

“WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A FRIENDS CHURCH in EFC-MAYM”

In summary, here are a few of the important distinctions of an Evangelical Friends Church:

- The essence of a Friends Church is a vital, close, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The written Word serves as a guide to that relationship. The two, Written Word and Personal Relationship, will never be in conflict with each other. This harmony will result in corporate unity within the church as the personal relationship and the Word, expressed through individuals, will be evidenced as unity within the Body of Christ, the Church. Our form of business discussions attempts to champion this truth.
- The Friends Movement has long held the belief that life itself is sacramental, meaning that each moment of our lives is a sacrament to be celebrated with and lived for God. To attempt to separate our lives into "sacred" and "non-sacred" compartments admits that we exclude the Lord from certain areas of our lives. Physical ceremonies are outward symbols of external witness to the presence and operation of God in our lives.
- The Friends Church has traditionally placed itself in the “Free-Will” thought of theology. We are eager welcome other views into our fellowship but are not interested in the debate.
- The Friends Church has welcomed equality between men and women into church leadership from its inception more than 350 years ago.
- The Friends Church champions the concept of the “Priesthood of Every Believer” therefore it does not emphasize any autocratic leadership of the pastoral position. In recent decades paid pastors have been given more leadership within the church polity, but not to the extent that they are the CEO of the church organization.
- The Friends Church believes the Holy Spirit gives a wide variety of spiritual gifts for ministry to individuals and is eager to utilize those gifts within the church. However, we reject any behavior that causes disunity within the church body as a result of the practice of individual gifts.
- The Friends Church has never taken a specific position on the technical dynamics of the second coming of Christ to receive His church. We believe it is sufficient to affirm that Christ is returning and that our ultimate destiny is with Him for eternity.

These are the fundamental doctrines and practices that define the Friends Church movement and can be more deeply explored by studying the documents within the Faith and Practice of EFC-MAYM.

This document describes foundational principles that the EFC-MAYM movement has as expectations for the individual churches within the movement. While this is not an exhaustive list, for the unity and mission fulfillment of the movement, it is important that there is alignment in the following descriptive areas:

THEOLOGY

A Friends Church in EFC-MAYM accepts and adopts without reservation, revision, deletion or addition, the Faith and Practice of the Evangelical Friends Church as its Faith and Practice.

EFC-MAYM Friends Church pastors and elected leaders accept and communicate without reservation the Faith and Practice, and the membership accepts and lives in harmony with the Faith and Practice.

A Friends Church in EFC-MAYM acknowledges differences in areas of evangelical theology not specifically addressed by the Faith and Practice and embraces with grace those within their fellowship and the denomination who may hold differing views.

SENSE OF VISION

The vision of EFC-MAYM is to reproduce the church in the towns and cities of our region, and to extend the church across the geographical and cultural borders of the world. A Friends Church in EFC-MAYM evidences a partnership in this vision by:

1. Giving a 10% share of support to EFC-MAYM.
2. Annually evaluating and giving attention to increasing its Great Commission health.

3. Involvement in healthy church multiplication among all people, both at home and abroad, in obedience to Christ's call to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

ATTITUDE

The EFC-MAYM, in addition to a common theology, also has a commitment to a common attitude. This common attitude is characterized by:

1. A unity based on the essentials coupled with freedom and charity in non-essentials.
2. Being evangelical in theology and practice.
3. Cooperating with others who are advancing the cause of Christ.
4. Teaching liberty in Christ with responsibility and accountability.
5. A balanced teaching ministry that engages both the mind and the heart.
6. Interdependence through working with the larger body of the EFC.
7. Respect, appreciation and acceptance of people from different cultural backgrounds.
8. Sensitivity to those in our congregations who suffer from social destitution, and compassionately addressing their particular needs to the best of our abilities.

POLITY

Friends believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and dwells in all believers. He enlightens and gives guidance so that believers may do His will. As the head of the Church, Jesus confers gifts upon members of the body, which are to be used for the edification of the Church. Members have equal rights and privileges as they exercise their giftedness in faithfulness to Jesus, the head of the Church. Therefore, Friends practice both a theocratic and democratic form of government.

The Friends admit into membership all who make a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose lives testify to their union with Him, and who accept the teachings of the Gospel as held by the Friends.

The local church is the general policy-making body. It is charged with the administration of the affairs of the church and has authority to call and contract pastoral services; to adopt the annual budget; to receive, transfer, and dismiss members; to deal with offenders and grant appeals; to consider and act upon all questions affecting the membership; to hold and administer real estate and other property in the name of the Yearly Meeting for the use of the church; and to consider, adopt, and carry out measures for the improvement of the spiritual interests of the church and of the community at large.

A Friends Church in EFC-MAYM has as its local polity a form of congregationalism that fits the size and demographics of the congregation.

A Friends Church in EFC-MAYM teaches that congregationalism includes the involvement of the entire body in ministry.

A Friends Church in EFC-MAYM entrusts much of the decision-making to godly leaders who are trained, trusted and allowed to lead.

RECORDING OF MINISTERS

Friends believe that only God ordains a minister. His people recognize God's ordination and record those called and gifted for public ministry. For legal purposes and tax requirements, the term Recording is interchangeable with the term "ordination."

Friends also believe that ministers may be called by God in a single instant, but they develop over time. They need Godly character, biblical knowledge, and ministry skills to maximize their effectiveness. The local church and its leaders play a significant role in discerning God's gifting, equipping for ministry and encouraging those called to lifelong calling.

COMMITMENTS

A Friends Church in EFC-MAYM is committed to working interdependently with other area Friends Churches, the Yearly Meeting, and the intercultural and international ministries. This commitment is evidenced by:

- Area:
 - Willingly cooperating with other Friends Churches for local ministry initiatives.
- Regional:

- Intentionally sharing resources with other regional churches.
- Being actively involved in regional ministries.
- Annually sending representation to regional conferences.
- Communicating regional initiatives to the church.
- Receptive to interaction with Yearly Meeting staff.
- Endorsing and promoting Friends University and Barclay College as quality schools when recommending students and the calling of ministerial staff.
- International:
 - Endorsing and promoting Evangelical Friends Mission when encouraging members to serve in missions.

A Friends Church is committed to partnering financially in response to the needs/opportunities of the EFC-MAYM ministries. This is evidenced by:

1. Adequately paying and caring for their own pastoral staff.
2. Recognizing current EFC-MAYM church planting projects, EFM missionaries, Friends University, and Barclay College as part of our Friends Church family when considering support.
3. An annual financial investment in support of regional and international ministries with a yearly review of their participation of the recommended support levels for the regional and international ministries.

I have read and fully agree with all principles and expectations outlined in this document.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____