



WHO WE ARE



EVANGELICAL FRIENDS
CHURCH SOUTHWEST

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Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know their master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

John 15:13-17 (TNIV)

The following is an expression of what we believe God has called us to be as a network of churches.

Biblical Foundation – Carrying out the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment

Values

We order our lives together, as congregations, around these convictions. These convictions influence how we interact with one another.

Jesus - Right Here, Right Now – This is a core belief and value we live by. We are confident that the Lord Jesus Christ is right here, right now, and will teach us and empower us to live out this reality, ushering in the Kingdom of God – right here, right now. This value is deeply embedded in Scripture and has been a defining conviction of Christ-followers from the very inception of the Church. It is also profoundly embraced by our spiritual ancestors. We strive to live out this truth with passion and single-minded intentionality.

Unity – We are better together than we are alone. This means we pray for one another, depend on one another and serve one another. I celebrate God's victories for you, as well as walk through difficult times with you. You do the same for me. My success is your success and visa versa. We listen and respect each other and resolve conflict appropriately

Compassion – This is the heart of Christ and flows through everything that he did and hopes to do through us. It compels us to care about those who do not know God or life as he meant it to be lived. It pushes us to adopt a relational approach to ministry, to pray for workers, to go to the hurting, to minister outside of ourselves, to reach out to neighbors and to attempt to usher in God's Kingdom in righteousness and justice.

Sacrifice – We exist for others. While we might have rights, we lay them down for the sake of others. We give up acting on our own personal freedoms for the good of others. We examine our actions to be sure that what we do does not hinder the well-being of others, and is truly a blessing to them. We are generous in spirit. We give cheerfully for the sake of others.

Liberty – We recognize that each person, group and church has a distinct place in God's Kingdom. The Lord may direct each of us in different ways. We also know that individuals cannot and should not manage every decision that a group may face. So, we trust one another to hear and follow God's direction. We give God the liberty to lead. In turn, without micro-managing or second guessing, we give others the freedom to ask clarifying questions and bring accountability.

Cultural Relevance – Forms may change; the message does not. We understand and act upon the truth that distinct cultures (and even individuals) have different ways of looking at life. We also understand the need for the Kingdom of God to saturate that culture (or individual life). We, then, are flexible with our methods of ushering in the Kingdom of God, yet remain uncompromising in living it out and proclaiming it.

Transformation – We live out and proclaim the gospel boldly and teach others to do the same. The essence of the Kingdom is transformation. The Gospel is power for salvation and transformation. This power permeates deep into the individual soul, displacing selfishness and placing the love of Christ in its place. This love then compels us to love others with the same passion that Christ did. So then, out of this great love, we help and grow and train others to live in this love.

Mission Statement

“We seek to live our lives as Jesus would live if He were in our shoes and together fuel a worldwide church multiplication movement that our grandchildren’s grandchildren will be compelled to expand.”

As an integral part of fulfilling this mission, we...

Foster and Deepen Connectedness – we work together and get along so that we can pursue God’s mission effectively and aggressively. Meaningful connections create a “chemistry” between us that catapults ministry to new levels of helpfulness. Without this sense of unity, we are left to question why we are together. With it, we are truly able to accomplish more together than we could by ourselves.

Key Ministry Areas

Make and Multiply Disciples – Develop patterns for helping people learn how to experience “Jesus - Right Here, Right Now.”

Develop and Multiply Leaders – Implement a coaching and mentoring process within every church that mobilizes and equips servants for ministry.

Start and Multiply Groups, Congregations, Regions and Movements – Cultivate healthy environments and supportive systems that result in an ever-expanding harvest.

Vision

This is God's Kingdom we are talking about. If we attempt this alone, these ideas are clearly beyond our reach. If we tap into Jesus, it is likely He will do above and beyond what we could ask for or imagine.

Imagine, in the not-so-distant future...

Our congregations are comprised of vibrant Christ-followers. They understand love, and are known as people with big, warm hearts. They give of themselves, swimming against the flow of self promotion and individualism. They experience a joy that is surpassed only by their ability to do and say the appropriate thing at the suitable moment. They build up and serve anyone around them. It's not that they don't experience conflict; they do. But they understand that loving one another does not mean the absence of conflict, but rather the unrelenting commitment to resolving conflict.

Husbands love their wives and are accurate representations of Christ's love for the Church. Wives respect their husbands and follow their Godly leadership. They are good parents, not provoking their children, but expressing their love in ways that the children perceive as loving. Employers esteem their employees who in turn, do their work as unto the Lord.

Christians in our churches make a difference in their community. They serve their neighbors in the right way at the right time. These Christ-followers are diligent about expanding the Kingdom of God beyond their own sphere of influence. The world is their concern, and they pray, give, send and go in such a way that God's love is keenly demonstrated and embraced by people around the world.

