

THE MINISTERIAL FORUM



EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

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On June 26, 2008, delegates of the 124th EFCA National Leadership Conference approved the Proposed Revision of the Statement of Faith with an overwhelming majority of 86%. Those delegates in attendance were able to be a part of this historic decision, which was marked by robust yet charitable debate.

In order to allow those who were not able to attend to get a sense of what transpired and to preserve this discussion and decision as a part of our public historical record, we are publishing here a slightly edited version of the minutes of the conference. As we do so, we thank God afresh for His grace and mercy to us in the EFCA. The 2008 NLC concluded with President Hamel leading the attendees in a strong and passionate confession of the new Statement of Faith. We pray that you and your local church will do the same, to God's glory.

Minutes of the GENERAL CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA St. Louis, Missouri • June 25-26, 2008

At the 2007 General Conference, the EFCA Board of Directors had proposed the amendment of Article III of the Articles of Incorporation (the Statement of Faith [SOF]). That proposal was taken up at this General Conference for action by the delegates.

President Bill Hamel introduced the topic and remarked that the process to revise the SOF began several years before he became president. As early as the 1970s certain issues were raised regarding the suitability of our current SOF. In the early 1990s a revision was discussed but was subsequently tabled. During the last few years the process for a revision has gone forward. Now for the first time in 58 years, delegates are being asked to vote on a revision. This action was needed for several reasons:

1) A time of examination is important because it reminds us that every doctrinal statement is a human product that is not on par with the Bible.

2) Every doctrinal statement is a product of its time. Words change. New issues arise that were not even on the radar screen in 1950.

3) A revision provides opportunity to update archaic and clarify unclear language.

4) A revision provides an opportunity to reexamine who we are in the EFC. It sets apart what is most important which defines our identity.

President Hamel strongly affirmed the process and its end results. He noted that there were three drafts prior to this final document. Material was repeatedly submitted to the EFCA constituency for prayer and consideration. On the first three drafts there was no statement that required premillennialism. But the Board listened to the constituency, and for the sake of unity changed the final revision to include the premillennial view. President Hamel stood with the Board and affirmed the wisdom of this decision. He noted that some were relieved and others

were disappointed. This is what it means to live together as an association. The revision would still be very helpful in strengthening our SOF. The time and attention devoted to this matter was necessary and was highly profitable.

Rev. Quintin Stieff, Vice Moderator of the EFCA and Pastor of Valley Church of West Des Moines, IA, called the conference to prayer. The delegates broke into groups for a mini concert of prayer centered progressively on Eph. 3:14-21.

The Moderator, Ron Aucutt from Cornerstone EFC in Annandale, VA, briefly explained the history of the process to revise the EFCA SOF and reviewed the special rules that applied to amendments to the proposed Revision of the EFCA SOF. He then formally placed the Revision before the conference.

The first order of business was to consider the four amendments that had been presented before the May 25 deadline.

Amendment One

Terry Bosch of Faith Evangelical Free Church in Manitowoc, WI, moved that Article 7 of the proposed Revision of the Statement of Faith be amended by striking out the last sentence and inserting "They are not the means of salvation, and are to be celebrated by the church in faith." David Naidl, also of Faith Evangelical Free Church of Manitowoc, WI, seconded the motion.

Terry Bosch spoke in favor of the amendment and reported that he strongly supported most of the revision, but he was concerned with the potential of misinterpretation in this area. He argued that the word "confirm" was too strong. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are physical representations. He did not want us to encourage a sacramental view of the ordinances. The words "confirmed and nourished" could cause confusion to those with Catholic and Lutheran backgrounds. "Celebration" is positive and should be retained, but "Genuine," "confirm," and "nourish" should be removed. He appealed to the EFCA wisdom that silence can be valuable.

David Martin, Senior Pastor of the Evangelical Free Church of Hershey, PA, spoke against the amendment as a representative of the Board of Directors. After thanking Terry and David for their thoughtful involvement in this process, he declared that he didn't want to affirm anything that was unbiblical. He listed several reasons why the amendment was not an improvement. The amendment did not list a rationale for the celebration of these ordinances. The amendment did not define the ordinances; it only said what they are not. The proposed revision didn't advocate a sacramental view, it simply affirms that we are nourished and confirmed by participating. While we do need to avoid a sacramental view, we also need to avoid overreacting by denying the power of participation.

