



GREENBELT

Community Church

Church Membership

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Who are we?



Our Mission:

“Being Faithful to Christ in Community Together” simply means that we’re becoming and making followers of Jesus Christ —people who are learning to be faithful to Jesus’ leadership, teachings and mission. “Church” in Greek means “Gathering” so by definition the body of Christ must always operate in community together.

Our History:

We never had in our own minds a plan for planting Greenbelt Community church in Clive. In 2020, a number of families were hungry for community and fellowship, so we started gathering in homes. Over time God brought more people to worship together and He began to make it evident that He was forming a church. He then gave us a vision for planting in the city of Clive, an often-overlooked part of Des Moines. In the spring of 2021 God provided a space for us to worship and do ministry in Clive at Crestview Elementary.

Our Denomination:

GCC is a member church in the **Evangelical Free Church of America** (www.efca.org) — a group of 1,500 autonomous churches that work together for the Kingdom of God. With regard to our beliefs, the EFCA “majors on the majors” which makes it a great fit for our church.

Our Staff & Leaders:

GCC is led by a team of **elders**. We have one full-time **Pastor**, and a vision for raising up and equipping people to go and serve Christ wherever God leads.

Our Future:

As we grow with our community, we want to be faithful to the Word of God and to the ministry of disciple-making through relationships. Will you join us in this journey?



Mission:

(What are we doing?)

Being Faithful to Christ in Community Together

Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 13

Motivations:

(Why are we doing this?)

- **Love** for God and **Devotion** to His word
Mark 12:28-34, 2 Timothy 3:10-17, John 8:31-32
- Having a community of **Grace** and **Truth**
John 1:14-18
- Building transformational **Relationships**
Genesis 1:26-27, John 17:10-26
- **Serving** the people around us
Luke 10:25-37

Measures:

(How are we successful?)

- By continuing to teach God's word faithfully
- People are learning to live in community together, having grace toward one another, and speaking truth that aligns with God's Word and Spirit.
- People are connected in relationships that are helping form them more into the image of Christ.
- People are invested in the lives of others, showing mercy, finding and meeting needs wherever possible.

What is the Gospel?

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

What is our initial condition before God? _____

Who acts first in reconciliation? _____

How does God act? _____

For those who have been saved, what is our position before God “in him” _____ and what is part of our new purpose “in him” _____?

RESPONSE OF THE GOSPEL

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Responding to the gospel includes _____ & _____

What must we confess? _____

What must we believe? _____

We are justified not by _____ but by _____ through _____. (Eph 2:8-9)

Share Your Gospel Story

Now is the time to write down and share Your gospel story with us.

What Do We Believe?

Greenbelt Community Church affirms the theological convictions in the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America. For more information on the EFCA please see pp. 13-17.

Statement of Faith

God

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

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

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

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

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

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 all 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

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

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

We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious 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

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.



The Importance of Membership

"Why can't I just be an active participant in my church without becoming an official member? Why is joining the membership of a church so important?"

These are good questions and deserve a thoughtful response. But before dealing with membership, consider why a Christian should at least be actively involved in a local church.

Reasons for Being Actively Involved

1. **Active participation in God's family.** To be active in the local church is a reflection of being a member of the universal Body of Christ. It seems only natural that a person who is part of God's eternal family would also be an active part of a local church in order to associate with fellow believers and fellow-heirs of the kingdom.
2. **Giving, not just receiving.** It is quite easy to attend services and events at a church and just be a recipient. However, one of the greatest means of fulfillment is being involved in some area of ministry. Giving is imperative if life is to be a joyous adventure of following Jesus Christ as Lord. We are blessed in serving and giving to others. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)
3. **Personal spiritual growth.** It is very difficult for any Christian to grow spiritually without encouragement from other Christians. Personal spiritual disciplines, a deeper understanding of the Bible, worship of God, and sharing one's faith are necessary for spiritual maturation. The assistance of other Christians help growth take place in these necessary areas. The church is a family of God's people helping one another to become what God intended them to be.
4. **Fellowship with Christians.** Meaningful relationships with other believers are a big part of the Christian experience. They certainly were for the early church (Acts 2:24), and are strongly encouraged for all Christians. (Hebrews 10:24-25) In-depth and meaningful relationships are often achieved through active participation in a local body of believers. As a by-product, there is a sense of belonging, a sense of being on the "inside" of a very significant group of people, the Body of Christ.

Reasons for Joining the Membership

If you're like most people, the word "membership" is something we associate with junk mail from credit card companies or a high-pressure sales pitch at a gym. When it comes to the Church, it could be viewed as a bureaucratic tool for keeping track of people. Some people consider it a Western idea—an imperialist concept that really should be abandoned. That is understandable, given how many churches treat the concept of membership.

