

# **Constitution and Bylaws of Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Atlanta, Inc**

## **PREAMBLE**

Whereas, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Atlanta Inc. (hereafter "the Church") has experienced significant growth since its inception nearly four decades ago; and

Whereas, such growth has necessitated the restructuring of the Church's organization and governance to enhance and revitalize its capacity to efficiently meet the evolving needs of its congregants;

Now, therefore, for the purpose of incorporating and legalizing the intended restructuring, we, the members of the Church, hereby resolve that the existing constitution and bylaws be repealed and replaced by this revised constitution and bylaws.

# CONSTITUTION

## ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this congregation shall be **Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Atlanta, Inc.**, hereafter referred to as “the Church”.

## ARTICLE II. OFFICES

### Section 1. Principal Office

The principal office for the transaction of the business of the church, referred to as the 'principal executive office,' is located at 4550 Greer Circle, Stone Mountain, Dekalb County, Georgia, 30084. The Board of Elders retains the authority to change the location of the principal office. Any change in location shall be recorded by the secretary in these bylaws by amending this section to reflect the new location.

### Section 2. Other Offices

The Board of Elders may, at any time, establish branch or subordinate offices at any place or places where the church is qualified to conduct business.

## ARTICLE III. PURPOSE, MISSION, VISION, AND OBJECTIVES

### Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Church shall be to engage in religious, charitable, and educational activities within the scope of Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code of 1986 (or corresponding provisions of any subsequent United States Revenue Law). This includes establishing and maintaining a place of worship for Almighty God, our Heavenly Father; providing Christian fellowship for those of like precious faith; honoring the Holy Spirit in accordance with our distinctive testimony; and assuming our share of responsibility and privilege in propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ through all available means.

### Section 2. Vision

The Church envisions a spiritually enriched community, united in faith and ignited by the transformative power of God's love and grace. We aspire to be a

beacon of Christian values, where every individual engages in spreading the message of Christ's salvation and contributes to a world uplifted by moral integrity and divine purpose.

### **Section 3. Mission**

The mission of the Church is to faithfully follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit as revealed through the unchangeable and authoritative Word of God. Our aim is to equip and encourage disciples of Christ in their spiritual journey, while also investing in and preparing the next generation to uphold and advance the faith. United by these core pillars, we are dedicated to worshiping and glorifying God, do our utmost to fulfill the Great Commission by sharing the Gospel, and fostering a strong, resilient community of faith.

### **Section 4. Objectives and Powers**

#### **Section 4.1 Objectives**

The objectives of this Church shall be:

1. **Worship and Community Building:** To promote worship and Christ-centered community building activities that reflect our vision and mission, as measured by attendance and engagement.
2. **Spiritual Growth:** To provide opportunities and resources for members to deepen their relationship with God, as measured by increased participation in spiritual programs and events. To equip and encourage disciples of Christ through mentorship, Bible studies, and discipleship programs, as measured by regular assessments of spiritual growth and knowledge.
3. **Youth and Next Generation Ministry:** To invest in youth and prepare the next generation to carry the torch of faith into the future, as measured by participation in youth-focused activities, spiritual development, and the involvement of the youth in the church leadership.
4. **Evangelism and Outreach:** To actively engage in evangelism and outreach, as measured by the number of outreach events, individuals reached and souls added to the Kingdom.

## Section 4.2 Powers

The powers of this Church, in order to carry out its objectives, shall be:

1. To purchase or acquire, by gift, bequest, or otherwise, either directly or as a trustee, and to own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or otherwise dispose of any real estate or chattels as may be necessary for the furtherance of its purposes.
2. To enter into, make, perform, and carry out contracts of every kind for any lawful purpose, without limit as to amount.
3. To exercise and enjoy all other rights, privileges, and responsibilities requisite or appropriate to carry out its purposes.

