

FOREWORD

Pilgrim Tabernacle was founded in March 1987.

At that time John Sherwood was called by the Church to be the Pastor.

The church is independent and self-governing but believes in fellowship and co-operation with churches of like faith and practice and desires to express the real unity existing between such churches.

We reject the Ecumenical Movement because of its failure to stand on fundamental biblical truth and we refuse spiritual collaboration with all who deny the doctrines of the historic evangelical Protestant Faith.

The main purposes of the Constitution are as follows:

- (1) to express and set down in an orderly manner what Scripture teaches concerning the faith and conduct of the church;
- (2) to regulate procedure in matters which arise in the course of church life, but which are not dealt with explicitly in Scripture, and which therefore must be ordered by the general principles of God's Word;
- (3) to provide a practical guide to the responsibilities and privileges of church membership.

'Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come' (Hebrews 13:12-14)

THE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

1 NAME

This church shall be known as Pilgrim Tabernacle.

2 DEFINITION

2.1 A church consists of those who have repented of their sins¹ and who have received Jesus Christ by faith as Lord and Saviour.²

¹Acts 2:38-41 ²Col 2:6

2.2 Such persons constitute a church of Christ when joined together by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel.¹

¹Ps 50:5 Is 44:5 56:3-8 Jer 50:4,5 Acts 11:23 2 Cor 8:5 Eph2:19-22

2.3 A true church is recognised by the faithful preaching of the Word of God,¹ the true and proper administration of the ordinances² and the spiritual exercise of biblical discipline.³

¹Matt 28:19,20 ²Acts 2:41,42 ³1 Cor 5:1-13

2.4 The purpose of a church is to glorify God¹ by promoting his worship,² by declaring his Word in its entirety,³ by building up his people in their holy faith,⁴ by obeying his perfect moral Law,⁵ and by extending his kingdom throughout the world.⁶

¹Rom 15:6 ²Jn 4:23,24 ³Acts 20:27 ⁴Jude 20,21 ⁵James 2:8 ⁶Matt 6:10

3 MEETINGS

3.1 Whenever the church gathers together, the Lord¹ is present and, in view of his exalted and infinite majesty, all meetings should be characterised by holy reverence and all things should be done decently and in order.²

¹Ps 5:7 76:11 89:7 Hab 2:20 Matt 18:20 ²1 Cor 14:40 Heb 12:28,29 Rev 15:4

3.2 The stated meetings of the church are the two services of the Lord's Day¹, at 9 am and 4 pm, the mid-week meetings for Bible Study on Tuesday at 7.30 pm and Prayer² on Friday at 7.30 pm, the Church Business Meetings³ and any Special Church Meetings which occasionally it may be necessary to call.⁴

¹Acts 20:7 ²Acts 2:42 ³Acts 15:1-31 ⁴Acts 13:1-3

3.3 **The Lord's Day Services.** The Sabbath, the oldest divine institution in existence,¹ was made for man's benefit,² a day of rest from worldly business, for the special acknowledgement of God and for the enjoyment of communion with him.³ A commandment concerning its holy observance was incorporated by God in the Ten Commandments and the keeping of the Sabbath Day is therefore part of the absolute and unalterable Law of God.⁴ Although Christ, as 'Lord of the Sabbath'. substituted the first day of the week for the seventh on account of his resurrection from the dead, the Sabbath Day principle (a day of rest after six days of work) remains and, as far as

possible, Christians are to set apart the Lord's Day for sacred purposes.⁵ Members are expected to be present for public worship at the two Sunday services, unless prevented by unavoidable circumstances. Members are also expected to attend the monthly observance of the Lord's Supper, on the first Sunday of each month, since to be absent without sufficient reason is to disregard our Lord's express command.⁶

¹Gen 2:3 ²Mk 2:27,28 ³Is 58:13,14 Jer 17:21,22 ⁴Exod 20:8-11 Matt 5:17-19
⁵Matt 12:8 Jn 20:1, 19, 26 cf. Ps 118:22-24 1 Cor 16:2 Rev 1:10 ⁶Acts 20:7 Heb 10:25