Scott Sheets of Riverside EFC in Mayville, ND, spoke in favor of the amendment. He noted that the Holy Spirit does the nourishing, not the elements.

Christopher Barnes of St. Luke Evangelical Church in Wellington, MO, spoke in favor of the amendment. He could not find any Scripture

that affirmed that the ordinances nourish and confirm the believer.

Mark Friz of St. Paul's Evangelical Church in St. Louis, MO, spoke against the amendment. The current wording was excellent. He believed that the ordinances convey common but not saving grace.

Jack Brooks of Georgetown EFC in Georgetown, KY, spoke against the amendment. The Apostle Paul uses the phrase "sincere faith." The phrase "by faith" cancels out a sacramental view. He didn't think we should adjust words to fit the various communities in which we serve. We can't always be changing words. It was our responsibility to take the words and explain them.

Charles Addis of Kingsburg EFC, Kingsburg, CA, spoke in support of the amendment. He believed that there was too much ambiguity in the wording of the revision. In addition, "nourish the believer" reduced a corporate act to an individual one.

Byron Harvey of Red Oak, Marietta, GA, had a question on the special rules regarding a substantive amendment. Would adoption of any of the amendments before us be ruled substantive?

The Moderator answered that it was impossible to rule definitively before the discussion. "Substantive" was not equivalent to "important" or "meaningful." Based upon plain language alone, the first two amendments would not appear to amend the SOF substantively. But the discussion would reveal whether people would be included or excluded by a particular amendment. The nature of the discussion and the intent of delegates when voting had to be taken into consideration. The Moderator would make a ruling as soon as he knew the answer.

Chaplain Ed Willis, US Army, spoke in favor of the amendment because the revision gave the appearance of sacramentalism.

Don Sailer of River Valley EFC in Arapahoe, NE, made a motion to replace "They are not the means of salvation, and are to be celebrated by the church in faith." with "Though not the means of salvation, they are to be celebrated by the church in faith."

The motion to amend Amendment One was seconded and carried (by voice vote and then confirmed by standing vote).

Jim Larson, Camarillo EFC, Camarillo, CA, stated that views on the ordinances vary among Evangelical Free Churches. He spoke in favor of the amendment because it didn't violate the conscience of anyone, while the current reading in the proposed revision may offend those with a strictly memorial view of the ordinances.

Tom Magers of EFC of Libertyville, Libertyville, IL, spoke against the amendment. He was raised in a Catholic church and studied to be a priest. He found no confusion or sacramentalism in the wording.

Bill Isley of Grace Community Fellowship, Overland Park, KS, read 1 Cor. 10:16. The phrase "a participation in the body of Christ" seemed to defend the word "nourish" in the current proposed reading.

Hilmer Eckstrom of Faith EFC in Stanley, WI, suggested simply replacing "nourish" with "inspire."

The question was called and carried by voice vote. Therefore, final arguments were initiated.

David Martin clarified that the current reading doesn't say that the ordinances by themselves confirm and nourish. "The ordinances" is the subject, but it is qualified by the phrase "when celebrated in genuine faith." The wording is used to emphasize that the ordinances were given to bring benefit to the church. Nourish simply means "to nurture and promote the growth of."

Terry Bosch argued that the current reading didn't have a strong biblical basis. He didn't think that "genuine" added anything to faith since all faith is genuine. He argued that the words we use now will be used to set the direction for the future. The current reading could lead toward a sacramental view. The primary reason for adopting the amendment is to keep the statement clear and simple.

The motion was defeated 335 to 292. (Voice and standing votes were too close to be called by the Moderator. A second standing vote was taken and counted in sections by the tellers.)

Amendment Two

Jeremy Vance of Faith Evangelical Free Church in Manitowoc, WI, moved that Article 8 of the proposed Revision of the Statement of Faith be amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting "We believe that having received

God's justifying grace we are to live through His sanctifying power and for His purposes." Paul Liermann, also of Faith Evangelical Free Church in Manitowoc, WI, seconded the motion.

