

# Constitution Change Proposal

The “KISS” (keep it simple, stupid) method for constitutional rewrites.

## The Elder Board

The qualifications for elders are clearly given in I Peter 5:1-4. *“So, I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, **exercising oversight**, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”* Qualifications for the role of Elder will be based on Biblical dictates.

The Elder Board will consist of the Pastor, as the lead elder, and a preferred minimum of three elders elected by the congregation. The term for an elder should be for three years, structured so that at least one Elder is elected at each annual congregational meeting. **After two three-year terms an Elder should step aside for at least one year.**

Nominations for the position of elder should be presented to the current Elder Board. The current Elder Board will review qualifications and put all acceptable candidates before the congregation for voting. A majority vote will determine the outcome.

The Elder Board should convene at least once a month at a preset time **and as many other times as seen needed.** **Any member of the congregation can request a private meeting with the Elder Board.**

## Deacons

Deacons or deaconess means servant or helper. They are members who aide the Elders in administrative, pastoral or practical matters and **are given responsibility** in any number of aspects of the church. (The missions committee example.)

Deacons can have a wide range of roles that may vary, depending on the gifts and skills of the individual, and the needs of the church. The nature of a deacon is to serve the people. Deacons might assist the elders to serve the church in many things **within the delegated authority received from the Elder Board.** Deacons should demonstrate a commitment to the spiritual nature of the position as well as their secular capability.

The Elder Board may receive nominations and suggestions from the congregation for those in the role of a deacon. Elders can also request someone to serve as a Deacon or Deaconess. In either case, on an annual basis, the elders will present the deacons to the congregation for **affirmation.** The term for a deacon or deaconess shall be one year and can be extended on an annual basis. Deacons meet with the Elder Board, either individually or as a group, when requested by the elders. In our fluid times and culture the Elder Board may appoint interim deacons (or groups thereof) to address urgent issues as needed. In these interim situations, this might be a temporary task-oriented group that can be dissolved when completed.

## Current Constitutional Items

While there are many areas of the Constitution that need to be examined, and perhaps changed, this was not within the authorization given by the congregation. There are some sections that, while they might be considered for change, do not require any immediate action, if any. There are also about 14 places within the Constitution where authority and decision making is given exclusively to the Church Board. This can be simply shifted to the Elder Board. Items in the Bylaws will be changed in the same manner.

In Article VI, section 4, which describes The Board in terms of authority, this will shift to the Elder Board, hopefully **through a period of transition.** In Article VI, sections 5, The Elders, it will include into the proposal on

elders. In Article VII, the Pastor, this will come under the responsibility of the Elder Board. All of these transitions will be made with complete transparency to the congregation.

Areas of discussion.

1. I am not worried about the exact wording of the proposal. (It took many days for our country's founders to agree on specific wording for the Declaration of Independence.) What matters is the essence.
2. This change in governing structure is complex in many ways. Therefore, I suggest that the congregation approve the proposed change sometime in March then we have a transition period lasting to the annual congregation meeting in June. During this period, we would ask all officers, committee leaders and board members to work side-by-side with the elders lending their knowledge and expertise. (The George Bush example.)
3. I strongly recommend that, at the time the congregation approves this proposal, that we also give them the names of additional members to be voted in as more elders to give us the biblically clear requirement of plurality of elders.
4. Communication to the congregation on all transition matters is important in keeping church operations running smoothly and confidence high.
5. This will be a process that has some confusion or differences. Romans 12:18. *"If possible, so far that it depends on you, live peaceable with all."* Should be the foundation of grace in this period.
6. In this period of change, I recommend that we inform the Evangelical Free Church district superintendent this process and invite hi, or someone else from the district, to give input. In keeping with long-standing EFCA policy such input would be **advice**, not instructions.