3.4 **The Mid-week Meetings.** At the mid-week meetings the church gathers to hear God speak through his Word¹ and to speak to God in the exercise of prayer.² These are precious times of spiritual communion, intended for our refreshment and renewal of strength, and therefore should not be neglected. Good and sustained attendance, together with enthusiastic participation on the part of church members, is essential to the continued supply of the Spirit of God. All members should make every effort to be present at these meetings.³

¹Acts 10:33 2 Tim 3:16,17 1 Pet 4:11 ²Acts 1:14 2:42 4:23-31 12:5,12 13:2
³Acts 20:32 Heb 4:16 James 5:16

3.5 **Church Business Meetings.** The Church Business Meetings, held on a quarterly basis along with one Annual General Meeting each year, is the church gathered to hear information which cannot be divulged at public services and to decide upon measures discussed beforehand by the church officers and recommended by them as expedient.¹ It is clear from the Scriptures that, although church officers have their respective tasks,² important decisions affecting the life of the church should be taken by the gathered church.³ Such meetings should always be conducted in an atmosphere of prayer, love and mutual trust. When that is the case, these meetings provide an opportunity for fellowship and full involvement in the life of the church, and all members should therefore consider it both a privilege and an obligation to attend.⁴

¹Acts 15:1-4 21:18,22-24 ²Heb 13:7,17 ³Acts 1:15-23 15:22
⁴Rom 12:9-18 Eph 4:29-32 Phil 2:3

3.6 **The Special Church Meeting.** Special Church Meetings need occasionally to be convened for matters of importance, such as the appointment of officers,¹ the settling of doctrine,² the maintenance of church order,³ the sending of missionaries,⁴ the amending of the constitution, and major practical matters.⁵ If at all possible, members should be present at these meetings to give their support and help.⁶

¹Acts 6:1-6 14:23 ²Acts 15:1-4 ³Matt 18:17 1 Cor 5:4,5 ⁴Acts 13:3
⁵Acts 15:22-31 ⁶Rom 12:11

4 **ORDINANCES**

4.1 Ordinances are institutions of divine authority relating to the worship of God:¹ such as the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs;² public prayer,³ fellowship;⁴ the reading and preaching of God's Word;⁵ and church government.⁶

¹1 Cor 11:2 ²Eph 5:19 ³1 Tim 2:1-8 ⁴Gal 6:2 ⁵2 Tim 4:2 ⁶1 Thess 5:12,13

4.2 Among the ordinances are the sacraments.¹ These are the sacred symbols or outward signs, appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ, through which God confirms to us the blessings of the New Covenant.² The only two sacraments are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.³

¹Matt 28:19,20 ²Mk 14:22-25 16:15,16 ³Act 2:41 42 cf 1 Cor 10:1-4

4.3 **Baptism**

4.3.1 The administration of baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,¹ is entrusted to the Minister (or to one of the Elders)² and will be by total immersion in water.³

¹Matt 28:16-20 ²Jn 1:33 Acts 8:38 ³Matt 3:5,6,13,16 Jn 3:23 Act 8:38,39 Rom 6:3,4

4.3.2 The proper subjects of Christian baptism are those who have repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and who give satisfactory evidence of true conversion.¹

¹Mk 1:5 16:16 Jn 1:33 Act 2: 38-41 8:12,13 8:36,37 10:47 16:14,15 16:32-34 18:8 Eph 4:5 Heb 6:1,2

4.3.3 Symbolized in baptism is our union with Christ in his death and resurrection,¹ the washing away of our sins,² and the giving of ourselves to the Lord.³

¹Rom 6:4,5 ²Act 22:16 ³Act 19:5 cf 1 Cor 10:2

4.3.4 Baptism is observed in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹ It is incumbent upon believers to submit to this command as soon as they realized it to be such.²

