



May 31, 2008

In April 2008, a group of individuals submitted two letters (with attachment) to the EFCA Board of Directors sharing their concerns about what they perceived to be areas of “abuse of authority” on the part of EFCA leadership. Although the letters were not signed by any individuals, 35 individuals were identified as sharing concerns. In one of the two letters, the “supporters and facilitators” of the communication to the Board of Directors expressed that they “desire God’s highest and best for the future unity and welfare of the EFCA until Jesus returns”.

The majority of the concerns expressed to the Board of Directors pertained to the process relating to the possible revision of the EFCA Statement of Faith. As you know, the possible removal of premillennialism was the feature that seemed to create the most concern throughout the EFCA movement. In ultimate recognition of that concern, the premillennial commitment was restored to the proposed revision of the Statement of Faith submitted by the EFCA Board of Directors in April 2007 and formally introduced at the time of the 2007 Leadership Conference. This was done to the disappointment of many within our movement who were hoping for a different focus with regard to eschatology. The proposed revision of the EFCA Statement of Faith will be debated and voted upon by the 2008 Leadership Conference.

The April 2008 communication to the Board of Directors was distributed to each board member in attendance at the April 22-24 Board of Directors meeting and was read and discussed during that time. On May 14, 2008, a brief response was sent to as many of the 35 supporters and facilitators of the communication for whom we could find addresses.

The Board of Directors is appreciative of anyone who takes the time to articulate his or her concerns and to contact the Board directly with those concerns. While we might not always agree with the content of those concerns within the constraints of our earthly wisdom, the Board does most certainly share the focus of desiring “God’s highest and best for the future unity and welfare of the EFCA until Jesus returns”.

It has come to our attention that the April 2008 communication to the Board of Directors has been disseminated to pastors, churches and/or lay leaders in various locations around the country. In their April 2008 communication to the Board of Directors, the supporters and facilitators of the communication suggest that a “significant area of abuse of authority” has been the creation of EFCA West. The communication states in part as follows:



“A few years ago the Board of Directors, along with the President, initiated and promoted the dissolving of two or more of our EFCA district corporations, creating a new structure which, to our understanding, is contrary to the following in our EFCA Bylaws. These Bylaws state that all districts shall have ‘ultimate governance by its member churches,’ not by the denomination. And furthermore it says that ‘a district is accountable to its member churches,’ again not to our EFCA denomination. ... Our heritage is such that we are to also be congregational and autonomous in our district governments without the final authority coming down from the top. So we consider it a most serious issue that our national leadership and the Board of Directors have, perhaps even unknowingly, disregarded our Bylaws in such a far-reaching manner.”

EFCA West was officially created in 2003 in an entirely open and transparent fashion. Until now, five years later, the Board of Directors had not previously heard that there are those in the EFCA movement who may feel this constitutes an “abuse of authority”. The statements, suggestions and perceptions now raised with respect to EFCA West are not accurate and are, we believe, most unfair to the churches and leadership of EFCA West. Please consider the following as you reflect on the suggestion that there has been an “abuse of authority”:

#### **EFCA Bylaw Provisions:**

- Article III, A, Creation, of the EFCA Bylaws provides as follows: “The Board of Directors shall divide the United States into geographic Districts. This division shall be based on the recommendation of the District Superintendent Team and on considerations of geographic size, the number of Evangelical Free churches in each proposed District, the number of members of those churches, and the total population of each proposed District. **Ordinarily, however, the preferences of churches and Districts shall be respected** and the Board of Directors shall substitute its own judgment only when the churches and Districts involved cannot agree.” (Emphasis added.)
- Article III, C, Functions, of the EFCA Bylaws states, in part, as follows: “A District **represents the regional presence of the EFCA. It exists primarily to serve local churches and enhance their ministries,** just as the EFCA exists primarily to serve local churches and Districts and enhance their ministries.” (Emphasis added.) This provision of the Bylaws then goes on to specify the functions of a District.
- Article III, D, Organizational Relationships, of the EFCA Bylaws states as follows: “1. A District is accountable to its member churches to fulfill its function as a District as determined by its member churches. 2. A District is accountable to the EFCA Board of Directors to work interdependently (cooperatively) with the

EFCA leadership in establishing District purposes and objectives that fulfill the requirements of EFCA bylaw Article III.B.”

### **Formation of EFCA West**

- Initiation of the formation of EFCA West came **to** the Board of Directors **from** the Central California and Southwest Districts which ultimately merged into EFCA West. It was **not** the EFCA Board of Directors, **nor** the President, “who initiated and promoted the dissolving of two or more of our EFCA district corporations” as has been suggested by the supporters and facilitators of the April 2008 communication to the Board of Directors.
- An excellent summary of the background leading to the creation of EFCA West is contained in the March 11, 2003 letter sent to delegates to the upcoming Southwest District Conference and Central California District Conference which were both held in March, 2003. This letter was sent by the Southwest District Superintendent. I will quote extensively from this letter.

“In the Spring of 1997, the seven West Coast District Superintendents began a bold consideration of how to more successfully multiply healthy churches. We cooperated closely with national EFCA leaders, and quickly concluded that the one-hundred year old model of one-man district organizations was no longer well suited to plant churches, befriend pastors, coordinate pastoral placement, mediate in conflict, raise funds, administrate legal processes and credentialing, counsel elder boards, run camps, develop specialized ministries to children, youth, men, women, and seniors, network with universities and seminaries, connect churches with other churches, and more. A new model was and is still needed.”

“For nearly two years, the Central California and Southwest Districts have been working to launch a pilot model of a new regional approach to ministry. Although only these two districts are involved in the initial legal structuring, it is designed to easily allow several more West Coast districts to join the effort should they choose to do so in coming years. Over a year ago, our administrative offices were combined, and our respective Boards of Directors began to fine tune a new structure which would make more effective use of personnel and resources at all levels of the denominational structure. At the CCD and SWD conferences one year ago ... delegates authorized our districts to move forward in this project. By God’s grace, we are ready for the next step.”