Jeremy Vance argued that the present reading of the Proposed SOF was confusing. It may lead people to judge salvation by behavior. Doing this weakens the concept of the substitutionary atonement. Sanctification should be the goal of all believers but it is not guaranteed (Romans 7). He didn't want our SOF to couple works too closely with grace. We need to draw clear lines and not emphasize human receiving of salvation over God's work.

Bill Kynes, Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church in Annandale, VA, spoke against the amendment as a representative of the Board of Directors. The Board opposed the amendment because it weakens the Article and removes its central emphasis. God's gracious purpose in the gospel is not only to save us but also to transform us by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. These two should not be separated. The concern of the motion to safeguard salvation by grace alone through faith alone is valid, but that concern is safeguarded already by the first sentence in Article 7. Article 8 has to be read in context with Article 7. Likewise Romans 6-7 must be read in context of Romans 1-5. The faith that saves is faith that works.

Paul Liermann argued that the amendment adds clarity. He called attention to a footnote of an earlier revision where similar wording was used for the sake of clarity.

Justin Keller of Bethel EFC in Staten Island, NY, spoke against the amendment. He appreciated the idea but argued from Romans 6, Ephesians 2:10, 1 John, and other Scriptures that deeds do form the basis for assurance of salvation. The amendment introduces ambiguity and doesn't clarify anything.

Jeremy White of Valley Church, Vacaville, CA, stated that the amendment is more inclusive within Evangelicalism. The current proposed reading "must not be separated" is overworked and could exclude people unnecessarily.

Gregg Gahan of Rose Hill EFC, Langford, SD, spoke against the

amendment. He supported the reading "must not be separated" as being essential. Any ambiguity is clarified by the context. The current reading is sufficiently ambiguous in the appropriate areas and leaves the door open to a broad view of orthodox beliefs.

Slayden MacGregor of Faith EFC of Spring Hill, Spring Hill, FL, spoke in favor of the amendment. It emphasizes that the gospel is a gift from a single act of Christ instead of resulting from the process of sanctification. Paul himself feared disqualification from the prize. Every believer is called to a sanctified life. The amendment encourages every believer to walk with Christ. Sanctification is not automatic.

Ian Carlisle of Richvale EFC in Richvale, CA, spoke against the amendment. He noted that a previous Article deals with salvation. This one deals with Christian living. James 2 emphasizes that there can be no separation.

Suzanne Larson, Bishop Creek Church, Bishop CA, asked for a clarification of the original reading. Does "must not be separated" mean "cannot" or "should not" be separated? Bill Kynes noted that this reading was carefully chosen so that it doesn't say too much or too little. The phrase has some purposeful ambiguity.

Ed Moore from Newark Community Church, Newark, CA, noted that it is unfortunate that English has two words (holy and sanctify). He noted that they both come from the same Greek word in the New Testament. We are saved to be holy because God is holy. He argued that Christians receive their qualification at salvation but then need to show it. He spoke against the motion.

A church planter in KS spoke against the motion even though he believed that it is true. The context makes the meaning of the current reading clear. The amendment removes the majority of the power of the statement and makes things less clear. The original is much clearer because it specifies that it is God's power than sanctifies us. He didn't like that the amendment shifts most of the responsibility for sanctification to humans.

Melissa Huyett of Faith Chapel in Burlington, WI, spoke in favor of the amendment. She referenced Eph. 2:8-

10 and argued that the amendment is more God-centered.

The question was called and carried by voice vote. Therefore final arguments were initiated.

Bill Kynes argued that the amendment is unnecessary because Article 6 already addresses salvation. He also noted that Romans 7 is followed by Romans 8 which emphasizes that God will complete the work that He begins in believers. The power that justifies believers will also bring completion.

Jeremy Vance argued that language is important and sets the course of history. He listed many historic documents that negatively shaped the world. This revision will be the most significant document in the EFCA. This Article is a little crack that may increase in future generations. Every sentence must be able to stand alone. This Article needs to be clarified. The amendment brings the needed clarity.

The motion failed (by voice vote and then confirmed by standing vote).

The Conference recessed at 5:08 p.m.

The Morning Session opened on June 26, and after singing and prayer, business reconvened at 8:53 a.m.

