



Evergreen Church Guiding Principles

This document defines the principles by which Evergreen Church (“Church” herein) leadership pursues its mission. It is divided into three sections:

- Mission Principles define what the mission is and broadly how the Church will accomplish that mission;
- Boundary Principles set boundaries around the Pastor/Head of Staff and staff that they shall not cross in the pursuit of the mission; and
- Accountability Principles define how the Session will hold the Pastor/Head of Staff and Staff accountable to their performance in the pursuit of the mission, and how it will hold itself accountable to the mission goals.

While this is a “living document,” the Session will in particular monitor and adjust the Mission Principles as they discern the will of God for the Church. It is not intended as an “instruction manual,” rather it sets out the guidelines by which we set goals, pursue, and monitor our performance against our mission, and keep within prudent behavioral and operational boundaries.

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MISSION PRINCIPLES

The Mission of the Church is to inspire, teach and disciple, ordinary people to become missionaries of Christ to their community so that our neighborhoods reflect the Kingdom of Heaven.

As we live into this vision and mission, the broad culture we are seeking to create is a missional one, where we are striving to become more outwardly focused while still nurturing and equipping our covenant partners and regular attenders. Within the larger culture that we seek to develop at the Church, we believe the following areas need particular attention:

Session to fill in Mission Principles/outcomes bulleted here

To bring the healing, peace, and transformation which comes from knowing Jesus by providing gathering spaces for those we seek to serve in our local community and surrounding areas.

BOUNDARY PRINCIPLES

The Pastor/Head of Staff's primary responsibility is to provide leadership for the congregation to "prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ...grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:12-16). The Session, the Pastor/Head of Staff, and the staff shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful, imprudent, unethical, or unbiblical within the ministry of the congregation.

They should not::

- 1) **Biblical/ethical:** Stray from upholding the highest standards of biblical teaching, ethics, and morality, and they shall not allow, encourage, or condone any teaching or practice that is unbiblical.
- 2) **Lawful:** Allow any decision, practice, or activity within the ministry of the congregation that is illegal.
- 3) **Prudent:** Cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are unsafe, undignified, unnecessarily intrusive, or that fail to provide appropriate confidentiality or privacy.
- 4) **Integrity:** Jeopardize the integrity or public image of the Church.
- 5) **Conflicts of Interest:** Allow a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. Where a potential conflict exists in financial, personnel, ministry, or any other matter of Church leadership, the leader shall disclose the conflict to the supervisor or supervisory body and that supervisor or supervisory body shall determine its resolution.
- 6) **Constitution and By-Laws:** Act in any way contrary to the constitution or by-laws of our Church and denomination.

Specifically, The Pastor/Head of Staff together with the staff shall not:

Finances: Stray from the budgetary guidance established by the Session or the policies and procedures set forth in the Church manuals for Finance. This includes:

- a) Spend more than is allocated in larger budget blocks nor gift additional salary or benefits to any staff
- b) Allow the facilities to deteriorate without a plan for managing deferred maintenance.
- c) Allow potential fiduciary liabilities to be hidden from the Elders or allow unreasonable exposure of the church to claims of liability.
- d) Fail to inform the elders of situations that could reasonably represent a conflict of interest.

Personnel: Stray from the policies and procedures established by the session as set forth in the Church manual for Personnel. This includes:

- a) Hire or retain anyone who is unwilling to endorse the mission, vision, core values, and beliefs of the church or ECO's Essential Tenets.
- b) Cause or allow any treatment of staff that is unsafe, unfair, undignified, or unlawful.

- c) Allow program staff to function without current annual goals or allow staff to go more than 15 months without a performance review.
- d) Hire relatives of another current staff members without addressing and resolving any conflict of interests.
- e) Hire or terminate staff without sufficient planning and consultation and according to best practices (see personnel policies).

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ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLES

The Session is accountable to God first and to the people of the church by governing through effective policies, being good stewards of finances and talents, and holding the Senior Pastor accountable for the achievement of the church's annual ministry goals and adherence to defined Boundary Principles. The Session must also hold itself accountable in doing its prescribed work. Specifically this includes: 1) Discernment of God's guidance and His will for the congregation and ministries of the Church; 2) Keeping the Guiding Principles updated and relevant to the Church and God's leading; 3) Evaluating the progress of the Church in living into the Mission Principles as led by the Pastor/Head of Staff; 4) Being disciplined in its own role and responsibilities in the life of the Church.

