

**HILLCREST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
GUIDELINES (BY-LAWS)**

300.0 MEMBERSHIP

300.1 Membership in this church is the acceptance of responsibility. It is the members that give assent and encouragement to the disciple-making ministry of the congregation. Therefore, attendance at business meetings and faithful service to the Lord is expected.

301.0 CLASSIFICATION OF MEMBERS

301.1 The members of the church shall consist of active and inactive members. (These classifications are established to express the importance of having a group of members who are committed to praying with and for the pastoral staff and the ministry.)

301.2 Active members shall be those who participate in the ministry of the church and are committed to attending congregational meetings for the purpose of praying for ministry.

301.3 Inactive members are those who, because of health or other circumstances, cannot participate in the ministry of the church. Inactive members do not have voting privileges and are not counted in quorum requirements.

301.4 If an active member misses two congregational meetings consecutively, the Elders will visit him/her to discuss status as a voting member. They will encourage him/her to attend future business meetings.

301.5 Active member attendance will be taken at the quarterly and annual meetings for the purpose of maintaining the voting membership roll.

302.0 QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

302.1 **Confession of faith.** Any person who confesses faith in the Lord Jesus Christ having been born again (Acts 4:12, John 3:3), who has the assurance of salvation (I Peter 3:15, I John 5:11-12), and whose character, conduct, and reputation are in accordance with his confession and the Word of God may apply for membership.

302.2 **Cooperation.** In addition, an applicant must subscribe to the Statement of Faith contained in the constitution, accept the constitution/by-laws of the Hillcrest Evangelical Free Church, and demonstrate loyalty by a willingness to support the church in attendance, prayers and Christian service.

302.3 No person shall be excluded from membership because of sex, race, national or ethnic origin or color. Rather, the Elders, along with the pastoral staff, shall examine all applicants for membership to determine if they are members of the Body of Christ, and to determine if they sincerely support the purpose of this local church as stated. If the Elders and pastoral staff determine that he or she is not a member of the Body of Christ and/or that he/she would not support the stated purpose of the church, then his/her application for membership shall not be forwarded to the congregation.

302.4 **Age.** An applicant for membership must be at least sixteen (16) years of age.

303.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERSHIP

303.1 **Procedure.** Application for membership shall be made to any of the Elders or pastoral staff. An application for membership may be requested from the church office.

303.2 **Preparation.** Applicants shall be requested to read the constitution/by-laws and encouraged to attend information classes when offered.

304.0 APPROVAL PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERSHIP

304.1 **Interviews and Recommendation.** The Elders and the pastoral staff shall interview all membership candidates. Included in this interview shall be a personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. Upon the recommendation of the Elders and the pastoral staff, the name of the candidate shall be presented to the membership for their approval at a business meeting. Name(s) of membership candidate(s) to be recommended will be presented to the active membership at least two weeks prior to the business meeting.

304.2 **Objection.** If any member has a valid reason for objecting to the receiving of any applicant into the church, this member shall appear before the Elders and give scriptural reasons for denying membership. The Elders shall consider the validity of these objections. This shall be done prior to the business meeting at which the applicant shall be voted on.

304.3 **Recommendations and Vote.** At any duly called business meeting, applicants who have been recommended for membership shall be voted into the membership by receiving the affirmative vote of at least three-fourths (3/4) of the members present. The applicant shall not be present while the application is being considered. Voting privileges are granted to the new member after the application has been approved.

304.4 Reception. New members will be presented to the congregation at any regular Sunday service. If appropriate, the pastoral staff will send notification of membership to the most recent church where the person was an active member.

305.0 LETTERS OF TRANSFER

305.1 Letter of Transfer. Applicants seeking membership by letter from another church shall be accepted only after meeting the above requirements.

306.0 PASTORAL MEMBERSHIP

306.1 The pastoral staff and their spouses automatically become members with full voting privileges upon assuming the responsibilities as a pastor of this church. They shall cease membership with the termination of their ministry within this church.

306.2 Membership may be maintained when not employed by the church by action of the church membership.

307.0 CONDUCT AND DUTY OF MEMBERS

307.1 Toward the church. Regular attendance at the services of the church, daily private and family Scripture reading and prayer, personal and public testimony, and the winning of others to Christ, are urged upon each member (Hebrews 10:25; Joshua 1:8; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15). It shall be the sacred duty of parents to provide Christian instruction for their children (Deut. 6:6-25; Prov. 22:6). Each member shall consider it their responsibility and privilege to make full use of their giftedness in ministry. All members are encouraged to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress, to be courteous in speech, and slow to anger (I Peter 3:8-12; Ephesians 4:25-32).