“In a nutshell, this is far more than simply merging two districts. It is an intentional effort to re-align ourselves with the pressing mandate to disciple our millions of multi-ethnic neighbors. The current structure, while it has served us well until just a few years ago, is guaranteed to bog down and stop under the hoped for success of starting hundreds, even thousands of new churches.”

“EFCA West is designed to serve your church by coordinating the experience, resources, and gifts of a vast network of local, national, and international servants who specialize in such areas as church planting, church health, pastoral ministry, credentialing, administration, youth, children, women, men, seniors, international missions, urban, cross cultural, education, financial campaigns, leadership development, conflict mediation, worship, prayer, curriculum, and more. We don’t pretend to have everything figured out. In fact, this project has been likened to building an airplane while we fly it! But we have much in the way of evidence to suggest that we are on the right track. Your vote to officially establish EFCA West will mean a great deal to the many who have invested hundreds of hours toward this effort.”

“The new model in absolutely no way challenges or alters the traditional EFCA emphasis on the autonomy of the local church. While it does modify the degree of autonomy of the district organization, this is intended to better align and coordinate the organization’s ability to serve the local congregation. A new degree of emphasis is placed on the National Board of Directors and the President of the EFCA to function as spiritual leaders and overseers. However, the local congregation still remains the focal point of ministry and authority.”

- On March 22, 2003, the delegates to the Southwest District Conference voted **unanimously** to approve the merger of the Southwest District into EFCA West until December 31, 2006. Approval of the merger until the end of 2006 was intended to create a “trial period” to assess the efficacy of EFCA West.
- On March 29, 2003, the delegates to the Central California District Conference voted **unanimously** to approve the merger of the Central California District into EFCA West. Approval of the merger until the end of 2006 was intended to create a “trial period” to assess the efficacy of EFCA West.
- The request of the Southwest and Central California Districts for the creation of EFCA West was extensively discussed among the District Superintendent Team, consisting of the District Superintendents of all EFCA Districts, **prior to** the approval by the EFCA Board of Directors of the creation of EFCA West. Among other venues of discussion, the Chair of the EFCA Board of Directors attended a meeting of the National Ministry Team (which includes the District Superintendents) for the primary purpose of seeking input from the NMT on the proposed creation of EFCA West.
- In 2006, after more than three years of assessing the efficacy of EFCA West, the churches of the Southwest and Central California Districts voted **unanimously** to permanently merge into EFCA West and dissolve the “old” Southwest and Central California Districts.

- In November 2006, the delegates to the Southwest Border District voted to enter into a 12 month trial merger with EFCA West in order to determine if a permanent merger was desirable and feasible.
- On March 4, 2008, after a 16 month period of assessment, by a vote of 53 in favor, 1 opposed, the delegates to the Southwest Border District Conference voted to finalize the merger of the Southwest Border District into EFCA West.

### **EFCA West Governance Structure**

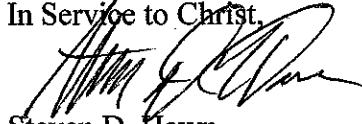
- According to its Bylaws, the purpose of EFCA West is to exist “as the regional arm” of the EFCA for the purpose of multiplying healthy churches among all people.
- EFCA West is “a wholly owned subsidiary” of the EFCA as was the contemplation of the Southwest and Central California Districts in seeking its creation.
- According to its Articles of Incorporation, **management** of EFCA West is vested in a **Regional Council** consisting of not less than three nor more than 15 persons. According to its Bylaws, “the ministry and business affairs of the organization shall be managed by its Regional Council. The Regional Council will have all powers that may be exercised by the corporation. The Regional Council shall act as the board of directors of this organization.”
- According to its Bylaws, “**Regional Council members shall be approved by a vote of the delegates of affiliated churches** at the biannual meeting of said affiliated churches. Each council member (except for ex officio members) **shall be a member in good standing of an EFCA West affiliate church.**” (Emphasis added.)
- The Regional Director of EFCA West performs the functions of a district superintendent. According to its Bylaws, the President of the EFCA and the Regional Director are ex officio members of the EFCA West Regional Council. The EFCA President does have authority to appoint the Regional Director as the authorized representative of the EFCA. This is done in consultation and cooperation with the local leadership of EFCA West. The Regional Director is the former Southwest District Superintendent. This has been the only “appointment” made by the EFCA President.
- According to its Bylaws, churches which affiliate with EFCA West “**shall have a polity consistent with congregational government** defined as ‘that form of government wherein the highest authority under Christ in a local church resides in the corporate understanding of the mind of Christ and in which a realistic process and reasonable opportunity exists by which that understanding is determined and

carried out, especially as it affects such matters as: determination of membership, selection or appointment of the principal governing board (elder, deacon, etc.), selection of the senior pastor, approval or alteration of constitution/bylaws, approval of an annual church budget, and approval of any major purchase or dissolution.” (Emphasis added.)

On behalf of the EFCA Board of Directors, I want to thank you for taking the time to read the contents of this communication. Although a “bit longer” than I would have hoped, we felt it was important for us to respond, factually and in context, to the questions and concerns that have been raised regarding the creation of EFCA West. If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to share them with me at [shawn@hawnlaw.com](mailto:shawn@hawnlaw.com).

We ask that you continue to pray with us for the leading of the Holy Spirit in our movement and that God would be honored and glorified as each of us seeks to serve Him obediently and wholeheartedly.

In Service to Christ,



Steven D. Hawn  
Chair, On Behalf of the  
EFCA Board of Directors