



**Recommendation from the EFCA Board of Directors  
For the Adoption of  
Transitional Rules for Implementation of a  
Revised Statement of Faith  
By the 2007 Conference**

The national Conference is the highest decision-making authority within the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). The 2006 Conference adopted a resolution pertaining to “basic rules under which consideration of a possible revision of the Statement of Faith should proceed.” This resolution provided in pertinent part as follows:

The Conference requests that if a proposed amendment of Article III of the Articles of Incorporation is brought to a future Conference for formal introduction, it be brought with the recommendation of appropriate transitional guidelines to assist EFCA constituents, especially individual churches, if the Statement of Faith is revised.

In furtherance of this mandate from the 2006 Conference, the EFCA Board of Directors recommends that the 2007 Conference adopt transitional **rules** for implementation of a revised Statement of Faith. It must be recognized that these rules would only be effective **if** a revised Statement of Faith is ultimately adopted by a subsequent Conference. If a revision to the EFCA Statement of Faith (which would come as a proposed amendment to Article III of the EFCA Articles of Incorporation) is introduced at the 2007 Conference, the proposed revision cannot be acted upon until the 2008 Conference. The Board of Directors recommends that the **2007 Conference** adopt transitional *rules*, as opposed to *guidelines*, in 2007 so that there is a clear understanding of the organizational implications of a revised Statement of Faith on individual church, district, national and international levels – **if** there is a revision to the Statement of Faith.

“Rules” do carry with them a higher level of expectation or implication than do “guidelines,” which might be misperceived as being almost “permissive” in nature. In order to avoid confusion and to ensure doctrinal integrity and alignment of mission throughout the EFCA movement, the Board of Directors does recommend that the Conference adopt transitional **rules**. The Board also believes that there is great benefit in considering and adopting transitional rules in 2007, as an action of the Conference, separate from consideration of any particular revision to the Statement of Faith in 2008. In this way, the Conference will be able to clearly delineate what must and will take place throughout the EFCA movement, focusing largely on *process and implementation*, if there is a revision to the Statement of Faith. Consideration of the *content or substance* of a particular, proposed revision by the Conference may take place in 2008.

## **PROPOSED MOTION**

The EFCA Board of Directors recommends that the 2007 Conference adopt the following Transitional Rules for Implementation of a Revised Statement of Faith:

Note: Accompanying rationale is provided as a guide to enhance understanding of the proposed transitional rule and shall not be considered part of the proposed transitional rule.

### **Preamble:**

The Conference affirms that Evangelical Free Church ethos, within the parameters of our Statement of Faith, is broader than any pastor's or church's particular theological distinctives. While we recognize that a local congregation has the right to develop doctrinal/teaching distinctives, those distinctives should be presented with humility, grace, understanding and respect, recognizing that there are those who fit within the Evangelical Free Church more broadly who may not hold the same positions. This would include issues such as the doctrine of salvation (both Arminian and Calvinist), baptism (both infant and believer), and the tribulation (pre-, mid- and post-) which are within the parameters of our Statement of Faith. Differences in such doctrinal distinctives should not be the sole basis for excluding otherwise qualified believers from admission into membership in a local church.

### **1. Districts:**

Upon Conference approval of a revised Statement of Faith, each District of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) shall adopt the revised Statement of Faith as its Statement of Faith. Each District shall formally adopt the revised Statement of Faith no later than December 31 of the second year following the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith.

*Example:* If a revised Statement of Faith is adopted by Conference in June 2008, each District will be required to adopt the revised Statement of Faith as part of its Articles and/or Bylaws no later than December 31, 2010.

### **Rationale:**

Article III.B.1 of the EFCA Bylaws requires that a District must "adopt the Confession of Faith in Article III of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA." Article III.B.2 of the EFCA Bylaws requires that a District "have purposes and objectives that are consistent with those in Article II of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA." There are currently 19 Districts within the EFCA. The Statement of Faith expresses the doctrinal essentials of the EFCA and, to a great extent, defines who the EFCA is as a movement. Consistency between the national Statement of Faith and the Districts' Statement of Faith

is necessary to preserve unity and cohesion of doctrine, mission, ministry and interdependence within the EFCA movement. Lack of consistency in Statements of Faith would lead to confusion and misalignment in doctrine, in credentialing, in acceptance of new churches into the EFCA movement, and in identity.

