Commissioned ministers, however, are urged to become life-long learners and develop ministry skills. Commissioned ministers are urged to fulfill the requirements for Recording.

Authority for Commissioning

Commissioning is under the direct authority of the *EFC-SW* Elder Board. A local church may not grant Commissioning independently.

Eligibility for Commissioning

The eligibility to begin Commissioning is the same as for Recording. Any candidate claiming tax exemptions, deductions or advantages provided by the Internal Revenue Service for Ordained (Recorded) or Commissioned Ministers must fulfill the legal eligibility requirements of the IRS. This includes paying self-employment Social Security tax and taking a deduction for expenses actually used for housing allowance. (The IRS Tax Code can change from year to year, so see the current edition or conference with a tax professional.)

Missionaries, church planters, pastors with special circumstances, and local church staff members are eligible if they meet the following requirements.

- (1) Sense God’s call to Christian ministry
- (2) Show Christ-like character
- (3) Reveal spiritual gifts for their ministries
- (4) Demonstrate competence for their assigned ministry roles
- (5) Work 20 hours or more per week in paid Christian ministry or carry major ministry responsibilities in a ministry position

Under special circumstances as determined by the Board of Recording and Commissioning, pastors may be Commissioned rather than pursue Recording.

Administrators of Christian schools are eligible if they are a recognized part of a Friends Church staff. If the Christian school is independent from the church and only leases facilities, the school administrator is not eligible for Commissioning. Teachers in Christian schools are not eligible for Commissioning if the only basis for it is their role as school teachers.

Specific Steps to Commissioning

The Elders/Ministry and Counsel initiate the process and/or consider the request of the candidate. The candidate must be able to articulate Evangelical Friends beliefs and distinctives as stated in *Faith and Practice*. When personal differences arise with Friends distinctives, the candidate must believe and state that the Friends position is a valid biblical option. The candidate must also satisfy the Elders/Ministry and

Counsel, Superintendent and Board of Recording and Commissioning that they will not teach in opposition to what *EFC-SW* believes.

1. Fill out the "Answering the Call". Send the completed paperwork to the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest office.
2. In conjunction with the Superintendent or executive staff member and the local church Elder/Ministry and Counsel, the candidate will schedule a meeting to ascertain their call to ministry. Questions will be asked about the candidate's spouse's testimony, calling and Evangelical Friends beliefs. Recommended reading includes *An Affirmation of Faith* and *Fervent Convictions* on pages 7-10 and *Friends Church Southwest Elements Statement 1994* on pages 29-31 of *Faith and Practice*. The candidate will present copies of their Answering the Call to each member of the local Elders/Ministry and Counsel in advance of this meeting.
3. When approved by Elders/Ministry and Counsel, Form A of the handbook will be signed by the Clerk of Elders/Ministry and Counsel and sent to the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest office.
4. The candidate will be responsible for contacting the chairman of the Board of Recording and Commissioning for his/her interview by this board.
5. The Board of Recording and Commissioning makes their recommendation to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest Elder Board for approval. A temporary Certificate of Commissioning is given upon approval.
6. For a permanent Certificate of Commissioning, the candidate must take the Friends History, Doctrine and Polity class and must pass with distinction the Friends History test and the *Faith and Practice* test. This class may be taken before or after meeting with the Board of Recording and Commissioning, depending upon when it is available. Candidates have two years to complete this class. Before the end of another two years, those with Temporary Certificates must take the second course, Friends Theology, Worship and Leadership and pass its final exam.
7. Evangelical Friends Church Southwest Superintendent issues annual Certificates of Commissioning, valid as long as the Commissioned Minister maintains his/her eligibility as detailed in Faith & Practice.
8. The Elder Board may authorize issuing of a temporary certificate of Commissioning with the understanding that a regular certificate will be issued by the Superintendent when the required tests are passed. A temporary certificate is valid for a maximum of two years until one test (or set of tests) is passed, and another two years until the second test (or set of tests) is passed. A temporary certificate automatically expires if the required tests are not passed within the stated time limits.
9. Upon completion of the required study and tests, and continued approval of the local church Elders/Ministry and Counsel and the Superintendent, the regular certificate of Commissioning may be issued. It may be rescinded by action of the *EFC-SW* Elder Board.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF RECORDED OR COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

The local church that calls a pastor holds primary responsibility for accountability. In times of conflict or crisis the Elders/Ministry and Counsel should call on the Superintendent, executive staff or appropriate board for additional help.

Missionaries, church planters or Friends Center employees, executive and field staff and all others hired by Evangelical Friends Church Southwest or its affiliates are accountable to the sponsoring board or related organization through the Superintendent or executive staff member.