The leaders in these churches are healthy and fulfilled. They are living out their primary objective of equipping people for ministry. It is not that they are without problems. Certainly they confront challenges. However, they face these challenges with confidence that flows out of a resilient connection to the True Vine. They find emotional and spiritual support in this connection, but also from vibrant relationships with other “equippers.”

These equippers (those who equip others for ministry as in Ephesians 4:11) are comfortable with the way God has wired them, and are becoming more and more adept at serving out of their God-given strengths. Christ is actively molding their character. They are gaining mastery in ministry skills, and they learn voraciously. They model the way of Christ and of self-sacrificial leadership. Because of this, they choose spiritual authority as their primary power base. They are appreciated by those they serve and are generously provided for.

Our churches mirror their members. They are oases of truth and grace, bound together by God’s love. Churches are so adept at loving one another that they grow significantly through conversion. Members clearly understand the processes of spiritual growth, as well as the nature of leadership. Churches themselves are committed to conversion growth, and are innovative in both drawing unbelievers to their midst and going out into the community to have an impact.

Churches develop leaders because they have intentional and purposeful pathways for leaders to grow. They provide a number of options for these leaders to learn because of the multiplication mindset that permeates the way they do ministry. They multiply groups, worship experiences, classes and even churches. There is a steady stream of new leaders that have recognized God’s call on their life, have received the training they require and are released for effective ministry. They, in turn, pass the baton of ministry on to others.

And so, these equippers are sent out. Certainly they are sent to many different corners of the world. However, many are sent to the areas of the world that the Lord has given us specific responsibility to reach. Some plant churches in the southwest United States. They may be a part of the Southern California region of EFCSW, or of the Northern California region or of the Arizona region. Nevada falls within our area of direct influence as well.

Others go as missionaries to Southeast Asia. These leaders understand and live out the need to pass the baton of leadership to national leaders, and are experts at doing so. Their approach demonstrates the power of the Gospel and learns to address all kinds of human need without creating dependence or forgetting the primacy of addressing the spiritual need.

In all of this, our churches have developed a sense of common purpose and affection for one another that allows us to break through barriers that often naturally exist. Cultural and language barriers are breached. Large and small churches care deeply for one another, learning from one another, spurring one another on, loving one another. We are bound together by the conviction that the Lord Jesus is actively at work in the other, and that we have been given a clear mission by the Lord to transform our communities, our region and the world. Our interaction is characterized by our mutual support of one another, not by competitiveness.

We are a joyful people. We understand that God's grace permeates any kind of fruitfulness we experience. We are riding the wave of His work. Sacrifice and difficulty are embraced with faith, determination and expectation. God is at work even in challenges. We surrender to him, and his grace fills our lives. We experience a level of fruitfulness well above and beyond what we could ever imagine. We are left... in awe of our Lord.

Our Affirmation of Faith

We believe in the one holy and loving God, who exists eternally in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and the final Judge of everyone who lives within it.

We believe in the deity and the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is at the same time fully God and fully man. We believe in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood on Calvary's cross, in His bodily resurrection from the dead, in His ascension, in His being seated (enthroned) at the right hand of the heavenly Father, and in His second coming to earth in power and great glory.

We believe the Bible, the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the only inspired, infallible, authoritative, written word of God. God is the source of truth and apart from His revelation no spiritual insights or principles are binding upon us. The Holy Spirit illuminates the scriptures and applies their truth to our lives, but never leads individuals or groups contrary to their teachings. We are obligated to obey what the scriptures teach and to subject all our doctrines and traditions to their authority.

We believe that God created the human being, male and female, in His own image. When Adam and Eve fell into disobedience and rebellion toward God, they were alienated from Him and the perfect image of God was warped, marred, stained and corrupted. As a result all people inherit a pervasive sinfulness that invades every part of their beings. Further, all people sin by their own willful choices, falling short of both their own personal standards and also of God's moral law. This moral depravity means that everyone is sinful and separated from God and needs to be redeemed and regenerated through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross, shedding His blood for us and for our sins and rose again from the dead to make us right with God. A person receives salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and not by being good enough to deserve it. To those who receive Christ, God grants forgiveness of sins,

the gift of eternal life and ultimately the resurrection of the body to live forever in the new heavens and the new earth. Rejecting Jesus Christ and His provision for salvation and forgiveness of sin results in the penalty of eternal death in hell. The presence of saving faith is revealed by a life lived in obedience to the will of God and results in the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do.

We believe that Christ lives in us and we live in Him. Living in this union with Christ we find our true identity in Him. We are crucified, buried, made alive, raised up and seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father. As a result our actual identity is no longer in outward appearances such as performance, looks, intelligence, ability or wealth but rather that each of us is a child of God, a new creation in Christ Jesus. We believe that we can experience Christ directly and intimately without the intervention of human priests or required rituals. Our experience is that we commune with Christ daily as Lord, Savior, Teacher and Friend.