In Matthew 16 and 18 Jesus first began to constitute his church, and he gave his church the authority to speak in His name both to what the gospel is and who is rightly confessing the gospel. This ability to affirm who is confessing the gospel rightly and who is not, is the outline of what we mean by the term "church" membership.

We also see this play out in the book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached the gospel and told people to be baptized. Then, in Acts 2:41 "three thousand souls were added to their number." Even at the beginning, then, the first Christians knew who they were. The life of the church wasn't just a matter of "come when you can." There was a defined, recognized group of people who believed, were baptized and were part of that number. They not only knew each other, but they lived life together. They attended temple (2:46) as more and more were added to their number (2:47) until in Acts 4:4 the number had risen to five thousand (just counting the men). To be part of "the number" wasn't just a lifeless bureaucratic reality, but they were "of one heart and soul" Acts 4:32.

Today, there are a number of reasons why a Christian should go beyond involvement and join the membership of a local church.

1. **Full identification with the church.** Jesus often spoke of the importance of being identified with Him as His disciple. Church membership can be part of that process. Membership is a public statement of allegiance to a church, signifying agreement with what the church believes and values.
2. **Accountability to the church.** Being a member means being willing to live by the beliefs and standards of the church. It means abiding by the church's constitution and by-laws, and submitting to the leadership's authority. Membership includes accountability, which is essential for maintaining integrity within the church. Without membership it is very difficult to implement church discipline and to hold people accountable to the standards of the scriptures.
3. **Accountability and care within the church.** Membership clarifies the primary group of people for whom the church is most responsible when it comes to care and concern. Those who are members are also more accountable to care for each other.
4. **Responsibility for the church.** A member not only enjoys the blessings and benefits of being part of the church, but also accepts the responsibility for helping to fulfill the vision and ministries of the church. When a person is accepted into the church's membership, that new member needs to be involved in the church, such as serving, attending faithfully, praying, caring for others, participating in congregational meetings, giving faithfully, and making oneself available for leadership.

5. **Selection of leadership.** Because members have publicly declared their allegiance to the church, it is from this membership that board members and other key leaders are chosen.
6. **A voice in the denomination and fulfillment of legal requirements.** It is from the membership of the local church that delegates are selected to attend the District and General EFCA Conferences where they make decisions which go beyond the scope of the local church.

Membership is not required to participate within Greenbelt Community Church, but it is highly encouraged for all of the reasons listed above. Membership in no way saves a person or provides a pass into heaven. It is simply an affirmation that a person confesses and believes the true gospel, belongs to the number of believers in that local church, and places themselves under the God appointed authority of that church's leadership.

Perspectives on Membership

How a person functions as a member of a church is determined to a great extent by the person's images of what the church is. (Credit: Rev. Greg R. Scharf)

If the Church is...

Then a good member...

COUNTRY CLUB	Participates, pays dues, has a good time, invites their friends
CORPORATION	Makes a profit, attends board meetings, projects a successful image
SPIRITUAL CO-OP	Does his share to keep the organization afloat, gives in order to get
THEATRE	Comes to be entertained, applauds, critiques
COUNSELING CENTER	Comes to get one's needs met

But if the Church is...

Then a good member...

The Household of God Eph. 2:19-22	Builds life on good foundation, belongs to the family
God's building project 1 Cor. 3:9, Eph. 2:10	Labors with God, produces changed lives
Body/Bride of Christ Eph. 1:22-23, 5:22; 1 Cor. 12	Loves, submits, maintains unity
Centered on Christ, Son of God Matt. 16:13-18	Obeys Christ, is part of His kingdom work
God's flock 1 Pet. 5:2, Acts 20:28	Serves willingly, is led by a shepherd, not self-sufficient
A nation of Holy Priests 1 Pet. 2:9	Lives in accord with God's word and Spirit, worships God and sacrifices for his Kingdom
A center for disciple-making Matt. 28:19-20	Activities and personal lives center around helping people follow Christ



Membership Covenant

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior, and being in agreement with Greenbelt Community Church's statement of mission, motivations, measures, values, and faith, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to become a member of the Greenbelt Community Church family. In so doing, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

Protect the unity of the body

- Demonstrate love toward other members
- Speak highly of others (refuse gossip)
- Follow the church leadership

"Let us therefore make every effort to *do what leads to peace* and to *mutual edification*." (Romans 14:19)

"...stand firm in *one spirit*, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel..." (Philippians 1:27)

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have a sincere love for your brothers, *love one another deeply*, from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22)

"A new command I give you: *Love one another*. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

"*Don't grumble* against each other..." (James 5:9)

"*Do not let any unwholesome talk* come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Ephesians 4:29)