The governance documents of the 19 Districts contain various procedures and timelines for the revision of the Districts' Statement of Faith. In addition, District conferences are held at different times throughout the year.

In order to take into account the differing procedures and timelines among the Districts for revision of the Districts' Statement of Faith, and in order to further take into account the practical realities of the scheduling of District conferences, it is recommended that the Districts be given until December 31 of the second year following the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith (i.e. essentially 2 ½ years) in order to come into doctrinal alignment by adopting the revised Statement of Faith as the Statement of Faith of the District.

## **2. Existing Member Churches:**

Even though existing member churches will not be required to adopt the revised Statement of Faith, the Conference expects that every church will seriously consider the desirability of adopting the revised Statement of Faith out of a spirit of commitment to the EFCA and to each other. This would be in keeping with the intent of the EFCA Bylaws, which state that all Evangelical Free churches have a common Statement of Faith (Article I.1).

### ***Rationale:***

There are approximately 1300 existing member churches within the EFCA today. Article II.A of the EFCA Articles of Incorporation states that the EFCA “shall be an association and fellowship of autonomous but interdependent congregations of like faith and congregational government.” Article I.1 of the EFCA Bylaws provides that churches which “adopt the Confession of Faith in Article III of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA,” and meet other requirements, are “Evangelical Free churches.” The vast majority of the nearly 1300 existing member churches have adopted the current Statement of Faith.

The recommended transitional rule recognizes the practical difficulty of **requiring** all of the nearly 1300 existing member churches to adopt the revised Statement of Faith. Thus, existing member churches will, in essence, be “grandfathered in” as churches in good standing with the EFCA. This recommendation is in recognition of considerations of fairness, and also of historical precedent, in allowing churches which came into the EFCA under the current Statement of Faith, to remain in good standing.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Conference, as the highest decision-making authority within the EFCA, must strongly encourage every church to seriously consider the desirability of adopting the revised Statement of Faith out of a spirit of commitment to the EFCA movement and to each other as autonomous, but interdependent, churches. Failure to do so could result in confusion, inconsistency, disunity and lack of cohesion amongst our churches, districts and ministries.

Some churches have provisions in their governance documents which purport to restrict them from amending their Statement of Faith. A document entitled “Statement of Faith Transitional Task Force: Discussion Regarding Prohibitions on Amending a Statement of Faith” may prove helpful in assisting churches address these types of provisions in their governance documents and can be found at [www.efca.org/about/doctrine](http://www.efca.org/about/doctrine).

### **3. Admission of New Churches:**

The revised Statement of Faith will be an *acceptable* doctrinal standard immediately for the admission of new churches, whether planted or adopted, and will be the *only* doctrinal standard applied for the admission of new churches upon adoption of the revised Statement of Faith by the District in which the church is located, or after December 31 of the second year following the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith, whichever occurs first. This is in accordance with the requirement in Article I.1 of the EFCA Bylaws that individual Evangelical Free churches “adopt the Confession of Faith in Article III of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA.”

#### ***Rationale:***

Upon approval of a revised Statement of Faith, it is likely that there will be new church plants and/or existing churches in the process of being adopted into the EFCA in various locations throughout the country. This proposed transitional rule gives flexibility to each such church to elect to proceed toward becoming an EFCA church under the Statement of Faith with which it began the process **or** to elect to proceed under the revised Statement of Faith. Once the District in which the new church is located has adopted the revised Statement of Faith as the Statement of Faith of the District, or after 2 ½ years (whichever occurs first), the revised Statement of Faith will be the only doctrinal standard applied for the admission of new churches into the EFCA. The outward limit of 2 ½ years is intended to mirror the time limit within which each District must adopt the revised Statement of Faith as the Statement of Faith of the District.

### **4. Credentialing of Ministry Personnel:**

In the credentialing of EFCA ministry personnel, the revised Statement of Faith will be an *acceptable* doctrinal standard immediately and will be the *only* doctrinal standard applied after December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith. This is in accordance with Article III.C.4 of the EFCA Bylaws, under

which the districts “assist local churches and the Board of Ministerial Standing in the administration of pastoral licensing and ordination” and in accordance with Article V.L.3.a of the EFCA Bylaws, which states that the Board of Ministerial Standing “shall seek to standardize the expectations of candidates for credentials throughout the EFCA.”