## ARTICLE IV. MEANS OF ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

### Section 1. Means

The church shall accomplish its objectives through the following means:

1. **Proclaiming the Good News of Salvation:** Communicating the message of salvation to all through various methods, as supported by Romans 5:9, 2 Corinthians 5:15-21, and Titus 3:5.
2. **Educating Believers in God's Word:** Teaching believers the truth of God's Word, in line with Romans 12:4-5, Ephesians 4:4, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, and 1 John 5:11-12.
3. **Strengthening Faith and Fellowship:** Enhancing the faith and fellowship of the church community through prayer, counseling, Bible study, and humanitarian efforts, as exemplified in Acts 2:41-42, 1:14, 11:21-16, and Ephesians 4:3-4.
4. **Developing Educational and Social Initiatives:** Creating initiatives that are rooted in Christian values and cater to both educational and social needs.
5. **Investing in the Next Generation:** Supporting and preparing the next generation for thriving ministry roles and actively involving them in church leadership.
6. **Establishing New Churches and Ministries:** Forming new churches, ministries, and educational institutions, and acquiring properties through renting, leasing, or purchasing.

## **Section 2. Nonpartisan Activities**

1. In compliance with the Georgia Nonprofit Corporation Code and for the religious purposes under which it has been established, the church shall operate as a nonprofit and nonpartisan entity.
2. No substantial part of the church's activities shall involve the publication or dissemination of materials aimed at influencing legislation. Furthermore, the church shall not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of, or against, any candidate for public office, or for or against any cause or measure being submitted to the public for a vote.
3. The church shall not engage, except to an insubstantial degree, in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of its primary purposes.

## **ARTICLE V. STATEMENT OF FAITH & BASIC BELIEFS**

### **Section 1: Scriptures**

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and serves as the record of God's revelation of Himself to humanity. It is an authoritative, perfect, reliable, and inerrant Word of God. (II Peter 1:21; II Samuel 23:2; II Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 5:18; Romans 16:26; Isaiah 34:16; Deuteronomy 29:29)

### **Section 2: God**

The Triune God is the one true God who exists eternally as three distinct Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet remains one in nature, essence, and divine being. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being who is self-existent and sovereign over all. As the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, He embodies the fullness of divine truth. (Isaiah 40:23; Genesis 1:1; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 111:9; Isaiah 43:1; Hebrews 1:3; Matthew 19:26; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 28:19–20).

#### **Section 2.1: God the Father**

God the Father is Almighty and eternal, creator of all things, both visible and invisible (Gen. 1:1-2; 7; I Cor. 8:6; II Cor. 6:18; I Tim. 1:17)

## **Section 2.2 - God the Son**

God the Son is the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary. He is fully God and fully man, who suffered and died on the cross for the sins of humanity, was buried, bodily rose from the dead, appeared to people, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for humanity. He will come again with great power and glory. (John 1:1; Philippians 2:6; John 14:9; Isaiah 7:12; Luke 1:31; Hebrews 4:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Timothy 2:5, 3:16; Romans 3:24-25; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9, 11, 10:42; Revelation 22:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:15; John 1:10)

## **Section 2.3 - God the Holy Spirit**

God the Holy Spirit is the Comforter who inspired the prophets and other ministers in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, He indwells, empowers, and distributes spiritual gifts for the church's spiritual edification. He also convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. (John 14:26; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11-12; John 16:8)

## **Section 3. Man**

Man was created by God in His own image, making humanity the pinnacle of His creation. Gifted with freedom of choice by the Creator, man succumbed to temptation from Satan, disobeyed God's command, and thus brought sin and death upon all generations. Yet, salvation is offered solely by God's grace, received through faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Genesis 1:26-30; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:1-24; Psalm 8:4-6; Hebrews 2:6-8; Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22)

## **Section 4. Salvation**

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who obtained eternal redemption for the believer through His own blood. In its broadest sense, salvation includes Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification. (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:68-69; John 1:11-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 3:23-25; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Romans 8:29-30; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 1:17, 4:11-16; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 5:10)