¹Matt 28:19,20 Acts 2:38 10:48 ²Lk 6:46 Jn 14:15

4.4 **The Lord's Supper**

4.4.1 The Lord's Supper, normally observed on the first Lord's Day of each month,¹ will be administered by the Minister (or by one of the Elders) with the elements of bread and wine.² The Deacons shall be responsible for the administration of these elements.³

¹Act 20:7 1 Cor 11:26 ²1 Cor 2:16 ³cf Act 6:2

4.4.2 Only members seeking to live in obedience to his commands and members of other churches, at the discretion and invitation of the Minister, may partake of the Lord's Supper.¹

¹Act 2:41,42 1 Cor 11: 27-29

4.4.3 It is a memorial of the sufferings and death of the Saviour,¹ a sign that he is now our nourishment and strength,² and an expression of the unity of the church as one body in Christ.³

¹1Cor 11:24,25 ²1Cor 2:16 ³1 Cor 10:17

4.4.4 Christ has commanded us to keep the feast,¹ and therefore the observance of the Lord's Supper should be regarded as essential to obedient discipleship.²

¹Lk 22:19,20 ²Jhn 14:21 15:9,10

5 OFFICERS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The church recognizes the Lord Jesus as its sole Head and Governor,¹ and the Holy Scriptures as its only rule of authority.²

¹Matt 23:8,10 Jn 13:13 Col 1:18 ²Is 8:20 Eph 2:20 2 Tim 3:16,17 2 Pet 1:19-21

5.1.2 While welcoming and desiring fellowship with other like-minded churches,¹ we do not recognize the right of any external body to govern or control the affairs of this church.² Accordingly, this church shall not belong to any association, council or union which involves the loss of its right under Christ to self government. Identification with any such body shall be permissible only so long as the church's independent and evangelical testimony remains uncompromised.³

¹Act 15:1-4 Rom 15:26 Eph 6:18 Col 4:16 ²Matt 18:17 1 Cor 5:12 ³Gal 5:1
1 Tim 6:3-5

5.1.3 If the church is unable to settle some perplexing question or remove some serious offence, it may consult with the Ministers and Ruling Elders of like-minded churches. Their counsel should be most carefully considered. It must be accepted as a rule without exception, however, that such occasional synods or councils are only advisory: they can have no jurisdiction over the church and no power to interfere with its internal order. The church should avail itself of this provision only when the need seems imperative.¹

¹Act 15:1-4, 22-31

5.1.4 The Lord Jesus has ordained that the local church should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of special office-bearers, and ministry of special office-bearers should be Elders (or Bishop) and Deacons.¹

¹Act 6:2-4 14:23 Phil 1:1 1 Tim 3:1-13

5.1.5 The local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is responsible for appointing men to these offices.¹ Individuals involved should have an inward conviction that the Lord is calling them to a particular office, and the church should recognize that the call as it observes in these men the gifts and graces Scripture requires for the office.² This is a most serious matter and it should be accompanied by much prayer waiting on God for guidance, a careful study of the relevant passages of Scripture, a dispassionate evaluation of each man nominated.³ After formally recognizing them by common consent in a Church Meeting, the church should set them apart by united prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Elders.⁴ If there are no Elders in the church, in order that this duty may be regularly performed, assistance should be sought from Ministers and Ruling Elders of like-minded churches.