The sponsoring board or related organization through the Superintendent or executive staff member holds responsibility for accountability of missionaries, church planters or Friends Center employees, executive and field staff and all others hired by Evangelical Friends Church Southwest or its affiliates.

The Superintendent holds responsibility for accountability of Recorded Friends ministers working outside *EFC-SW* or no longer in paid ministry. An annual form must be filled out and returned in order to receive a valid Certificate of Ministry.

RESCINDING OF RECORDING OR COMMISSIONING

When a pastor or staff member joins a church or denomination other than Friends, the Recording or Commissioning automatically expires. It may be reinstated if the minister returns in good standing.

Commissioning automatically expires when the minister is no longer employed by one of our churches.

Recording is for life. If a Recorded Friends Minister appears to have forfeited usefulness in ministry, a proposal to rescind the Recording may come from the local church Elders/Ministry and Counsel, or any appropriate board of *EFC-SW*. Final action must be taken only by the *EFC-SW* Elder Board or the Representatives. The minister and the local church must be notified of the action.

In the case of moral failure or church discipline, the Elder Board must review the case to see if rescinding the Recording is appropriate. Proposals to rescind Recording may come from the local church Elders/Ministry and Counsel or any appropriate board or related organization.

A Recorded Friends Minister who is no longer in ministerial service may ask in writing for the Recording to be dropped. The Elders Board will investigate, and make a final decision.

Transfer

Commissioning is not transferable to other Yearly Meetings unless they have a similar status.

Recording follows membership. When membership is transferred to another Yearly Meeting, the Recording automatically goes with it. The Yearly Meeting where membership is held becomes responsible for accountability, and the Recorded Minister must meet their standards and requirements, including education.

Ordained pastors from other denominations

When ordained pastors from other churches or denominations become members of a local church belonging to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest, they may apply to become Recorded Friends Pastors. The Board of Recording and Commissioning will set the competencies, requirements and standards to become Recorded or Commissioned.

Commissioning for Missionary Ministers, Church Planting Ministers and Pastors

Missionary Ministers, Church Planting Ministers and Pastors may be Commissioned. The requirements are the same as Commissioning for staff members in the local church. The process is also the same as for the local church except that the appropriate Board will act in place of the local church Elders/Ministry and Counsel. Accountability for ministry remains with the appropriate board. It is recommended that the board consult with the Elders/Ministry and Counsel of the local church where the staff member worships and belongs.

Certificates of Ministry

A Certificate of Ministry recognizes that the pastor has the legal right to perform weddings, visit jails and do other tasks restricted to recognized ministers.

The Superintendent will issue an annual Certificate of Ministry to all Recorded and Commissioned Friends pastors and staff members, including missionary ministers, church planting ministers and pastors. Retired Friends pastors and those not in active service may also receive a certificate after returning the annual questionnaire sent by the Superintendent.

Temporary Certificates of Ministry

Those in the Recording or Commission process will receive temporary certificates of ministry each year that requirements are met until full Recording or Commissioning status is granted.

Those coming into Friends ministry and hired by a local church or board, whether ordained by another church or not, may receive a temporary certificate for one year. By the end of the first year they must start the process to become Recorded or Commissioned in order to receive a certificate of ministry or another temporary certificate.

Renewal of certificates of ministry depends upon sufficient progress toward the requirements for a regular certificate.

Licensed Minister

Candidates for the Licensed Minister (LM) credential should fit into one of two categories:

1. Non-paid personnel who need a credential to enter institutions (like hospitals, life-care centers, etc.) and/or to perform weddings.
2. Paid personnel (full or part time) who are not ready to pursue the Commissioning or Recording credential but who also need the credential to enter institutions or perform weddings.

The LM credential is a local ministry credential. The person who receives a LM credential must be serving in a ministry described by *Ephesians 4:11-13* and demonstrate a need to carry such a ministry credential. The recipient should be one who is serving in a significant teaching or caring ministry within a local ministry of the *EFC-SW*. The LM credential is good for one year.

Candidates may have their LM credential renewed each year by fulfilling the following requirements:

1. Pass a yearly competency evaluation.
2. Maintain membership in a local Friends church.
3. Build competency through FEATS (Friends Equipping and Training System), or its equivalent (prescribed reading and mentored service).
4. Receive recommendation from the local elders (M&C) and local ministry staff.
5. Receive approval from the Superintendent of *EFC-SW*.

Once the candidate has completed all the requirements, the Superintendent of *EFC-SW* issues the LM card from the *EFC-SW* office. The LM does not qualify for IRS housing benefits.