*Example:* If a revised Statement of Faith is adopted by the Conference in June 2008, the Board of Ministerial Standing will need to be prepared to apply the revised Statement of Faith as an acceptable standard immediately (at the option of the candidate), and the only standard after December 31, 2008.

***Rationale:***

Upon approval of a revised Statement of Faith, it is likely that there will be pastors and other ministry personnel in various stages of the credentialing process. This proposed transitional rule gives flexibility to each such individual to elect to proceed toward credentialing under the Statement of Faith with which he began the process **or** to elect to proceed toward credentialing under the revised Statement of Faith. This election is in the sole discretion of the candidate and is in effect for a “grace period” of six months after adoption of the revised Statement of Faith by the Conference. After six months, the revised Statement of Faith will be the only doctrinal standard applied in the credentialing process. It is believed that six months is sufficient time for candidates engaged in the credentialing process to continue through the process by adherence to the revised Statement of Faith.

**5. Reaffirmations of Statement of Faith:**

Letters are sent from the EFCA to credentialed ministry personnel every five years seeking their continued affirmation of the Statement of Faith.

**A. Ministry Personnel Credentialed Under the 1950 Statement of Faith:**

After December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith, ministry personnel who were originally credentialed under the 1950 Statement of Faith may **elect** to base their written reaffirmations **either** upon the 1950 Statement of Faith **or** upon the revised Statement of Faith.

**B. Ministry Personnel Credentialed Under the Revised Statement of Faith:**

After December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith, ministry personnel who have become credentialed under the revised Statement of Faith must base their written reaffirmations upon the revised Statement of Faith.

These provisions are in accordance with Article V.L.3.a of the EFCA Bylaws which speaks to the issue of preserving the doctrinal integrity of the Evangelical Free Church.

***Rationale:***

Doctrinal and missional alignment of credentialed ministry personnel within the EFCA is of paramount importance to the movement. Article V.L of the EFCA Bylaws, for example, provides that the Board of Ministerial Standing “shall seek to preserve the doctrinal integrity of the EFCA, and shall adjudicate all charges brought to it of doctrinal error among ministers.” Periodic, written reaffirmations of the EFCA Statement of Faith by credentialed ministry personnel is a significant means by which doctrinal integrity is preserved.

There has been concern expressed within the EFCA constituency that credentialed ministry personnel who do not favor a revised Statement of Faith will be excluded or removed from the EFCA and may not retain their credentials. The Board of Directors believes that credentialed ministry personnel who affirm the current Statement of Faith should be able to affirm a revised Statement of Faith, which receives the approval of the Conference, in all that it contains. In the interests of doctrinal and missional alignment and unity, it would be preferable that all credentialed ministry personnel would reaffirm the same doctrinal standard. However, it is not the intent of the revision process to exclude, remove or “drive out” ministry personnel who have been credentialed under the current Statement of Faith.

Therefore, in the interests of clarity and unity, this proposed transitional rule has been revised to explicitly provide that ministry personnel who were originally credentialed under the 1950 Statement of Faith may elect to base their written reaffirmations either upon the 1950 Statement of Faith or upon the revised Statement of Faith. This election is in the sole discretion of each individual who was originally credentialed under the 1950 Statement of Faith.

Prospectively, ministry personnel who become credentialed under the revised Statement of Faith must base their future, written reaffirmations solely upon the revised Statement of Faith.

**6. International Mission:**

In the commissioning of missionaries for service, the revised Statement of Faith will be an *acceptable* doctrinal standard immediately and will be the *only* doctrinal standard applied after December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith. This is in accordance with Article V.E.2.c of the EFCA Bylaws, which states that the Board of the EFCA International Mission shall “recommend qualified missionary candidates to the Conference for commissioning and commission additional candidates itself as necessary between annual Conferences.”

***Rationale:***

Upon approval of a revised Statement of Faith, it is likely that there will be missionary candidates in various stages of the commissioning process. This proposed transitional rule gives flexibility to each such individual to elect to proceed toward commissioning under the Statement of Faith with which he or she began the process **or** to elect to proceed with commissioning under the revised Statement of Faith. This election is in the sole discretion of the candidate and is in effect for a “grace period” of six months after adoption of the revised Statement of Faith by the Conference. After six months, the revised Statement of Faith will be the only doctrinal standard applied in the commissioning process. It is believed that six months is sufficient time for candidates engaged in the commissioning process to continue through that process by adherence to the revised Statement of Faith.