¹Act 6:3 14:23 - 'ordain' or, more literally, 'elect by popular vote' ²Act 13:2
Prov 18:16 cf Heb 5:4 ³Act 1:14, 24, 25 6:3 1 Tim 3:1-13 5:21-22 Titus 1:5-9 cf
Jude 16 ⁴Act 6:6 13:3 1 Tim 4:14

5.2 Eldership

5.2.1 In normal circumstances, and according to apostolic precedent, there should be in the church a plurality of Elders.¹

¹Act 11:30 14:23 20:17 Titus 1:5 James 5:14

5.2.2 They shall be responsible for government, spiritual oversight and pastoral care. All meetings and organizations connected with the church come under their supervision. They shall appoint to help in the various departments those evidently gifted by God and recognized by the church.¹

¹Heb 13:17 Act 20:28 1 Pet 5:1-3

5.2.3 It is the duty of Elders to be faithful in their attendance at the public means of grace and to be diligent in the performance of their duties in this church.¹

¹1Tim 4:12-16 Titus 2:7,8

5.2.4 No Elder is free to act independently of his fellow-Elders of the membership in initiating or involving himself in any new spiritual work either inside or outside the church.¹

¹Act 15:22,25

5.2.5 If at anytime an Elder cannot continue in the full responsibility of his office, he shall be expected to resign graciously. A man should not normally hold office beyond the age of 65 years but, at the recommendation of the other Elders, the church may request a man to continue in office for a further stated period.¹ When an Elder retires from an office, the Elders may still consult with him occasionally and benefit from his experience and counsel.²

¹cf Num 8:25,26 2 Job 12:12 Prov 1:5 11:14

5.2.6 While all Elders rule, some are gifted, called, and trained by God to preach also. He who both rules and preaches is called a Teaching Elder or Minister.¹

¹Rom 12:6-8 1 Cor 12:28 Eph 4:11 1 Tim 5:17 Heb 13:7,17

5.3 The Teaching Elder (or Minister)

5.3.1 The minister must evidence the ability to preach the Word of God and fulfil the personal, domestic and ministerial qualifications set out in 1Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.¹ Anyone called to this office must subscribe whole-heartedly to the Baptist Confession of Faith 1689,* the Church Statement of Faith and this Constitution.² He must also have been baptized by immersion on confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.³

¹Jer 3:15 Matt 13:52 2 Cor 3:5,6 ²2Tim 1:13 2:2 4:1-5 Titus 2:1 Jude 3

³Act 9:18-20

* The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 was one in essence with the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 (Presbyterian) and the Savoy Declaration of Faith of

1658 (Congregational), except for modifications in areas such as church government, and the proper subjects and mode of Christian baptism.

- 5.3.2 The task of the Minister is to lead in public worship,¹ to teach publicly as well as privately the whole counsel of God,² to administer the sacraments according to the Scriptures,³ and to guide in all matters of government and oversight.⁴

¹1 Cor 4:1,2 ²1 Tim 5:17 2 Tim 2:24,25 4:2 1 Pet 4:10,11 ³Matt 28:19,20
⁴Heb 13:7

- 5.3.3 The minister may either be called from the Eldership within the church, or, since the gifts of God are for the benefit of all the churches, from another church.¹ In either case he should be, or become, a member of this church. It is desirable, though not essential, that he should have received theological training.²

¹Col 1:7 4:12 ²Act 18:26 1 Tim 4:13-16 2 Tim 2:15

- 5.3.4 In the event of there being no Minister in office, the Elders, in prayerful consideration with the Deacons and members shall seek to discover the will of God.¹ The right of nomination and recommendation to the pastorate belongs to the Elders,² but the name of the nominee must be brought to a Church Meeting specially convened for that purpose and he must be approved, in a secret ballot, by a 75% majority of the total voting church membership.³

¹Act 1:14-26 13:1-3 Rom 10:15 ²Acts 14:23 2 Tim 2:2 ³Act 1:15, 26 13:1-3

- 5.3.5 The Minister shall be recognized as the presiding Elder and shall preside as Chairman of all Church Business Meetings and Special Church Meetings.¹

¹Acts 15:13-29 21:18 cf 18:8,17

- 5.3.6 The Minister shall have the right to choose all who shall preach in the church.¹