APPENDIX

Amendments

Amendments to *Faith and Practice* may come from local churches, boards or committees of Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. Proposals for change must first go to the Elder Board for consideration, review and recommendation. They must be sent to the Representatives and other affected parties at least 90 days prior to a meeting of the Representatives.

Amendments to Evangelical Friends Church Southwest beliefs (See Chapter 1 and 2) require careful consideration by the local Elders/Ministry and Counsel to weigh the impact upon our people and churches, our related organizations and the Evangelical Friends movement around the world. The Representatives must consider the proposed amendments in two separate Representatives' sessions, even if they are twelve months apart.

Amendments to our organization, polity and organizational practices may be temporarily implemented, with approval of the Representatives, for a trial and development period of up to three (3) years. During the trial period, a study committee, appointed by the Representatives, will monitor and evaluate the progress and report its findings at least annually to the Representatives.

With 90 days notice and the prior recommendation of the Elder Board, changes to organization, functions, polity and organizational practices may be adopted in a single session of the Representatives.

Editing

Once each decade (2010, 2020, 2030, etc.) a group of writers and editors will be appointed by the Elder Board or the Representatives to update the language of *Faith and Practice*. The goal is to keep the wording contemporary and readable. While these editorial changes are not intended to change the content, they still must be approved by the Representatives.

GLOSSARY

Clerk	A church officer appointed to conduct the business meeting, usually called the Presiding Clerk. The secretary who takes the minutes at the business meeting is called the Recording Clerk.
Consensus	The sense of unity about a business matter that emerges after prayerful discussion of the issue. Sometimes, it is called “the sense of the meeting” (see below). Consensus in Friends business differs from its secular counterpart in that the Holy Spirit brings the group to a sense of discerning God’s will rather than finding mere human compromise.
<i>EFC-SW</i>	Evangelical Friends Church Southwest is our legal name. It was originally California Yearly Meeting of Friends Church, and later changed to Friends Church Southwest Yearly Meeting.
Elder Board	The Board that functions as the Representatives when they are not meeting in session. This Board gives counsel and direction to the Superintendent in providing leadership to <i>EFC-SW</i> .
First Fruits	The method <i>EFC-SW</i> churches have chosen to provide financial resources for the Church Health and Growth budget.
Faith Boards	Boards that attempt to fulfill the great commission. They include Friends Center (theological education), Missions, and New Church Development. These boards raise their own funds rather than receive income from the First Fruits giving.
Harvest Movement	A synonym for fulfilling the great commission through evangelism, starting new churches, raising up disciples, developing leaders and prayerfully deploying workers worldwide to disciple the nations, fulfill prophesy and bring God maximum glory. The roots of the term come from Jesus’ words about the harvest being plentiful and George Fox’s vision of a great people to be gathered.
Ministry and Counsel	The elders of a local church in a collective sense when they meet as official church officers.
Recording	The process of recognizing the calling and spiritual gifts of candidates preparing for vocational ministry. Friends believe that only God ordains a minister. The two-year minimum process is designed to equip and test a person for competency in character, knowledge and skills for ministry. When all requirements are met the candidate is publicly Recorded. For legal purposes Recording is an interchangeable term with ordination.
Related Organizations	Organizations other than the local church that are incorporated separately from <i>EFC-SW</i> , but still affiliated with it. <i>EFC-SW</i> appoints some or all of the organization’s board members.

Representatives	Delegates assigned from local churches to conduct the business of <i>EFC-SW</i> . They meet jointly at least once a year and serve as the final authority for business decisions.
Sense of the Meeting	A synonym for consensus in decision-making, with the understanding that the perception of unity comes from God's guidance and not from human compromise. In Friends business meetings the clerk tries to discern and state "the sense of the meeting" following prayerful discussion by the participants, but before calling for approval of the action.
Service Boards	Boards that serve needs in local churches or assist local churches. Recording and Commissioning is a service board. Service Boards receive funds from the Church Health and Growth budget which includes First Fruits giving from the churches.
Stand Aside	Decisions do not need to be unanimous, but they do need substantial unity. Members who disagree with an action may stand aside; that is, agree to let the others proceed without their agreeing with the action taken.
Strategy Forum	A group composed of the Elder Board and additional members from various boards and local churches. It is an inspirational, vision-casting, communicating body and not a policy-making board.
Substantial Unity	The measure of unity necessary to approve any decision in a Friends meeting for business. It does not mean unanimous, but it does mean that the overwhelming majority of the group is strongly united in believing the proposed action is God's will.
Yearly Meeting	The highest unit of authority in the structure of Friends business meetings, the annual meeting of the Representatives. The term also refers to the geographical area where <i>EFC-SW</i> churches are located. Occasionally it is used for the Friends denominational headquarters for a given region.