We believe the Holy Spirit lives within every person who truly receives Jesus Christ. He satisfies our deepest longings for grace, truth, love, power and righteousness. We respond to these riches of Christ with our faith, hope, love, obedience and holy living. The Holy Spirit counsels and helps the Christian to train for godly living. He also gives one or more spiritual gifts to every saint (Christian) to serve God with a fruitful life. Within each true believer in Christ He grows the fruit of loving character qualities. We believe that every Christian is commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit, yielding heart, mind, spirit, soul and body as God's holy temple.

We believe that in living union with Christ every Christian has the authority to overcome the three major spiritual enemies of this life - the world, the flesh and the devil. The world is the system that is organized to leave God out and to applaud those who violate Christian values. The flesh is the inner weakness within each of us that finds temptation attractive and desires what is evil instead of what is good. The devil is Satan and his forces of evil, fallen angels sometimes called demons, that deceive, accuse and harass Christians. Christ has already defeated Satan and all his evil powers at the cross and in

the resurrection. Our Lord Jesus is now exalted to the highest place with absolute authority over all His enemies. In Christ we have all the resources we need to win the battle for our minds and overcome the evil one. These resources included God's Spirit, God's Word, God's works, and God's people.

We believe the church is composed of all people who through repentance and faith receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become His devoted followers in fellowship with like-minded believers. This church, universal in scope, unites all true Christians in spirit to love one another, live holy lives and proclaim the gospel to all the world. It has local expressions in individual congregations and in families of churches called denominations or movements. Our denomination is called Friends, from the words of Jesus, "You are my friends if you do what I command you. (John 15:16 NIV)." The church gathers to worship God, encourage believers, preach the gospel, teach the Bible, equip the saints, serve the needy, and pray for God's best. The church then fans out into the community and the world to demonstrate the love of Christ and the presence of His reign in the daily routines and crises of life. As a body the church uses its material, organizational and spiritual resources to obey its Head, even Jesus Christ until His coming kingdom finds fulfillment in His return.

We believe in the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and all the great events of the end times prophesied in scripture. We refuse to divide fellowship over disputed questions of eschatology that are not clear in the scriptures. We believe in the great resurrection of both the saved and the lost. We believe everyone will stand before Christ in the final judgment to receive their just due. Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will inherit their eternal rewards in the new heavens and the new earth, freed forever from selfishness, sin, demonic influence, control and all evil. The finally unrepentant wicked will suffer the eternal condemnation of hell prepared for the devil and his angels. At that time Christ will reign fully over the restored universe and God the Father will be fully glorified.

We believe the chief end of men and women is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

What is Evangelical Friends Church Southwest?

EFCSW is a network of churches filled with people who believe that we are better together than we are by ourselves. We share resources and work collectively to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment. Together, we help each other serve one another and reach out to our communities. We develop leaders, send missionaries and start new churches nearby and around the world.

Resources for churches

By being a part of any EFCSW affiliated church, you enjoy many benefits. Your church can receive individual and customized consultation to help it reach its God given vision. Training for Elders and Leaders, hands-on consultation for setting up financial systems, help with conflict resolution, direction for seeking pastoral leadership, aid in acquiring capital funds and loans, encouragement for leaders and pastors, and assistance in strategic planning are just a few of the benefits established churches receive.

Leadership Development

Leadership development is an emphasis as well. Established leaders can be paired with a coach or in peer coaching relationships which helps them reach their God-given potential. Churches can be led in processes which will help them forge systems for encouraging emerging leaders to get the training and individual mentoring they need. Seminary education, along with less traditional forms of education for leaders is also readily available. EFCSW provides spiritual direction for those who are exploring a call to ministry in their own lives as well.

Church Planting

Churches are encouraged to reach out to communities beyond their own. They receive ongoing instruction on how to plant a daughter church. Church planters are provided a coach to walk them through the church planting process. Start-up funds are contributed to new church plants. Church planter family care is a part of every start-up church.

Church planting models include conventional church plants as well as “Simple Church” plants and multi-site planting.

Missions

We also, together, support missions work in Central America, Southeast Asia and Indonesia. These missionaries come from EFCSW churches and are supported and cared for by our regional staff and groups of volunteers from these same churches. Cooperation with other Evangelical Friends across North America through Evangelical Friends Mission allows our people to participate with other mission fields in Asia, Africa and Europe. Short-term mission trips are an ongoing initiative of our common ministry, as well.

Opportunities

It takes churches and individuals committed to these efforts to make them truly effective. There is room for all kinds of people with every talent and gift. Even now, we need people who have an interest in coaching, mentoring, outreach, discipleship, restoring broken leaders, conflict resolution, administration, development, missions and church planting. Expertise, while welcome, is not required. Training and coaching are a part of the process.

Passion, however, is required. We are looking for people who have a deep commitment to living out and ushering in the Kingdom of God at home and around the world. God is calling us to be a people who throw all that we are into following Jesus. Join the mission God has given us. We will all be better for it.

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