Amendment Three

Bobby File of Evangelical Fellowship in Amarillo, TX, moved that Article 9 of the proposed Revision of the Statement of Faith be amended by striking out "personal, bodily and premillennial" in the first sentence and inserting "personal and bodily." Wil Regier of Richfield Community Church in Yorba Linda, CA, seconded the motion.

Bobby File defended the amendment because he considered it inconsistent to keep one particular theological view on such a small area as a test for orthodoxy. He noted that it is inconsistent to include only one of the historically acceptable orthodox views. Outsiders see this as the one area that stands out and is out of place. The Scripture is clear that Jesus will return personally and bodily to rule, but the premillennial requirement is out of place. He had heard why premillennialism was restored to the final proposed revision but was unconvinced that it was valuable or prudent. He believed that God will be better glorified and ministry will be enhanced by passing the amendment.

Bill Kynes, Senior Pastor of Cor-

nerstone Evangelical Free Church in Annandale, VA, spoke against the amendment as a representative of the Board of Directors. He affirmed the merits of the motion and noted that he has used the same arguments himself. Including premillennialism does appear to be inconsistent with "majoring in the majors and minoring in the minors." Deleting premillennialism also would not be a move away from inerrancy because some of the strongest advocates for inerrancy have not believed in premillennialism. The Arminian/Calvinist debate is much more significant, and yet the SOF is silent in this area. However, from the very beginning of the revision process there was a desire for broad support. The issue has been discussed with thousands of people. Many who initially wanted to retain the premillennial requirement changed their minds. But many others were not persuaded. The Board made a pastoral judgment

*The Ministerial Forum
of the
Evangelical Free Church
Ministerial Association*

A review of opinions, viewpoints and thoughts addressing biblical issues facing EFCA Ministerial members. Editor, Bill Kynes. Published under the direction of the EFCA Ministerial Association Board members 2008-2009 Chairman: Rev. Tom Macy, Faith Missionary Church, Indianapolis, IN; Rev. Mark Frazee, Bradenton EFC, Bradenton, FL; Rev. Mark Liesch, Butte EFC, MT; Rev. Mike Shields, Kearney, NE; Rev. Dave Wardle, Arlington Heights EFC, IL.

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about what would be best for the EFCA. They came to the conclusion that to remove premillennialism would risk causing disunity and would likely keep the revision from passing with a two-thirds majority. The Board balanced theological principles with the commandment of Scripture to "seek the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Although he was sympathetic to the amendment, he urged delegates to vote against it.

Wil Regier stated that his church was glad to be a part of the EFCA and to be a part the process to revise the SOF. He noted that his church will support any decision of the conference because they seek unity. However, he argued that the amendment is valuable because the title of the document is our SOF, not our Statement of Distinctives. The church has disagreed for centuries over this matter. Removing the narrow requirement would help the SOF remain focused on the gospel.

Ernie Mangus, ReachGlobal missionary in the Philippines, announced that he would vote against the amendment. This is not the time or place for this modification. He had been very vocal in advocating removing the premillennial statement. He had not changed his position. This does cause problems with missionaries on the field. But he respected the guidance of the Board that it could be damaging to our unity. He desired to preserve the good work in the rest of the document and move forward.

Jack Brooks of Georgetown EFC in Georgetown, KY, stated that he was very upset in the beginning when premillennialism was removed from the first draft. But he changed his mind because he saw this as a polity question rather than a theological one. The matter is very important even if it is a polity issue because it encapsulates a particular view of the Kingdom of God. He wouldn't want to refuse membership in a church for a polity matter, but he would want the view to be stated clearly in a polity document. But since we do not yet have a companion polity document, he argued for voting against the amendment. There is time to continue to pray and talk about the matter if we defeated the amendment now. It was not the time yet for such an amendment.

Angus McDonald of Great Bridge EFC in Chesapeake, VA, noted that he

highly respected the wisdom of the Spiritual Heritage Committee. They have discerned the times. The amendment would bring disunity at this time. He has not heard a convincing biblical argument to drop premillennialism from our SOF.

The question was called and carried by voice vote. Therefore final arguments were initiated.

Bill Kynes noted that the inclusion of premillennialism in our SOF was a compromise. But the compromise was not merely pragmatic—it was theological, for it was rooted in our commitment to unity; it was born out of brotherly love; and it respected a doctrine many value highly. He contended that the proposed revision without amendments was a statement we could all support. It allowed us to work on our primary mission.

