

# Constitution & Bye-laws

---

October 2007

## Constitution

We, a body of sinners saved through the grace of God and immersed into the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection, do hereby unite in Church fellowship, so that as a holy brotherhood, we may advocate the truth of God, proclaim the riches of His sovereign mercy to the lost and perishing, and by sympathy and counsel help one another in the Christ-like and heavenward life. We believe it our privilege and duty, by the Spirit's aid, to bear one another's burdens, and in the exercise of a tender-hearted, tolerant, forgiving kindness, to avoid everything of harsh and ungenerous criticism, recognising in each other fellow-members of that mystical body of which our risen Saviour is the Head. We seek to maintain in primitive simplicity, purity of worship and communion. We regard as essential features in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, that redeemed souls should walk in newness of life and holy separation from the world; and consider those only admissible to the Lord's Table who profess their sins forgiven through the blood of Jesus, and whose lives are in harmony with that great truth.

While desiring to extend to all believers the fullest and freest liberty of conscience, we require from all Church members an adhesion to the following doctrines of our faith as understood in a simple and straightforward and evangelical sense:

1. The plenary inspiration, sole authority and all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as originally given.
2. The trinity in unity of the Godhead.
3. The essential deity and perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The personality of the Holy Spirit.

5. The depraved and fallen state of man through Adam's transgression.
6. Atonement through the substitutionary death-sacrifice and blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. The justification of the sinner through faith in the risen Christ.
8. The personality of the Devil.
9. The second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.
10. The resurrection of the body.
11. The natural immortality of the soul.
12. The everlasting security of the believer, and the everlasting punishment of those who die impenitent.
13. The perpetuity of the Ordinance of Baptism of believers by immersion in water on confession of each individual of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
14. The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, thereby showing forth in the simple emblem of the broken bread and poured out wine, "the Lord's death, till He come."

**EXPLANATORY NOTE:**

In accordance with the Church's Trust Clauses no alterations or amendments may be made to these insofar as they relate to the Constitution of the Church, the doctrines to be held and proclaimed, the qualifications of the Pastor and the ultimate reversion of the Trust premises.

# Bye-laws

## 1. Office-bearers and Members

- 1.1. The office-bearers shall consist of the Pastor together with the other elders, and deacons. We believe that God alone can raise up, qualify and ordain all such persons. (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-3)
- 1.2. The duty of the elders is to take the oversight of the spiritual affairs of the church. They shall from time to time recommend to the church the setting aside of duly qualified men to the office of elder. Elders shall be appointed by the church, by election, at a special church meeting and shall hold office until the age of seventy (state retirement age in case of the Pastor) unless removed from office by the church before that age or service beyond that age is reaffirmed by the church at a special church meeting. Each elder's appointment, including that of the Pastor, shall be reviewed by the church every seven years by reaffirmation at a special church business meeting. The Pastor and the other elders shall, ex-officio, be members of all Committees, Societies and Organisations connected with the Church.
- 1.3. The deacons shall have the responsibility for the practical affairs of the church. A special church meeting shall be held once in each year for the purpose of the election of deacons. Persons shall be nominated with their agreement by a proposer and a seconder. Deacons shall serve for a period of four years and shall not be eligible for re-election until the next election of deacons. The office-bearers shall have the power at any time to co-opt any such person who is retired from office, but the deacon so co-opted shall hold office only until the next election of deacons and shall then be eligible for re-election. The deacon holding the office of Church Secretary or Church Treasurer shall upon retirement be immediately eligible for re-election and, if re-elected, shall continue as Church Secretary or Church Treasurer as the case may be.

- 1.4. To be eligible for nomination for election to the office of elder (other than the Pastor) a person must have been a member of Windsor Baptist Church for the previous three or more years. Notification of the special meeting for the election or reaffirmation of elders shall include the names of the persons recommended by the elders for election or the names of elders presented to the church for reaffirmation.
- 1.5. To be eligible for nomination for election to the office of deacon a person must have been a member of Windsor Baptist Church for the previous two or more years. Notification of the special meeting for the election of deacons shall include the names of the persons nominated.
- 1.6. Applicants for Church membership shall be interviewed by two members appointed by the Church, one of whom shall be an elder of the Church. Following their report the Church shall vote on the application provided the applicant subscribes to the constitution. The names of new members shall be kept in the Church Roll.
  - 1.6.1. Membership of the church is also open to persons from outside the island of Ireland who are members of a church in another country but who are residing in Northern Ireland for a period of at least a year. The following conditions must be met: (1) The church in the person's home country must be informed and agree and (2) when the person ceases to reside in Northern Ireland his/her name will automatically be removed.

## **2. General Church Meetings**

- 2.1. General church meetings shall be called by the Church Secretary as instructed by the office-bearers or a majority of them. Notice shall be given at public worship on the Sunday immediately preceding the date of the proposed church meeting.
- 2.2. No business at general church meetings shall be deemed to be transacted unless a majority of those present and voting signify their assent thereto. In the event of an equality of votes the

Chairman of the Meeting shall have a casting vote whether he has or has not previously voted on the question.

- 2.3. The church minutes and a statement of the church finance shall be read to and approved by the church every six months at which times members may discuss ordinary business.
- 2.4. The church accounts shall be examined annually and certified to be in order by an auditor appointed by the church.

### **Special Church Meetings**

1. Special church meetings shall be called by the Church Secretary as instructed by the office-bearers or a majority of them, or by written notice served on him by not less than ten members of the church.
2. Special church meetings for the following purposes shall be called by notice given at public worship on the two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the proposed church meeting:
  - 2.1. The calling of a pastor.
  - 2.2. The termination of a pastorate. A pastor shall normally be required to give three month's notice, in writing, of his resignation from the pastorate. In the event of the church terminating a pastorate, the pastor shall be given three month's notice or three months' salary in lieu of notice.
  - 2.3. The fixing or altering of a pastor's salary.
  - 2.4. The election of elders or deacons.
  - 2.5. The removal of an elder or deacon from office.
  - 2.6. The removal, if considered appropriate, of the names of members from the church roll for either non-attendance at the Lord's Table for a period of six calendar months without valid reason, or any other reason interpreted by the members

present as constituting a valid scriptural cause for such discipline.

- 2.7. The setting apart of missionaries and other full-time workers.
  - 2.8. The appointment of a Trustee or Trustees.
  - 2.9. The purchase, sale or leasing of any grounds or buildings.
  - 2.10. The construction or alteration of any building.
  - 2.11. The alteration of the Trust Clauses in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Trust Deeds. A copy of the Trust Deeds is available for inspection from the Church Secretary.
  - 2.12. The alteration, deletion or addition of any bye-law.
3. No business at any special church meetings shall be deemed to be transacted unless at least one-third of the entire members of the church attend and two-thirds of those present and voting signify their assent thereto.

### **3. General Voting and Procedural Practices**

- 3.1. No member of the church may vote at any meeting, whether general or special, unless he or she has partaken of the Lord's Supper with the church at least once during the previous six calendar months.
- 3.2. Any ten members of the church may demand a ballot vote on any resolution before the church in business session.
- 3.3. No resolution passed at any meeting, whether general or special, shall be rescinded at the next meeting unless notice of the resolution for such rescission has been given at a prior general meeting.

#### **4. Constitution and Bye-Laws**

A copy of the constitution and current bye-laws shall be given to every applicant for church membership and, in the event of the bye-laws being revised, a copy of the new bye-laws shall be given to each member.

Revised 1946, 1966, 1974, 1976, 1981, 1989, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2007.