"*Obey your leaders* and *submit to their authority*. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you." (Hebrews 13:17)

Live faithfully among others

- Pray regularly for the body
- Pursue those that do not know Christ
- Engage in gospel-centered relationships

"...*pray* for one another" (James 5:16)

"They devoted themselves to the *apostles' teaching* and to *fellowship*, to the *breaking of bread* and to *prayer*..." (Acts 2:42)

"...*go* and *make disciples* of all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and *teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will *be my witnesses*..." (Acts 1:8)

Serve others in the body

- Bless others with God-given gifts
- Compel others to develop their gifts
- Encourage maturing, Christ-centered relationships

"...so in Christ we who are many form *one body*, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:5)

"Each one should *use whatever gift* he has received to serve others." (1 Peter 4:10) "It was he who gave...some to be pastor and teachers, to prepare God's people for *works of service*, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:11-12)

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also *to the interests of others*. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant." (Philippians 2:4-7)

Support the testimony of the body

- Be present at gatherings
- Honor the name of Christ in your life
- Give regularly, generously, and joyfully

"Let us not give up *meeting together*...but let us *encourage one another*" (Hebrew 10:25) "Every day they continued to *meet together*..." (Acts 2:46)

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner *worthy of the gospel of Christ*" (Philippians 1:27)

"If you love me, you will *obey* what I command" (John 14:15)

"Each man should *give what he has decided* in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20_____

_____ (Printed Name)

_____ (Signature)



The Evangelical Free Church of America

Who We Are

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of some 1,500 autonomous and interdependent churches and church plants united by a mutual commitment to serve our Lord Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and obedience to the Word of God. We are committed to cooperate with one another in ministry and fellowship as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission which Christ has entrusted to His Church. The growing ministry of the EFCA currently extends to some 50 countries of the world.

The terms “Evangelical” and “Free” in our society have come to mean different things to different people. Though they may seem outdated to some, or watered down to others, we invite you to read the definitions below to get a glimpse of why they are foundational to us as a denomination. Though they may be older terms, they are as relevant today as when they were chosen by our EFCA forefathers.

What does “Evangelical” mean?

The term “Evangelical” refers to our faith, our theology. We are committed to the proclamation of the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, and to the Scriptures as being the inspired, inerrant, authoritative and sufficient Word of God.

What does “Free” mean?

The term “Free” refers to our polity, our structure and organization. We are committed to a congregational form of government.

In sum, we are evangelical, which is affirmation of our “like faith,” our theology, our theological convictions (Statement of Faith); we are free, which is an affirmation of our polity, our structure, our organization – we are autonomous, congregationally governed, and interdependent (Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws).



The Historical Background of the EFCA

The Evangelical Free Church of America began in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Its religious and philosophical roots are firmly planted on the foundational principles of two major historical events. The first was the 16th century Protestant Reformation, which changed the religious climate all across Europe. The Church had strayed far from a biblically-based foundation, and reform back to biblical roots was desperately needed. Three revolutionary principles of the Reformation laid the foundation for spiritual renewal and formed the basis for the “free church” movement during the next 250 years.

- ***Sola Scriptura*** (“only the Scriptures”) The Scriptures, not the institutional Church, are the primary authority by which humanity must live and against which truth and error must be judged.
- ***Sola Gratia*** (“only by grace”) Salvation is by grace alone; it is the free unmerited gift of God to a sinful human world.
- ***Sola Fides*** (“only by faith”) The gift of salvation and the benefits of being in God’s eternal family come through personal faith in Christ as Savior, not by any personal good works, the merits of a human mediator, religious ceremonies or institutional efforts.

The second major historical event was a mid-19th century grass-roots movement across Europe to break away from established state-controlled churches, which were in many cases simply arms of government. In the Scandinavian countries, the Lutheran Church acted in such a manner. A number of issues emerged and brought an unsettledness among a growing number.

- ***The dominance of the State over the Church.*** The relationship between the State and the church was unhealthy because the State had far more authority over the Church than did the Scriptures. In most places, the State had authority to dictate what the Church was to believe, how it was to worship, and how it was to be governed.
- ***Deadness of the Church.*** The State Church was the Church of all citizens whether or not they were true believers. The Church’s beliefs and practices were not under the control of believers who sought to follow the scriptures in everything they did. In many churches, the services and ceremonies had become hollow religious experiences with little personal spiritual commitment, involvement in ministries, or evangelistic missions outreach.
- ***Mandatory and open communion.*** Instead of emphasizing the need for a personal faith in Christ, the Church’s emphasis was on attending communion services which were often required by law and granted to everyone regardless of their personal spiritual commitments.