Bobby File shared appreciation for the spirit of cooperation. He still thought that this issue would be forever before us and that it was time to address it now. He heard those who think there would be disastrous results if premillennialism was removed, but he considered the Arminian/Calvinist debate more significant right now. He was saddened that it appeared that we cannot do what is right regarding this particular issue.

The motion failed (by voice and then confirmed by standing vote).

Amendment Four

Don Sailer of River Valley Evangelical Free Church in Arapahoe, NE, moved that Article 7 of the proposed Revision of the Statement of Faith be amended by adding to the end of the third sentence "and whose members have the right, under Christ, to decide and govern their own affairs." Matthew Snell of Keene Evangelical Free Church in Axtell, NE, seconded the motion.

Don Sailer explained that the purpose of his motion was to define "autonomy" and "congregational." He stated that the Articles of Incorporation of the EFCA helpfully define these words. He saw his addition as valuable and in line with historic precedence.

Greg Strand, EFCA Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialing, spoke against the amendment as a representative of the Board of Direc-

tors. He appreciated the desire to assure that the EFCA remained congregational. But the Board determined that it was unnecessary and unwise to put this in the SOF for two reasons: 1) Organizational: The matter is clearly and definitively addressed in Article II of the Articles of Incorporation. 2) Theological: There are serious consequences of raising polity to a first order theological conviction. The introduction of the revised SOF lists the items as theological convictions. Adding the proposed amendment would say something we don't desire to say about congregationalism. We want to remain congregational (this is covered by Article II), but we don't want to exclude those who will abide by our polity but who don't believe that it is the only orthodox theological view.

Mike Maggard of Grace EFC in Louisville, KY, stated that he was conflicted but supported the motion. He appreciated that the issue is addressed in the preamble to the SOF, but he didn't believe that it was safeguarded sufficiently in the Articles of Incorporation. These can be changed too quickly. Plus he believed that stating this strongly helps to prevent a tendency toward centralization of power.

Justin Keller of Bethel EFC in Staten Island, NY, spoke against the motion. He was not prepared to say that the only true churches were those who are congregational. If this were amended we would clearly have to change the preamble to avoid such a statement.

The question was called and carried by voice vote. Therefore final arguments were initiated.

Greg Strand emphasized that polity did not belong in the SOF. The EFCA has been and needs to remain a believer's church. Polity can be addressed in different places. Now was not the time to enter into a discussion of how we implement congregationalism in our churches.

Don Sailer noted that the meaning of "imminent" had changed. The meaning of "autonomy" may also change. We need to state clearly what these things mean. A positive affirmation of the right of each local church would not deny someone else the ability to join our churches. He didn't agree that this amendment would exclude in such a black and white manner.

The motion failed. (The vote was taken first by voice and confirmed by standing.)

The Moderator announced that since none of the amendments passed, the revised SOF had not been substantively amended and the vote on the primary motion would be allowed.

Primary Motion

Steve Hawn, Chairman of the Board of Directors, reported on behalf of the BOD regarding the vote on the entire document. He thanked the conference for the way the discussion had taken place in an atmosphere of love and unity. God had been and was being honored in our midst. The process had affirmed the priesthood of all believers. He thanked previous Board chairs Brian Cole and Jimmy Kallam for their leadership in the process.

Steve Hawn reviewed each statement of the revision and noted ways in which each strengthened our SOF (on this, see p. 8)

The Moderator called for discussion of the main motion before the delegates.

Matt Jones of Del Rey Hills EFC of Playa Del Rey, CA, called the revised SOF an incredible masterpiece. It strengthened key doctrines and addressed new problems. However he spoke against approving it. Parts of the revision would exclude some within our movement. He believed that the new SOF placed him outside the EFCA. The first amendment would have solved the matter but was not passed. He didn't believe that the communion table nourishes or confirms in any way metaphorically or physically. He believed that others would be excluded by things addressed by the second amendment. He suggested reconsidering and having further dialogue before passing the document.