307.2 Admonition to Purity. Each member is called upon to heed the admonition of the Lord: "Do not love the world, or the things of the world," and "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (I John 2:15-17; Romans 12:1, 2). All members should seek to be examples in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity (I Timothy 4:12). A member is expected to abstain from any act or practice, which may be harmful in its influence or a stumbling block to the weaker brother or sister (Romans 12:2; Romans 14:13).

307.3 Attendance at congregational meetings. Each member shares a vital part in the decision making process of this congregation. Therefore, attendance at congregational meetings is expected (see 300.1). Attendance at congregational meetings helps to ensure a group of people who are meeting, praying and interacting with the elected leadership of the church. If a member does not attend congregational business meetings on a regular basis, the Elders may place them on the inactive membership list and they will not have voting privileges (see 309.3).

308.0 BROTHERLY CARE, RESTORATION AND DISCIPLINE

308.1 Brotherly Care. Throughout the Scriptures God's people are responsible for looking after one another's spiritual well being (Leviticus 19:17; Psalm 141:5; Proverbs 27:4,6,17; 28:13; Galatians 6:1,2; James 5:19,20). When a brother or sister sins, the offended brother/sister or the one who is aware of the sin is to privately speak with the offender about the matter. The goal is to encourage the offender to repentance, forgiveness and restoration if necessary (Matthew 18:15-20). If this first effort fails, a second effort is to be made by taking along one or two other spiritually minded brother/sister. Again, the goal is the same, seeking to protect the brother's/sister's reputation. (Prov. 11:13; 17:9; 26:20). When all private efforts to restore the offender to fellowship with Christ have failed, the matter is to be brought to the Elders. Their goal shall be the same as the above stated goal.

308.2 Discipline. If all previous efforts to restore the sinning brother/sister to fellowship with Christ and this church have failed, the matter shall be brought before the membership for final decision. The brother/sister in question shall have the right to appear before the membership to make a defense. (While a member is thus being dealt with, he/she shall be ineligible to vote or hold an office in the church.) If the brother/sister refuses to listen to the church, he/she is to be removed from membership and treated as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer (unfit to receive the blessing and ordinances of the church until he/she repents and is restored (Matthew 18:17-20; I Cor. 5:1-13)). A three-fourths vote of the membership present shall be required to remove someone from membership.

308.3 Restoration. If repentance occurs, steps shall be taken by the Elders and pastoral staff to further restore the brother/sister to fellowship with Christ and the local church (II Cor. 2:7-11).

308.4 Re-joining. After the membership has restored an individual may reapply for membership as outlined in Sections 303 and 304.

308.5 Unbiblical Teaching or Attitude. Any member or worker in the church who promotes any teaching or attitude contrary to the Word of God and the principles and practices of this church shall be dealt with by the Elders and pastoral staff (Acts 20:28-30; Rom. 16:17, 18; I Timothy 6:3-5; II Tim. 2:24-26). Their purpose should be to instruct in love, and if possible, to encourage restoration. However, if in the event restoration becomes impossible, the offending person shall be removed from membership and rejected from the fellowship of this church. A three fourth vote of the members present shall be required to remove someone from membership.

309.0 INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

309.1 Non-attending. It is expected that every member who is absent continuously will communicate with the Elders frequently concerning his/her spiritual life and interest in the Lord's work. After having been contacted by registered letter any person, absent for one year, from whom no communication or support has been received, shall be recommended to the congregation by the Elders to be dropped from the roll. The Elders shall notify a person dropped from the membership with a registered letter.

309.2 Non-Resident. A member who has moved away or for other reasons is unable to attend or participate in church activities shall by action of the Elders, be placed on an inactive roll retaining all church privileges except the right to vote. When the member is again able to participate, the Elders may place the member's name in active status, restoring their right to vote.

309.3 Membership Records. Membership records shall be reviewed at least semi-annually by the Elders and updated in accordance with 301 and 309.

310.0 WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

310.1 Written request. Any member who wishes to withdraw from the church shall submit a request to the Elders in writing. The Elders may approve the request and drop the name from membership. This action will be reported at the next business meeting.

311.0 LOSS OF RIGHTS OF MEMBERSHIP

311.1 Withdrawn or deprived. Any member, who has withdrawn from or has been deprived of membership, loses all rights of membership in the church and any claim on property.