## **Section 5. The Church**

The church is a local assembly of born-again believers in whom Christ dwells by the Holy Spirit. They are associated, for the Glory of God, by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the ordinances of Christ, and committed to carrying out the Great Commission. It is an autonomous body with its own administration that operates in accordance with the Word of God. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Matthew 16:15-19; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20-22; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:41-42, 13:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Matthew 26:26-28, 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

## **Section 6. Water Baptism**

The ordinance of water baptism is to be observed by all who have truly repented and believed in Christ as Savior and Lord in their hearts. In doing so, they declare to the world that they have died with Jesus and have been raised with Him to walk in the newness of life. (Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 16:16; Acts 10:47-48; Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:12)

## **Section 7. The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper, consisting of bread and the fruit of the vine, symbolizes our communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. It serves as a memorial of His suffering and death and a proclamation of His promised return. This practice is commanded for all believers to observe "until He comes." (2 Peter 1:4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 22:19-20)

## **Section 8. Last Things**

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth. The dead will be raised, and Christ will judge all people in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. (Acts 1:11; Titus 2:13; Isaiah 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Matthew 24:29-30; Revelation 22:12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Matthew 25:34, 41; Revelation 20:15)

## **Section 9. Christian Unity**

Living in harmony with other believers is the teaching of the New Testament. Every believer should strive to live in fellowship with one another. It is also the responsibility of each member to put an end to all gossip. (1 Corinthians 12:13-27; Ephesians 4:1-32; Romans 16:17)

## **Section 10. Family/Marriage**

God created mankind, male and female—one man and one woman—man from the dust of the ground and woman from a rib taken from man's side, as determined at conception and revealed in their biological sex. These two distinct, complementary sexes together reflect His image. God established the first family. We believe that one man should be married to one woman and one woman to one man. This union provides the sole context for sexual expression and conduct. (Genesis 1:27; 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5; Hebrews 13:4; Mark 10:6-9)

## **ARTICLE VI. CHURCH AUTONOMY**

### **Section 1. Relationship**

No external institutions or organizations of any kind shall interfere with the church's objectives and operations. Consequently, the church shall not be used for the distribution of any printed materials, tapes, audiovisual materials, etc., not produced by the congregation, without the prior knowledge and approval of the church. However, the church is free to receive financial or material support from any individual or organization.

### **Section 2. Affiliations**

The Church is an autonomous entity and maintains the right to govern its own affairs independent of any denominational control. While we are not subjected to the control of any ecclesiastical body, we recognize and sustain the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among churches of like minded. Recognizing the benefits of cooperation with other churches and organizations in world missions that share and support the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith, the Church retains full power and authority to develop, implement, or terminate affiliations with any organizations to facilitate the achievement of the mission of the Church. The Board of Elders will authorize

future affiliations, cooperations, or terminations.

### **Section 3. Dedication of Assets**

The properties and assets of this church are irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes. No part of the net earnings, properties, or assets of this church, upon dissolution or otherwise, shall insure to the benefit of any member of this congregation or its committees. In the event of liquidation or dissolution, all properties, assets, and obligations of the church shall be distributed and paid over to an organization committed to the exempt purposes as specified in Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3).

## **ARTICLE VII. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. The Standard of Membership**

The standard of membership of this congregation shall be:

1. Evidence of a genuine experience in regeneration (the new birth) (John 1:12 & 13; 3:3-8; I Peter 1:18-25).
2. Evidence of a consistent Christian life (Romans 6:4; 8:1-4; 13:13 & 14; Ephesians 4:17-32; 5:1,2 & 15; I John 1:6 & 7).
3. Full subscription to the tenets of faith as set forth in the Bylaws.
4. Willingness to contribute regularly to the support of the church according to one's ability.

### **Section 2. Membership Roll**

The Church shall maintain an official Membership Roll that includes the names of all members in good standing, as set forth in the Bylaws.