Charles Addis of Grace EFC, Kingsburg, CA, noted that he disagreed with the revision at the beginning. He wanted to apologize publicly to Greg Strand and the Spiritual Heritage Committee for attacking them. He believed that the process had produced a valuable revision and urged its adoption. He noted that fear-based decision-making is not biblical. We should not fear what will happen in the future. If there is abuse, then people will stand up against it.

Jeremy White from Valley Church, Vacaville, CA, shared his appreciation for those who had worked on the refreshed SOF. He disagreed with the wording in Article 8 but supported the hard work. He liked the latest reorganization. Although there has been much progress, he didn't feel that the SOF was ready to be approved. He believed that the revision moves toward Reformed theology. If we continue to seek to be broadly Evangelical we should change some of the wording.

Rich Carlson, Superintendent of the Intermountain-West District, stated that he was privileged to be involved in the debate regarding the SOF. He loved the people on each side. He urged people to vote against the revision because it would divide his district and the EFCA. He believed that we need a renewed commitment to our current SOF rather than a new one. He believed that the new SOF will suppress church planting and evangelism.

John Mochel of Brooklyn EFC in Beresford, SD, noted that he served on his district Board of Ministerial Standing. He spoke in favor of the motion. It would help immensely in their work with credentialing pastors. Its clarity and organization would be helpful. The revision improved on the excellent SOF we already have.

Jack Brooks of Georgetown EFC in Georgetown, KY, urged voting for the SOF. The characterizations made by those who didn't want you to vote for it are not accurate. This is not a Reformed document. This says nothing about the key areas that separate Arminianism and Calvinism. He loved having differing views in the EFCA. This revision would retain those. The revision doesn't teach sacramentalism. The word "ordinances" is used, not "sacraments." The revision clearly teaches that they are unable to save. We should not make decisions based upon fear. We continue to believe in the autonomy of the local church. He urged delegates not to vote against the revision because of these flawed arguments. He asked people to see the flaw in the reasoning of those who oppose it.

Nate Good of Valley Christian Fellowship in Grand View, ID, stated that he would vote against the revision in principle. He felt we didn't

need more carefully crafted wording. We needed more of God to become a movement of multiplication. He read Psalm 51:6 and noted that he believed we are abandoning sound doctrine for the sake of better verbal clarity. He didn't want sections dropped. We have vowed to uphold and abide by the missing sections.

Raleigh Galgan, Valley EFC, Vacaville, CA, announced that he had a point of order. However, he never stated his point of order. He shared his desire that the Transitional Rules be amended to allow district superintendents to base their periodic reaffirmations of the SOF on either the 1950 or the 2008 version. He argued that districts and superintendents are autonomous and that their autonomy was questioned by the transitional rule. However, he stated that he wasn't actually bringing such an amendment. He simply wanted to inform the conference of the issue.

Phil Smith of the Evangelical Free Church in Oakland, NE, noted that his church was in favor of the revision. It is healthy to discuss theology. He noted that historically denominations have veered liberal. It is exciting to see a SOF that is strengthened and fortified.

Brian Burton of Lincoln EFC in Cushing, MN, shared that he had been greatly encouraged by the way the original SOF had provided grounding and been an affirmation to his ministry. The original SOF didn't worry about how God brings people to faith. He wondered why salvation proper has been left out of this revision.

Darin Anderson of The Church at Charlotte in Charlotte, NC, spoke in support of the revision. Unity is important. He thanked the Moderator for leading with grace and peace. He also thanked debaters and the Spiritual Heritage Committee. He believed that they accomplished exactly what they set out to do. The result should be unity as we go forward. As family life pastor, he wanted to invest in the next generation. This revision would help us do just that.

Bruce McKanna of EFC of Mount Morris, Mount Morris, IL, spoke in favor of the revision. Our differences on small points didn't mean that we weren't unified. He would have worded the portion on the ordinances differently, but he didn't have a problem with the wording. He believed that

even such things as church membership, Scripture reading and prayer nourish the believer. This is a positive affirmation of what is good for us. Regarding the salvation/sanctification issue, the revision shows them properly as distinct but not separate. There is no confusion regarding the ground of our salvation. He loved the statement because the overall picture is a presentation of the gospel. Salvation is not listed as a heading, but if you read through it you would have presented the gospel and called people to respond. He believed that salvation is more strongly emphasized than in the original SOF.