¹Matt 24:45,46 Rom 12:7

- 5.3.7 As one set apart to teach, administer the ordinances, and guide the church, he will be required to devote himself to prayer and the study of God's Word in order to fulfil his tasks.¹ The church, acknowledging that such a person must be supported by them, will ensure, in so far as financial resources allow, that he is adequately maintained and will also pay all necessary expenses incurred in the performance of his duties. His stipend will be reviewed at least annually by the Deacons and will be such as enables him to make reasonable provision for his retirement.²

¹Acts 6:4 1 Tim 4:15-16 ²1Cor 9:7-14 Gal 6:6 1 Tim 5:17,18

- 5.3.8 No time limit shall be fixed for the service of a Minister, but upon resolution of a Church Meeting specially convened for that purpose and passed, in a secret ballot, by a 75% majority of the total voting church membership, his office may be terminated, three months notice being given him by the church.¹ Similarly, the Minister shall be required to give the church three months notice of his intention to resign his office. Upon termination of the office, the Minister shall vacate the Manse.

¹1Tim 5:19-21

5.3.9 In the event of there being no Minister in the church, the other Elders shall be responsible for carrying on the work and shall elect one of their number to act as Chairman at any church gathering.¹

¹1Tim 3:1,2 Titus 1:9

5.4 **The Ruling Elder**

5.4.1 Only men with necessary qualifications are eligible for the office. These are laid down in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Ruling Elders must subscribe wholeheartedly to the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689,* the church's Statement of Faith and this Constitution.¹ They must be over 25 years of age, and baptized by immersion on profession of faith. Normally they must also have been in the membership of this church for at least three years, but in special circumstances the church may appoint a man to this office after two years.²

¹1Cor 4:2 Titus 1:7-9 ²Act 14:21-23 1 Tim 3:6

5.4.2 Ruling Elders are appointed to share the pastoral oversight of the church.¹ Their work includes caring for the souls of the members and leading the church in a spiritual order and discipline. They shall, with the Minister, have charge of all matters concerning the spiritual welfare of the church.²

1Act 20:17,28 Rom 12:8 ²Gal 6:1 1 Cor 12:28 1 Thess 5:12 1 Tim 5:17 Heb 13:17
1 Pet 5:1-3

5.4.3 In the choice of a Ruling Elder, the existing Elders, after prayer and attention to God's Word, shall consult with the Deacons and members.¹ The Elders shall then bring to the church at a Special Church Meeting, the name of the man whom they consider to be gifted and called of the Lord to this work. The nominee must receive, in a secret ballot, a 75% majority vote of the total voting church membership.²

¹Matt 9:38 Phil 4:6 1 Tim 4:5 ²Act 14:23 1 Tim 5:22

5.4.4 No time limit shall be fixed for their period of service, but a Ruling elder's appointment shall be terminated upon a resolution brought to a Special Church Meeting and passed in a secret ballot by a majority of the total voting church membership.¹

¹1Tim 5:19-21

5.4.5 If there is only one Elder in office, he shall be assisted in his duties by Deacons.¹ This shall be considered a temporary arrangement, existing only until other Elders are appointed.

¹1Cor 12:28 – 'helps'

5.4.6 In the event of having no Elders in office, the Deacons should assume temporary but full responsibility for the government of the church, with one of their number acting as Chairman at church gatherings.¹ This shall only be until one or more Elders are ordained. During such period, and at their own discretion, they may seek advice and counsel from Ministers and Ruling Elders of like-minded churches.²

¹1Tim 3:13 ²Act 15:1-4

5.5 **Diaconate**

5.5.1 In accordance with New Testament teaching and practice, a plurality of Deacons is the norm.¹ The actual number will depend on local circumstances and the size of the congregation with the existing Deacons. It is desirable that there should be a minimum of three Deacons.

¹Act 6:3 Phil 1:1

5.5.2 The function of Deacons, in general, is to relieve the Elders of involvement in the material affairs of the church.¹ In particular, their duties include the organization of good works, the visitation of the sick, the superintendence of finance, the secretarial work, and the maintenance of all property used by the church.