1. The Membership Roll shall be established and maintained by the Church Administration Coordinator under the oversight of the Board of Elders.
2. The Membership Roll shall be reviewed and updated at least semi-annually. Updates shall include the addition of new members, removal of inactive or disqualified members, and any necessary corrections.
3. Access and Transparency: A current copy of the Membership Roll shall be made readily available to the Pastor(s) and Elder Board.

### **Section 3. Voting Membership**

All those who meet the standards for membership as described in Article VII, Section 1, shall constitute the legal voting membership of the congregation, provided that:

1. They are eighteen (18) years of age or over.
2. They are living consistent Christian lives.
3. They are in agreement with the church's tenets of faith.

The term 'voting' refers to casting ballots or expressing consensus exclusively on **property matters** that necessitate formal decision-making within the church, and specifically **excludes matters of spiritual guidance or church governance and leadership**.

### **Section 4. Junior Membership**

There shall be a non-voting junior membership for young people under eighteen (18) years of age who give evidence of the new birth, having received Christ as a personal savior, and who meet the standards for membership as described in Article VII, Section 1.

## **ARTICLE VIII. BOARD OF ELDERS, OFFICERS, DEACONS**

### **Section 1. Board of Elders**

The Church shall have a Board of Elders consisting of Elders, Pastors, other Officers, and the Head Deacon. The Board of Elders will conduct the governance and decision-making of the church and be responsible to the congregation, acting subject to the constitution and bylaws.

### **Section 2. Officers**

The officers of the congregation shall be the Lead Pastor, the Vice-Lead Pastor, the Secretary, and the Chief Financial Officer. The Secretary and the Chief Financial Officer shall be approved by the Board of Elders upon the recommendation of the Lead Pastor and shall serve as officers of the church as set forth in the bylaws. The church may also have other officers designated by the Board of Elders.

### **Section 3. Executive Leadership Team**

The Church's Executive Leadership Team shall include all Pastoral staff members,

as well as the Officers of the church. They are entrusted with the responsibility for both the spiritual leadership and the daily management of the church, subject to the constitution and bylaws.

#### **Section 4. English Speaking Leader**

The appointed, full-time ministers leading the English-speaking congregation, and the Children's Ministry, if different, shall hold voting positions on the Board of Elders. Their role on the board is vital in directly representing the priorities and needs of the next generation, facilitating comprehensive decision-making within the church community.

#### **Section 5. Deacons**

The congregation shall have deacons, whose appointment, qualification, and responsibilities shall be as set forth in the bylaws and in accordance with the Bible, specifically as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-10.

### **ARTICLE IX. Meetings**

#### **Section 1. Public Worship**

The Church will hold worship services on Sundays and other meetings throughout the week for worship, evangelism, teaching, prayer, fellowship, and other spiritual activities as directed by the Executive Leadership Team.

#### **Section 2. Board Meeting**

The Board of Elders shall have a regular meeting cadence set and agreed upon by the Board of Elders. Notice of the time, place, and agenda of such meetings shall be given by the Lead Pastor or the Secretary at least one week prior to the meeting. A special meeting of the Board may be called when necessary, after notice has been given by the Lead Pastor or by the Secretary.

##### **Section 2.1. Board Quorum**

The Board of Elders may not transact business unless a quorum of 50% of the members qualified to vote are present. All matters presented to the Board for vote shall be decided by a majority vote of members present and voting, unless stated otherwise in the bylaws.

### **Section 3. Congregational Meeting**

There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation consisting of eligible members. The date, time, and venue of congregational meetings will be announced through church communication channels such as the bulletin, website, etc., and communicated during the Sunday worship service, ensuring a minimum two-week notice and at least two separate announcements.

The following reports will be read during the annual meeting of the congregation:

1. The full year financial report of the church, including income and expenses as well as performance against the year's budget.
2. The current forecasted budget of the following year.
3. An update on all major initiatives as decided by the board.
4. Any additional reports as requested and approved by the officers.