Marcos Solt, Iglesia EFC, Allentown, PA, expressed his thanks and noted that the strengthening of Article 8 is an important improvement.

Jeff Kroll of Grace Community Church in Worthington, MN, noted that he sensed a basic problem with the discussion. It was difficult for a group to deal with the personal interpretation someone might derive from the words. There was some room to interpret words slightly differently. He exhorted people to refrain from thinking that their personal definition was the only possible one that can be.

Chris Johnson of Christ Community Church in Waseca, MN, responded to whether salvation was represented in the revised SOF. He read examples of direct references to salvation in Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 10. He believed that the revision has been strengthened in many areas.

Wes Johnson, past EFCA Pastor, Superintendent, and Assistant to the President, affirmed the new SOF. In his 56 years of service he believed that he had read more doctrinal papers than anyone in the EFCA. He wished that this revision would have been completed long ago. The strengthening was valuable because we have had to fight against liberalism for years with the old SOF.

Tom Macy of Faith Church in Indianapolis, IN, noted that he had been drawn to the EFCA through the current SOF. That was the primary factor that led him to go to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He had now pastored for 32 years and led countless membership classes. Over the last 15 years he had seen some weaknesses and gaps in the current SOF. A SOF is not on par with the Bible. A SOF is

rooted in history that changes. He is pleased with the quality of pastors and theologians involved in the formulation and listening process. He would have changed a few things himself, but believes the revision is a huge improvement. Salvation is clearly stated. The substitutionary atonement is clearly specified. Evangelism is emphasized. He was grateful for the old SOF but now urges adoption of the new.

Jim Kallam of the Church at Charlotte in Charlotte, NC noted that in the past he has had to speak as a member of the BOD or as Chair of the BOD. But today he stands unbound. As a pastor he heartily endorses the statement. It will move us forward to allow us to continue to minister in unique places in an organization committed to the fundamentals of the faith.

The question was called and carried by voice vote.

The Moderator instructed delegates on voting procedures and explained how to vote for or against the proposed revision. Ballots were distributed. Deuteronomy 32:1-4 was read.

The vote was taken by secret ballot.

Concluding matters

Announcement of the Vote on the Revision of the Statement of Faith.

The tellers reported that 736 ballots were cast: 630 voted in favor of the revision of the SOF, 105 voted against the revision. One ballot was illegible and unable to be counted.

The Moderator announced that the revision carried by approximately 86% of the vote.

Resolution of Thanksgiving and Commitment

Pastor Byron Harvey, Red Oak Church, moved the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Evangelical Free Church of America has now come to the end of a long and rigorous process of re-examining and strengthening itself theologically, and whereas that process has consumed countless hours of tireless effort, and whereas our leadership has thoughtfully kept our movement abreast of all proposed changes, allowed all voices to be heard, amended and clarified the various parts of the proposed statement to reflect concerns voiced by the EFCA constituency, and worked hard to achieve a statement that accomplishes broad consensus, and

whereas throughout the process, those within the leadership of the EFCA have demonstrated consistent devotion to our Lord, integrity of godly character, and unwavering commitment to our movement, whereas implementing change always brings challenges, and whereas Satan always seeks opportunity to divide God's people, subvert God's mission, and harm God's kingdom,

Be it therefore resolved: That we, the delegates to the 2008 National Leadership Conference, express our sincere appreciation for the dedicated efforts of all of those individuals who have labored so diligently in preparing this Statement of Faith revision; That we reaffirm our support for the leadership of our movement; That we determine to do all within our power to

maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as we are called to do in Scripture; and That we humbly and prayerfully call upon God to use the revised Statement of Faith for His glory and the building of His kingdom. The motion was seconded and carried by voice vote.

Vice Moderator, Quintin Stieff, led the conference in prayer. ■

EFCA STATEMENT OF FAITH

Adopted by the Conference on June 26, 2008

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures.

Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these

ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen. ■

WAYS OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED

Article 1: The doctrine of "God" clearly gives guidance regarding His "limitless knowledge and sovereign power" (over against open theism). It also acknowledges that God "has purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory."