**7. Trinity International University:**

**A. Statement of Faith:**

Upon Conference approval of a revised Statement of Faith, Trinity International University (TIU) shall adopt the revised Statement of Faith as its Statement of Faith. TIU shall formally adopt the revised Statement of Faith no later than December 31 of the first year following the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith.

***Rationale:***

By virtue of its governance documents, Trinity International University must hold to the doctrinal position of the EFCA. This proposed transitional rule gives TIU a period of 18 months to align its Statement of Faith with any revised EFCA Statement of Faith.

**B. Board of Regents:**

The revised Statement of Faith will be the only doctrinal standard applied after December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith. This is in accordance with the requirement in Article V.H.1 of the EFCA Bylaws that all members of the Board of Regents of Trinity International University “shall agree to and sign, without reservation, the Confession of Faith in Article III of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA.”

***Rationale:***

It is likely that in the year in which the Conference approves a revised Statement of Faith, there already would have been an election held for members of the Board of Regents of TIU and that these members of the Board of Regents will have affirmed the current Statement of Faith. Six months after adoption of a revised Statement of Faith is a

reasonable time to wait before requiring that the revised Statement of Faith be the only doctrinal basis upon which members of the TIU Board of Regents may serve.

### **C. Faculty:**

To the extent consistent with state law, the revised Statement of Faith will be the only doctrinal standard applied after December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith. This is in accordance with the requirement in Article V.H.3.c of the EFCA Bylaws that each member of the faculty of Trinity International University and its constituent schools “agree to and sign annually, without reservation, the Confession of Faith in Article III of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA.”

#### ***Rationale:***

Upon approval of a revised Statement of Faith, it is possible that prospective faculty members of TIU and /or its constituent schools will be in various stages of the hiring process and that these prospective faculty members may have affirmed the current Statement of Faith. Article V.H.3.c of the EFCA Bylaws requires that each member of the faculty of TIU and its constituent schools must agree to and sign **annually**, without reservation, the EFCA Statement of Faith. Six months after adoption of a revised Statement of Faith is a reasonable time to wait before requiring that the revised Statement of Faith be the only doctrinal basis upon which each faculty member of TIU and its constituent schools must base his or her written, annual affirmation.

The proposed transitional rule contains a reference to consistency with state law. The purpose of this reference is to recognize that state law could have impact on the application of this transitional rule with respect to tenured faculty.

### **8. Trinity Western University Board of Governors:**

With respect to the members of the Board of Governors of Trinity Western University (TWU) elected by the Conference, the revised Statement of Faith will be the only doctrinal standard applied after December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith. This is in accordance with the requirement in Article V.I.1 of the EFCA Bylaws that all members of the Board of Governors of TWU “shall agree to and sign, without reservation, the Confession of Faith in Article III of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA.”

#### ***Rationale:***

It is likely that in the year in which the Conference approves a revised Statement of Faith, there already would have been an election held for members of the Board of Governors of TWU and that these members of the Board of Governors will have affirmed the current Statement of Faith. Six months after adoption of a revised Statement of Faith is a

reasonable time to wait before requiring that the revised Statement of Faith be the only doctrinal basis upon which those members of the TWU Board of Governors elected by the Conference may serve.

**9. EFCA Offices, Boards and Committees:**

The revised Statement of Faith will be the only doctrinal standard applied after December 31 of the year in which the Conference approves the revised Statement of Faith. This is in accordance with applying the requirement in Article VII.A.1 of the EFCA Bylaws that persons elected, confirmed or appointed to the offices, boards and committees of the EFCA “shall agree to and sign, without reservation, the Confession of Faith in Article III of the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA.”

***Rationale:***

Doctrinal and missional alignment of individuals who serve as EFCA officers, or who serve on EFCA boards and committees, is of critical importance to the movement. Six months after adoption of a revised Statement of Faith is a reasonable time to wait before requiring that the revised Statement of Faith be the only doctrinal basis upon which persons elected, confirmed or appointed to EFCA offices, boards and/or committees may serve.