A grass-roots movement began to return churchgoers to a faith founded on the Scriptures. When people came to know Christ personally as Savior and Lord and studied the Bible, they formed some strong convictions regarding the foundational principles for local churches:

- **Church membership** of “believers only, but all believers.” Church membership was comprised only of individuals who professed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and was not to exclude anyone, except when this confession was lacking.
- **A scriptural basis** for theological belief and personal life-style. “Where stands it written?,” was asked on questions of belief and practice.
- **Local church autonomy**, the right of self-government, free from the control of the State.
- **The ordinances** of baptism and communion were only for the those who confessed personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- **Active involvement** of lay people in the work of the church. The ministry of the church was for all believers, not just for the professionally trained pastors.
- **Missionary activity** to reach people who needed to know the good news of the Gospel. Missionaries were needed to be sent to other parts of the world.

So what is the Evangelical Free Church of America? Prior to the 1960s, the few who had even heard of it probably would have responded that it was just a small Scandinavian denomination with little to distinguish it and with minimal influence on what was happening on the larger church scene. Within the past 100 years, and especially in the past 30 years, the Evangelical Free Church of America has grown from a small ethnic-oriented fellowship of churches into one of the fastest-growing small denominations in America. Its membership includes people from all walks of life, all ethnic groups, and almost all denominational backgrounds. They are joined together with one common commitment – that Jesus Christ is Savior of the world, Head of the Church, and Lord of Life.



Distinctives of the EFCA

"In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity. In all things, Jesus Christ."

1. The Evangelical Free Church of America is a believers' church – membership consists of those who have a personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The great heritage of EFCA people around the world includes the fact that fellowship and ministry opportunities in the local church are based solely on one's personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and trusting in Him alone for salvation. Membership requires commitment to sound doctrine as expressed in our Statement of Faith. However, a person is not excluded from membership because he or she does not agree on every fine point of doctrine. Within the EFCA, there is allowance for legitimate differences of understanding in some areas of doctrine.

2. The Evangelical Free Church of America is evangelical – we are committed to the inerrancy and authority of the Bible and the essentials of the gospel.

The EFCA was born out of a heritage of commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. We have deep convictions based on the authority of God's Word, but we do not draw battle lines over minor points. Nor do we make minor issues of doctrine a test of fellowship in the local church. We are evangelical. We believe in separated living and personal holiness, but we are not separatists.

3. The Evangelical Free Church of America embraces a humble orthodoxy in partnership with others of like faith.

We believe in the spiritual unity of the Church though not necessarily in structural union. We join with other Christians and other denominations of like, precious faith in common goals and ministries to accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. But we believe that there is strength in diversity and that it is important to preserve our distinctives. We recognize that union in structure does not guarantee unity of spirit. Our foremost concern is unity of spirit with our Lord, with each other and with other Christians.

4. The Evangelical Free Church of America believes in Christian freedom with responsibility and accountability.

We believe in Christian liberty, but freedom always has its limitations. Responsible Christians do not abuse freedom. The apostle Paul wrote forcefully about Christian liberty in the Book of

Galatians. He shattered the legalists with the doctrine of grace. But in First and Second Corinthians and Romans, the apostle also rebuked believers when liberty was abused. He declared boldly the principles of Christian liberty, but spoke with equal forcefulness about Christian accountability. The EFCA desires to preserve our freedom in Christ. We encourage our people to be responsible, godly men, women and young people who desire to live under the control of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the principles and precepts of God's Word, and in harmony with God's will for life as revealed in Scriptures.

5. The Evangelical Free Church of America believes in both the rational and relational, i.e. the head and the heart, dimensions of Christianity.

We believe the Scriptures must be applied to our individual lives with warmth of heart, warmth of message and warmth of concern. We believe it is essential to have solid, biblical content in our doctrinal understanding of faith, but it is equally important to have a dynamic, vital relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son and to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. Sound Christian doctrine must be coupled with dynamic Christian experience. Ours is a ministry of love and spiritual reconciliation.

6. The Evangelical Free Church of America affirms the right of each local church to govern its own affairs with a spirit of interdependency with other churches.

The EFCA is committed to a congregational form of government as stated in our Articles of Incorporation: "*The Evangelical Free Church of America shall be an association and fellowship of autonomous but interdependent congregations of like faith and congregational government...*" Strong pastoral leadership coupled with discerning and well-equipped Christian lay people can produce spiritual growth as well as significant church growth. While the EFCA affirms the right of each local church to govern its own affairs, we also believe in the biblical values of interdependence and cooperation.

We are a movement of churches committed to working with one another in order to fulfill the Great Commission in the United States and abroad. This is only possible when there are strong ties with other EFCA churches, with local district organizations and with the national EFCA ministries.