#### **Section 3.1. Special Congregational Meeting**

Special business meetings of the congregation may be called when necessary after proper notice has been given as directed by the Board of Elders.

#### **Section 3.2. Quorum**

At any regular or special congregation meeting, one-third of the members listed in the membership rolls shall be needed. If a quorum isn't met, the meeting will be adjourned until further notice.

#### **Section 3.3. Moderator**

The Chairman, or Vice-Chairman of the Board of Elders, or their Representative if both are unavailable, shall preside as Moderator at all Members' Meetings. In the absence of the Moderator or if the matter at hand concerns the lead pastor himself, the vice lead pastor will moderate the meetings.

#### **Section 3.4. Voting Requirement**

Congregational Meetings shall proceed according to a reasonable order, and the Members present shall constitute a quorum to do business. Motions shall be adopted upon the agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question, except on matters otherwise provided for in this constitution. Members must be physically present to vote. For the purposes of this Constitution, "present" shall be defined as physically present. All meetings in the church shall follow the above rule of order. In case of conflict with the bylaw, the bylaw takes

precedence. The moderator will interpret any rule if required.

## **ARTICLE X. DEPARTMENTS AND COMMITTEES**

### **Section 1. Departments**

As needs arise, departments and committees may be established by the Board of Elders. Each department shall have documented governing policies, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Board.

### **Section 2. Relationship**

All departments and committees shall be subordinate to the Board of Elders and shall contribute to the harmony and development of the whole church. They shall be under the general supervision of the Board, and the Lead Pastor shall be an ex-officio member and chairman of all committees and departments.

### **Section 3. Independent Ministries**

If a full-time minister of the church wishes to establish an independent ministry, he or she must submit a written proposal and request to the Board of Elders. The Board will prayerfully examine and evaluate the proposal and provide approval. Should the Board determine that the ministry could adversely impact the duties of the minister with the church, they will decline the proposal, and the minister shall not proceed with establishing the ministry.

## **ARTICLE XI. FINANCES**

The Church shall maintain a set of financial management policies and procedures establishing principles for and guiding its operation. The Finance Committee, in cooperation with the Deacons as described in the Bylaws, will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Financial Policy Manual. Any changes to the Financial Policy and Procedure Manual will need to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Elders. The financial management policies should articulate the purpose and vision of the Church's financial management, aligning it with the overall mission and values of the church, while maintaining full compliance with government and regulatory requirements.

## **ARTICLE XII. PROPERTY**

All property of the church shall be deeded to the church and held in its name. No immovable property (real estate) of the church shall be sold, mortgaged, or otherwise disposed of without approval by a vote of at least two-thirds of the voting membership present at a regular or special meeting called for this

purpose, with a quorum present as provided by the bylaws. The pastor and the secretary shall certify in such conveyance or mortgage that the same has been duly authorized and recommended by a vote of the congregation. Such certificate shall be held to be conclusive evidence thereof. Property other than real estate may be sold, mortgaged, leased, or otherwise disposed of by the approval of the majority vote of the Board.

### **ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the voting members present at a duly called congregational meeting, provided that written notice of the proposed amendment is distributed to all voting members at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

### **ARTICLE XIV DISSOLUTION**

Upon the dissolution of the Church, the Board of Elders shall, after the payment of all liabilities of the Church, dispose of all the assets of the Church exclusively for the purposes of the Church in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious or scientific purposes as shall qualify as an exempt corporation or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or of the corresponding provisions of any future United States Revenue Law) as the Board of Elders shall determine.

No part of the net earnings of the Church shall be to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, officers, or any person except that the Church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered, and to make payments in the furtherance of the Church. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the Articles of Incorporation or these bylaws of the Church, the Church shall not carry on any activity not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from Federal Income Tax, under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, (\*or by the corresponding section of any future Revenue Code of the United States of America) or (b) by a corporation, contributions of which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding section of any future United States Revenue Law).