

Document to be presented to the Congregation

**LA CRESCENT EVANGELICAL
FREE CHURCH (LEFC)
La Crescent, MN**

By-Laws

2016

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ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP

A. DESCRIPTION OF MEMBERSHIP

The Membership of the Church shall consist of persons who profess belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; whose character, conduct and reputation conform therewith; and who will abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of this Church.

B. ADMISSION

Any person desiring to become a Member of this Church shall meet the requirements for faith and conduct set forth in Article V of the Constitution of LEFC. Procedure for admission to Membership shall be:

1. Qualifications
 - a. Any person, eighteen (18) years of age or older, who confesses faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the assurance of salvation, and whose character, conduct and reputation is in accord with his confession, who subscribes to the foregoing Statement of Faith, who accepts the Constitution and By-Laws of this organization.
 - b. A person who is willing to support the Church in attendance, prayers, and material means, (time, treasure and talents) may apply to become a Member of this organization hereafter referred to as the Church.
2. Any qualified person may make a request for Membership by submitting a completed Membership application to a Pastor or any Member of the Elder Council. A copy of the Constitution and By-Laws shall be given to the applicant.
3. A person seeking Membership must have been in faithful attendance at the Church for not less than six (6) months.
4. The applicant shall participate in Membership instruction and be interviewed by the Elders at the discretion of the Elder Council to affirm a valid personal testimony.
5. All potential new Members shall be requested to give testimony of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ either verbally during a regular service or in written form available upon request. (Romans 10:9-10).
6. Before the applicants are recommended at a duly called business meeting, a list of their names and copies of their written testimonies shall be made available to all Active Members at least two (2) Sundays prior to the business meeting. Any Active Member who has a valid reason for objecting to the receiving of any applicant into Membership of the Church, shall within one week, appear before the Elder Council and give scriptural reasons for the objections. The validity of these objections shall then be considered by the Elder Council.
7. All satisfactory candidates shall be recommended by the Elder Council to at any duly called business meeting of the Church for approval and admission. They shall be approved for Membership by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the Active Members present. The applicants will be asked to leave the room while their applications are being considered and the written vote is taken.
8. Members of sister EFCA Churches will not be automatically accepted into LEFC Membership. They must go through the above named procedures and meet the same qualifications.

C. MEMBERSHIP STATUS

1. Active/Inactive Membership
 - a. Active – Any Member who is faithfully fulfilling the above qualifications.
 1. Only Active Members compose a quorum and can vote.

- b. Inactive – Any Member absent more than one year, from whom no communication has been received, or has requested in writing to be moved to inactive status or has come under Church discipline due to unrepentant sin issues.

D. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

1. Any Member can at any time request in writing to be removed as an official Member.
2. Members absent from the Church for a period of one year shall be removed from the rolls after having been contacted in writing or electronic communication by the Elder Council prior to removal, unless the Elder Council decides to retain them.
3. Members found living contrary to the teachings of the Bible and the principles of this Church after having been lovingly admonished by the Elder Council shall be removed from the rolls.

E. DISCIPLINE

1. Responsibility to discipline rests on the Church as given by the Lord Jesus Himself. (Matthew 18:15-17)
2. Initiating discipline will be the responsibility of the Elder Council as the recognized spiritual leaders of the body at LEFC.
3. Reasons for discipline shall be:
 - a. Any action, sustained attitude or conduct which brings the Lord, the Church or the Gospel into dispute. (Colossians 4:2-6)
 - b. Any action, sustained attitude or conduct which is hostile and/or offensive toward other Members or attenders of the Church. (James 4:11)
 - c. Any action, sustained attitude or conduct which sows divisiveness in the Church. (Proverbs 6:12-14; Galatians 5:19-21)

F. PROCESS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The restoration of the erring Member shall be the single purpose, and love the sole motivating force in these steps:

1. Any incident involving any person who is willfully sinning against a person(s) in the body, who has been confronted by two or three witnesses to the event (Matt. 18:16), and is yet unrepentant, will be brought to the Elders.
2. If any Members shall conduct themselves in a manner as indicated above (Section E) and still do not show evidence of repentance, they shall be promptly interviewed and counseled by two or more of the Members of the Elder Council. (Matthew 18:17) After completing step two, initial disciplinary action may be the restriction of the erring Member from holding Church offices, actively participating in places of leadership and service in the ministry of the Church. Any of these actions may be done upon a vote of the Elder Council.
3. If an unrepentant spirit is maintained by the offending individual(s), then the matter will be brought to the Church body, that the body as a whole may help restore the offending individual(s). (Matthew 18:17a)

4. If, however, any Members should choose to continue in their unrepentant condition, they shall be deprived of their Membership. This can be done only by the Church upon a recommendation from the Elder Council and by a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the Active Members present and voting at any duly called business meeting of the Church. This shall be done by an open show of hands.
5. A former Member of this Church whose Membership has been discontinued may be restored to the fellowship of this Church upon public confession of error, true repentance and/or restitution, and profession of faith to the Elder Council, who will make a recommendation to the Church by way of Article 1, Section B of these By-Laws.

G. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

Members of LEFC are expected to:

1. Strive toward a personal goal of being a mature disciple of Jesus Christ. (II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 3:12)
2. Participate in the ministry activities that are designed to help contribute to Christian disciple-making such as: worship, small groups, Christian education, giving, prayer, evangelism, Congregational meetings, and an area of gifted service. (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:25)
3. Submit to the spiritual authority of the Church leaders (Heb. 13:17)
4. Resolve conflicts within the church in a biblical manner. (Rom. 12:18; Gal. 5:14-

ARTICLE II – ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE ¹

A. OUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE ILLUSTRATED

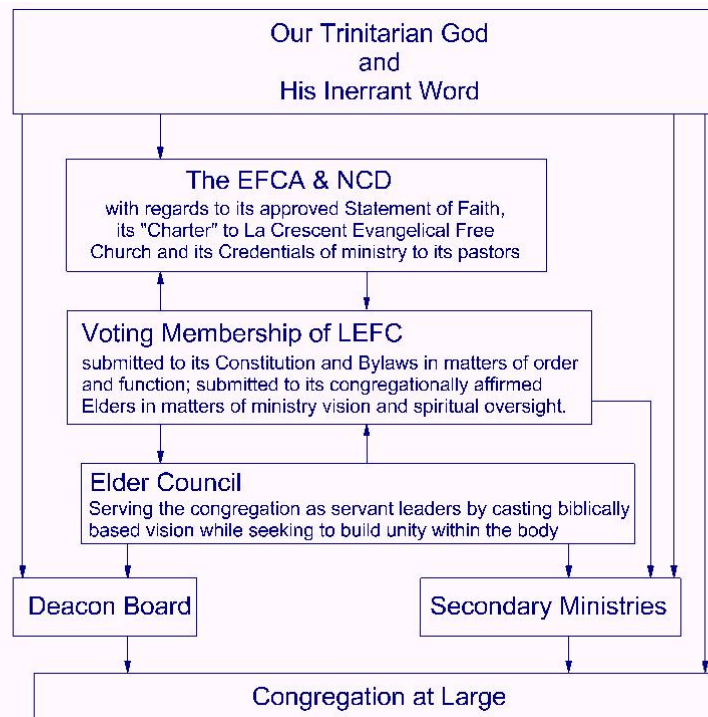
Elder Council

Deacon Board

Secondary Ministry Forms

B. OUR AUTHORITY STRUCTURE

1. The Elder Council, Deacon Board and other ministry leaders exist to serve the Church in specific and complimentary areas.
2. Our Authority Structure
 - a. The final responsibility for all matters relating to the life and ministry of LEFC shall be with the Active Members of the Church.
 - b. The Elder Council is accountable to the Active Membership and is designated by them to oversee all Church ministry and functions.
 - c. The Deacon Board and other elected and appointed ministry leaders are under the Elder Council's authority. Their decisions will be respected by the Active Membership and attenders.
3. Our Authority Structure illustrated:



¹ The New Testament holds out two central ministry functions and offices which help define the Church itself. The following diagram highlights the centrality of these functions and offices while also reflecting the important but more flexible nature of secondary ministries which may arise in various forms as our context and constituency changes.

C. PRIMARY MINISTRY FORMS

1. ELDERS²

a. GENERAL

1. Though the practical administration of the Church's ministry is invested in its elected and appointed leaders, we recognize the spiritual oversight and shepherding of the Congregation to rest with the Elder Council. In accordance with Scripture, recognized Elders are entrusted with a noble task (I Timothy 3:1) of responsible, eager and exemplary spiritual oversight of all individuals and ministries in the local Church (I Peter 5:2). Such men are called by God to give themselves proactively to shepherd God's people, proclaim the whole will of God, keep watch over the flock and be on their guard against those who would distort the truth (Acts 20:25-31). In as much as the Elders remain faithful to teach and lead the Church in accordance with the Bible, God's people are called to respect them and submit to their authority, following their guidance so as to make their work a joy and not a burden (Heb. 13:17, I Thessalonians 5:12-13).
2. Definition. Elders are affirmed as vocational and non-vocational, who, in response to God's call, have devoted their lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of the Church of Jesus Christ.

b. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Eligible candidates shall be those whose private and public lives conform to the qualities set forth in such passages as: Rom. 12:1-2, 1 Jn. 3:16-18, Ps. 15, II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 5:13-26, Eph. 4:22-32, 5:1-28, Phil. 2:1-5, 3:7-11, Col. 3:5-10, I Pet. 2:1, 3:7-9 Y 5:2-3.
2. Elders shall be men meeting the spiritual requirements for leadership as stated in I Timothy 3:27, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 6:4 and I Peter 5:2-5. In addition, all nominees shall be in agreement with LEFC's Constitution, By-Laws and Theological Distinctives.
3. Only active, resident voting Members may be eligible for Eldership. A resident Member is an individual who is on the Membership roll, who lives in the area and is able to be a regular attender. Any person who has moved outside the area and no longer attends is considered a non-resident.
4. No person may simultaneously serve as an Elder and in another elected position in the Church.

² Standard operating procedures, structure, responsibilities and objectives for the Elder Council are detailed in the *LEFC Theological Distinctives and Philosophy of Ministry Guidelines*.

c. SELECTION

1. Elders and Elder Apprentices shall be elected by the Congregation at the annual meeting. Those newly elected shall begin service on the first of the month following their election at the annual meeting or a duly called meeting.
2. The Elder Council will, after careful prayer and consideration, make a recommendation to the Congregation for Elder candidates. Each Elder/Elder Apprentice candidate under consideration for election at a Congregational meeting must receive at least three-fourths (75%) of the votes cast.

d. ELDER APPRENTICESHIP

1. Elder Apprentices will meet all of the qualifications of Elders but without Elder voting rights for a time period determined by the Elder Council.
2. At a Congregational meeting, after he has been elected as an Apprentice, should the candidate and Elder Council so recommend, the Congregation will affirm the candidate in his elected position, who will then complete his full term of office.³

e. COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

1. The Elder Council shall be composed of men, both Lay Elders and Vocational Elders. Vocational Elders are designated "Pastors" or "Pastoral Staff."
2. Although it is the desire of LEFC always to maintain an Elder Council consisting of the Pastoral Staff and no less than three Elders elected from the Congregation, in light of the necessary qualifications revealed by the Bible, LEFC agrees to wait for God to supply qualified candidates rather than lower the standard of the office.
3. Elders shall be elected to serve for a term of three years. That call and any reaffirmation(s) shall be conducted as provided in ARTICLE II, Section C of these By-Laws. Any Elder who fails a three-fourths (75%) reaffirmation vote shall be removed from office. Removal from office by this means shall not be considered disciplinary action.
4. As Vocational Elders are asked to refresh themselves spiritually via sabbatical, so also the Non-vocational Elders will be subject to this time of refreshing at the Elder Council's direction.

³ If deacons were required to be tested in Paul's day (1 Timothy 3:10), how much more important is a period of training/testing for Elders!

f. VOCATIONAL ELDERS (PASTORAL STAFF MEMBERS)⁴

Vocational Elders shall carry out specific areas of ministry under the direction of the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor and Pastoral Staff shall strive "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry." (Eph. 4:12)

Job descriptions with administrative arrangements for the Senior Pastor and the Pastoral Staff shall be negotiated and maintained by the Elder Council (after Congregational approval), and shall include qualifications, responsibilities, and lines of accountability. All job descriptions shall be available to all Members upon request. A minimum of thirty (30) days' notice is required to terminate employment by either party unless other terms are mutually agreed upon with the Congregation. At all times the Pastor must keep the dignity of his call and the importance of the ministry of the Church in mind as to when and how he submits his resignation.

1. SENIOR PASTOR

- a. The Senior Pastor is to provide spiritual, preaching, and teaching leadership for the Church in the discharge of the functions of the ministry. He is to make his aim the "equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12)
- b. The Senior Pastor shall automatically be an Elder (See Article II, Section C, b,4), serving as a voting Member of the Elder Council and shall be recognized as an ex-officio Member of all boards and committees, serving on committees as determined by the Elder Council. However, the Senior Pastor shall not serve in another elected leadership position or as Church Chairman.
- c. The Senior Pastor shall be accountable to the Elder Council and to the Congregation. He shall report to the Elder Council at their meetings and to the Congregation at its annual business meeting. He shall be evaluated annually by the Elder Council.