Article 2: The doctrine of "The Bible" is strengthened by acknowledging that it is "the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged." This is important in a postmodern world that relativizes all truth claims. Moreover, it affirms that every discipline must ultimately submit to the Lordship of Christ as revealed in the Word. This Word is to be "believed," "obeyed" and "trusted."

Article 3: The doctrine of "The Human Condition" is strengthened by explicitly including Adam and Eve as historical persons. Satan is also identified, which acknowledges his historical reality and the reality of evil and the spiritual world. It also affirms that in sin, men and women are "under His [God's] wrath." This truth is being denied by many today.

Article 4: The doctrine of "Jesus Christ" includes a wonderfully rich, theologically profound statement—Jesus is "Israel's promised Messiah." That

becomes the key for Christians as they read and understand the whole Bible.

Article 5: The doctrine of "The Work of Christ" now clearly affirms the substitutionary atonement. Christ is "the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins," not simply "a sacrifice for our sins" (cf. article 3, 1950 SOF).

Article 6: The doctrine of "The Holy Spirit" is strengthened by clarifying the various aspects of His ministry from pre-conversion, to conversion to growth in Christ-likeness. It also emphasizes our union with Christ, our adoption as children and heirs in the family of God. It provides a place for both Arminians and Calvinists in that it emphasizes the essential aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry (He regenerates sinners) while not addressing the specific order of regeneration and faith.

Article 7: The doctrine of "The Church" is strengthened by emphasizing justification "by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone," a key formulation in the rediscovery of the gospel during the Reformation. Moreover, our commitment to the ordinances is stated more strongly, and we acknowledge in a positive and affirming way that they are to be celebrated by believers, with both an individual ("the believer") and corporate emphasis ("the church").

Article 8: The doctrine of "Christian Living," which consists of a statement on orthopraxy, is a great addition to our SOF. It addresses a problem of our day in many Christian circles—orthodoxy divorced from orthopraxy and orthopraxy divorced from orthodoxy (justification and sanctification).

Article 9: The doctrine of "Christ's Return" has been strengthened by referring to Christ's return as "bodily." It consists of a statement of humility regarding the precise timing of Jesus' return ("at a time known only to God"), while it states strongly that the coming of Christ "demands constant expectancy" and is to motivate the believer.

Article 10: The doctrine regarding "Response and Eternal Destiny" completes the SOF by calling people to believe the gospel (through "repentance and receiving"), acknowledges a judgment for all and affirms the bodily resurrection of the dead, with the unbeliever condemned to eternal conscious punishment and the believer to be with the Lord in the new heavens and earth—key biblical truths that are being denied by some today. The statement then ends gloriously on a doxological note, "to the praise of His glorious grace." ■

EXCERPTS FROM EFCA PRESIDENT BILL HAMEL'S ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF SOF DISCUSSION AT THE CONFERENCE:

After presenting three draft revisions for consideration and discussion (December 2005, February 2006 and February 2007), the Board of Directors has now made a recommendation that was formally presented at the 2007 Conference, with debate and action to occur following my opening statement. This proposal comes as a relief to some, and it causes disappointment to others. That is what it means to live together in a world in which none of us has perfect knowledge, and we trust that God is working through the priesthood of all believers to reveal His will. I believe the Proposed Revision, though not as far-reaching as some would like, will still be very

helpful in strengthening our SOF, with language that is more precise, more theologically rich, and which avoids some of the ambiguities that have caused problems in the past.

This has been a long, difficult process but the Board of Directors and the Spiritual Heritage Committee deserve the appreciation of all EFCA leaders. They have led well with incredible grace, at times under immense pressure. . . .

So brothers and sisters, here again is the question: will we affirm a new Statement of Faith that strengthens our commitment to Evangelical, historic theology, or will we miss an opportunity to address key theologi-

cal issues of our day? I am prayerful we will do the former.

[Regarding a] second question, will the EFCA history report that we debated and voted with godly character? When we are passionate, especially regarding the defining statements for our movement, our human nature can become a negative factor in the debate. I am praying for myself and the entire assembly of delegates that we not only make a wise decision, but that the decision will be made in the context of the exhibition of godly character.

May we keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) and manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) so that we will be an aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:14-16), bringing honor to Him and glory to God for the good of all people. ■