

# DISTINCTIVES OF THE



## **1. The Evangelical Free Church is inclusive not exclusive.**

The great heritage of the Evangelical Free Church 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, 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 Evangelical Free Church, there is allowance for legitimate differences of understanding in some areas of doctrine.

## **2. The Evangelical Free Church is evangelical but not separatistic.**

The Evangelical Free Church 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 separatist.

## **3. The Evangelical Free Church is ecumenical in spirit though not in structure.**

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 the spirit with our Lord, with each other and with other Christians.

## **4. The Evangelical Free Church believes in liberty 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 Evangelical Free Church desires to preserve our freedom in Christ and 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 the Scriptures.

**5. The Evangelical Free Church believes in both the rational and relational 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 reconciliation.

**6. The Evangelical Free Church affirms the right of each local church to govern its own affairs.**

The Evangelical Free Church is committed to a congregational form of government as stated in Article 10 of our Confession of Faith: "We believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Head of the Church and that every local church has the right, under Christ, to decide and govern its own affairs."

Strong pastoral leadership coupled with discerning and well-equipped Christian lay people can produce spiritual growth as well as significant church growth. The New Testament emphasizes the importance of the Body of Christ ministering through the spiritual gifts that have been given to each believer. "Congregational in government" means that each local church governs its own affairs. Within the local church, the highest human authority rests in the congregation.