2. OTHER PASTORAL STAFF

- a. Other Pastoral Staff are those Pastors who are called to fill specific areas of ministry and are approved by Congregational vote.
- b. These Pastors shall be responsible for the Congregation, directed by the Senior Pastor, and accountable to the Elder Council.
- c. They shall submit regular reports to the Senior Pastor and Elder Council, to the Congregation at its annual business meeting, and shall be evaluated annually by the Elder Council.

⁴ Though the category of Staff Pastors in general are included in this section under Elders for the sake of organization, we recognize that some future Pastoral Staff may not meet all of the qualifications to serve on the Elder Council.

3. CALL OF PASTORAL STAFF

- a. For each Pastoral position, the Elder Council will have the latitude to outline and select the appropriate search and candidating processes which will include an Elder appointed search committee from among the Active Members. The process and the search committee Members will be communicated to the Congregation at large before the search is initiated.
- b. Once selected through the approved process, the candidate and their spouse (if married) shall be interviewed by the Elder Council. Upon agreement of the Elder Council, a single candidate shall be brought forth to candidate.
- c. The Elder Council will call a special business meeting following the candidate's visit to vote regarding the hiring of the new Pastor. At least 51% of the Active Membership must be present, with a three-fourths (75%) vote by secret ballot of all Active Members present necessary for the church to extend a call to the candidate.
- d. If called, the Pastor will receive a written contract stating his salary, benefits, time for vacation and other pertinent information.
- e. All Pastors automatically become Members of LEFC.

g. ELDER CHAIRMAN

The Elder Chairman is to serve the Congregation as a facilitator, coordinator and communicator. The Elder Chairman shall:

1. Facilitate communication between the Congregation and the elected Church leaders.
2. Ensure communication among the elected Church leaders.
3. Give legal notice of all meetings when such notice is required.
4. Preside over all regular and special Congregational meetings as a voting Member of the Congregation.
5. Preside over all regular and special Elder Council meetings as a voting Member of the Elder Council.
6. Initiate any processes or procedures required by the Constitution and By-Laws of LEFC.
7. Initiate any processes or procedures required in resolutions approved by a vote of the Congregation at any regular or special Congregational business meeting.
8. The Elder Chairman shall be nominated by the Elder Council and affirmed by 75% of the Membership present at any duly called Congregational meeting.

9. The Elder Chairman shall not serve in any other elected ministry position.

10. In the event of the absence of the Elder Chairman from the Elder Council meeting or a Congregational meeting, the Elder Council shall designate another Elder to preside at that meeting.

2. DEACONS

a. GENERAL

1. The Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Elder Council in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the Church, and the care for the Members of the Congregation.⁵
2. DEFINITION: Deacons shall be both men and women called and gifted by God to serve. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men and women in the Church.

b. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Deacons and nominees for Deacon shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible, and be among the Active Membership of the Church. Texts include 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

c. SELECTION

1. Each Deacon shall be called by the Membership of the Church to a normal term of three years. The call and any reaffirmation shall be conducted as provided in these By-Laws. Any Deacon who fails a three-fourths (75%) reaffirmation vote shall be removed from office but this removal shall not be considered disciplinary action.

d. COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

1. The Deacons shall be organized into committees as best suited to fulfill the ministry needs of the Church. Each committee shall be chaired by an Active Member of LEFC. No committee shall be held to be indissolvable unless mandated by these By-Laws.
2. The Chairperson of each committee shall meet together to constitute the Deacon Board.
3. Though it is the desire of LEFC always to maintain a Deacon Board consisting of one Elder liaison and no less than three Deacons elected from the

⁵ Standard operating procedures, structure, responsibilities and objectives for the Deacon Board are detailed in the *LEFC Theological Distinctives and Philosophy of Ministry Guidelines*.

Congregation, in light of the necessary qualifications revealed by the Bible, we agree to wait for God to supply qualified candidates rather than lower the standard of the office.

4. The term of office for Deacons shall be three years. Deacons at two consecutive terms will be offered one year off the Deacon Board to provide them sufficient opportunity to rest from their labor. After choosing a one year's rest, a qualified Deacon is welcomed to be considered for election to additional service on the Deacon Board.
5. The Chairman of the Deacons shall be a man recommended to the Elder Council by the Deacon Board. The Congregation must then reaffirm the Elder nominee for Chairman of the Deacons by 75% of the Membership present at any duly called Congregational meeting.