1. Discernment:

- (a) Devotion to Prayer and the Word of God: Under the teaching and guidance of the Pastor/Head of Staff, the Session shall continually seek the wisdom and leading of Christ as the Lord of the Church, communicating their sense of discernment to the Pastor/Head of Staff and the congregation regularly.
- (b) The Session shall maintain an active connection with the congregation and the broader community to understand the spiritual needs and discern how the Church can serve people more effectively.

2. Guiding Principles: Through prayer, discernment, and evaluation of the progress of the church in its ministry, the Session will review at least annually the Guiding Principles and make updates as often as needed to keep them relevant so that the Church can effectively live into its Mission and Vision.

3. Senior Pastor Accountability:

- (a) Decisions of Session: Only decisions of the Session acting as a whole by consensus or majority vote are binding on the Pastor/Head of Staff.
- (b) Delegation to the Pastor/Head of Staff: The Session will instruct the Pastor/Head of Staff through written principles that prescribe the mission to be achieved and establish boundaries to be observed, allowing the Pastor/Head of Staff to use reasonable interpretation of these principles.
- (c) Authority of the Pastor/Head of Staff: The Pastor will act as the Head of Staff and has authority to lead the staff and congregation in all aspects of fulfilling the Mission Principles.
 - (i) This authority includes establishing, directing, modifying, or ceasing ministry activities.
 - (ii) This authority includes establishing the structure of the church staff, and selecting and managing all staff personnel in accordance with Evergreen Personnel policies. Volunteer staff positions may be created at the discretion of the Pastor/Head of Staff. Budget for paid staff positions must be approved by the Session. Ordained positions must be created and filled following denominational policy and procedure.

- (d) Annual Goals of the Pastor/Head of Staff: The Pastor/Head of Staff will write and submit to the Session, for review and approval, measurable goals each year that correspond to each of Session's mission principles.
- (e) Communication from the Pastor/Head of Staff: The Pastor/Head of Staff is the Session's primary link to operational achievement and conduct, and is accountable to the Session for the performance of the staff and the success of all the ministries of the church. The Pastor/Head of Staff should provide:
 - (i) Monthly Pastor's report that includes progress towards annual goals.
 - (ii) Monthly financial reports reflecting the current financial picture and budget updates as well as any other critical financial issues.
- (f) Performance Review of the Pastor/Head of Staff: At least annually, the Session shall review the results achieved by the Pastor/Head of Staff on each of the annual goals together with the Mission and Boundary Principles. Salary increases, other compensation changes, or corrective action shall all be based on the results of these reviews.

4. Governance of the Session:

- (a) Governance Style: The Session will govern with an emphasis on:
 - (i) Outward vision rather than internal preoccupation
 - (ii) Consideration of diversity in viewpoints
 - (iii) Strategic leadership rather than administrative details
 - (iv) Clear distinction of Session, Pastor/Head of Staff, and staff roles
 - (v) Individual elders are to submit to the decisions of the Session
 - (vi) Future rather than past or present
 - (vii) Proactive rather than reactive
 - (viii) The interests of the entire church, rather than individual constituencies.
- (b) Session Elders' Code of Conduct:
 - (i) Session elders seek to be faithful to the interests of Jesus Christ regarding those they have been called to serve. Members must conduct themselves at home, work, and in the community in ways that enhance the reputation of the church and Jesus Christ.
 - (ii) Members of Session shall honor the principles and decisions of the Session acting as a whole. They shall not foster dissent or attempt to exercise individual authority over the staff or congregation.
 - (iii) Session elders shall respect the confidentiality of sensitive issues and shall avoid facilitating gossip or other triangulation of people involved.
- (c) Responsibility of the Elders for Accountability: A team of three elders, ideally one from each class and facilitated by the elder with seniority shall function as the accountability team. Their job is to ensure the integrity of the Session's process for monitoring the performance of the Head Pastor as well as, along with the session Clerk, to ensure that the Session adheres to its own governance policies and schedules. These elders are to be appointed by the session and serve during the entirety of their term if possible.

(d) Cost of Governance: The Session will invest amply in its own governance capacity through training, outside expertise, research mechanisms, and meeting costs.