D. SECONDARY MINISTRY FORMS

1. No organization or committee shall be formed within or considered to be a part of the Church activities before the sponsor's submitted plans are approved by the Elder Council.
2. The various organizations are requested to confer regularly with the Elder Chairman regarding their plans and activities, and to submit copies of their minutes to either the Elder Council or Deacon Board regularly. All matters of importance which affect the Church shall be submitted to the Elder Council for approval in advance.
3. No organization shall be permitted to function under the name of LEFC whose supervisor/chairperson is not a Member of LEFC.
4. CLERK. The Clerk shall be appointed by the Elder Council and keep an accurate record of the proceedings and decisions at all business meetings of the Church, such records must be approved at the next following business meetings. The Clerk shall keep correct register of the Membership, showing date and manner of their admission and dismissal.
5. TREASURER. The Treasurer is to be a Deacon nominated by the Elder Council and affirmed by 75% of the Membership present at any duly called Congregational meeting. The Treasurer shall also become a member of the Deacon Board. The Treasurer shall receive and account for all monies of the Church and shall disburse funds as directed by the Elder Council and the Deacon Board. The Treasurer shall report to the Church as to the financial standing of the Church at all regular business meetings and at such other times as may be requested by the Church or the Elder Council.
6. MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS. Ministry Volunteers are male and female Members or non-

Members of LEFC who serve on committees by request of the Deacon chairing the committee, upon approval of the Elder Council.

E. REMOVAL FROM OFFICE OF ELECTED LEADERS AND MINISTERIAL STAFF

Elected Church leaders and ministerial staff may be removed from office for reasons related to doctrine or conduct only after the proper exercise of Church discipline in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17 and/or I Timothy 5:19-20 as in ARTICLE 1, Section F. A seventy-five (75%) vote of the Members present and voting at a Congregational business meeting is required to dismiss an elected leader or Pastor when the issue is before the Church. No accusation shall be made by the Congregation nor entertained by the Elder Council against elected leaders or Elders except by written complaint of **at least** two witnesses. (1 Tim. 5:19)

F. STANDING POLICIES

1. LEFC will baptize by immersion only (except by Elder Council approval) believing that baptism is an outward sign of an inward change. (Acts 8:36-39)
2. LEFC Pastor(s) will not perform marriages of those persons considered by the Elder Council to be unequally yoked or not within the biblical definition of a traditional marriage which is between one man and one woman. (Gen. 2:24) All marriages performed by LEFC Pastors, or done in LEFC facilities, must be approved by the Elder Council. (II Corinthians 6:14-16)

ARTICLE III – MEETINGS

A. SERVICES

Regular worship services and special services of the Church shall be conducted at such times as decided upon by the Elder Council, taking into account the needs of the Congregation.

B. ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETING

The annual business meeting of the Church shall be held during the month of April each year, or at such time as may be decided upon by the Elder Council. At this meeting, which must be announced to the Congregation publicly for two consecutive weeks prior to the date of the meeting, the annual budget shall be approved, annual reports shall be received, and other necessary business transacted.

C. BI-ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

A bi-annual meeting of the Church, which must be announced to the Congregation publicly for two consecutive weeks prior to the date of the meeting, shall be held during the month of October each year or at such time as decided upon by the Elder Council.

D. SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

Special business meetings of the Congregation may be called at any time by the Elder Council. Twenty-five percent of the Church Membership may also call a business meeting through a letter to the Elder Council. The purpose of all special business meetings must be announced to the Congregation publicly two weeks prior to the date of the meeting. Only such matters as have been announced may be taken up for consideration and decision.

E. QUORUM

A quorum for any business meeting of the Congregation shall be thirty percent (30%) of the resident Active Members. Fifty percent (50%) of the Members of the Elder Council shall constitute a quorum for Elder Council meetings.

F. ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Scripture is the over-arching guideline for all of our meetings, relationships and conduct.
2. The Elder Chairman shall conduct the annual meeting and other business meetings.
3. The Rules of Order contained in Robert's Rules of Order (revised) shall govern this organization, and its board and committees, when it is not inconsistent with the Constitution and By-Laws.

G. VOTING

1. Nominations for the Elder Council and Deacon Board are not permitted from the floor.

2. All matters shall be determined by a simple majority of those Members present and voting except when otherwise specified in these By-Laws. The chairman of the meeting may exercise discretion as to the precise procedure of voting on a particular issue unless any voting Member present requests a written ballot.

ARTICLE IV – AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS

These By-Laws may be amended or altered by the Church Membership when deemed necessary. Any proposed amendments of the By-Laws must be submitted to the Active Membership by the Elder Council in writing at least three successive Sundays prior to a regular or special business meeting. A quorum of 51% of the Active Membership must be present to amend the By-Laws. At least three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the Active Membership present is necessary to change the By-Laws.

ARTICLE V – FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year shall begin on April 1st and end on March 31st of each year.