¹Act 6:2-4

5.5.3 Deacons must fulfil their tasks in co-operation with and under the guidance of the Elders.¹

¹Act 11:27-30

5.5.4 The qualifications for men chosen to this office are laid down in Acts 6:3 and in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They must be able to subscribe whole-heartedly to the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, the Church's statement of Faith and this Constitution. They must be over 21 years of age, and baptized by immersion on profession of faith. They must also have been in the membership of this church for at least two years.¹

The on-going service and involvement in the material affairs of the church of women deacons is recognised by the church, though they are not appointed to office.²

¹1 Tim 3:8-10 ²Mk 15:40-41 Lk 8: 2-3 Rom 16:1 Phil 4:3

5.5.5 In the appointment of Deacons, all members of the church will be called upon to make selection and submit names to the Elders.¹ The Elders, after prayer and attention to God's Word, will make known to the membership the names of those men whom they judge to be duly qualified, who are evidently recognized by the church, and who are willing to accept office.² The names will then be brought formally to the church at a Special Church Meeting. The nominees who receive, in a secret ballot, the highest number of votes will be appointed, providing each has a 60% majority vote of the total voting church membership.³

¹Act 6:1-6 ²1 Tim 3:10 ³1 Tim 5:22

5.5.6 Outstanding vacancies which may arise because the requisite majority has not been received, will be filled by a further election which will take place under the same conditions.

5.5.7 In the event of a vacancy occurring, the Elders may recommend to the church at a Church Meeting the co-option of any member of the church who is eligible to fill the vacancy. This shall be a temporary appointment, continuing only until the vacancy is filled by the normal process of election.

* see note 5.3.1

5.5.8 The Diaconate shall appoint annually from among its number, a Church Secretary and a Church Treasurer. When required, the Deacons may also appoint from among themselves an Assistant Secretary and an Assistant Treasurer.

5.5.9 Deacons shall meet together to pray and to conduct business as often as thought necessary. Their meetings shall be intimated to the Elders, so that a representative may attend. Deacons and Elders shall meet together regularly for prayer, consultation, and fellowship.

5.5.10 Deacons must faithfully attend the public means of grace and diligently carry out the ministrations of their office.¹

¹Rom 12:7 1 Tim 3:10,13

5.5.11 It is desirable that Deacons should obtain the help of other church members. They should especially try to involve the men of the church, some of whom the Lord may be preparing for the Deacon's office.¹

¹Rom 12:4,5 1 Cor 12:14-27

5.5.12 Deacons shall hold office so long as they fulfil their calling and have confidence of the members.¹

¹1Tim 3:13

5.5.13 If a Deacon finds he is no longer able to discharge his duties, he should resign from his office. If a Deacon proves to be unfitted for, or unworthy of his office, it is the responsibility of other office-bearers and the church to recognize this. In such a case, he should be asked to resign or be relieved of office. A Deacon's appointment may be terminated upon a resolution brought to a Special Church Meeting and passed, in secret ballot, by a majority of the total voting church membership. A Deacon should not normally hold office beyond the age of 65 years, but the church may request him to continue as a Deacon for further period subject to annual review.¹

¹cf Num 8:25,26

6 MEMBERSHIP

6.1 Meaning

Membership involves joining together, by covenant with God and with one another, so that there might be a faithful performance of all those duties belonging to a church of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹

¹Ex 24:7 cf Act 7:38 Ps 50:5 Isa 44:5 56:6 Jer 50:5 Amos 3:3 Act 4:32 5:13,14 11:23 2 Cor 8:5 Eph 4:16 2 Cor 9:13

6.2 Necessity

6.2.1 The New Testament assumes that being 'added to the church', in its visible expression, is an immediate and necessary consequence of conversion.¹

¹Act 2:41,47

6.2.2 Church membership is essential to the true life and proper functioning of the church and the enjoyment of its fellowship.¹

¹Eph 2:20-22 4:11,12 Col 2:5

6.3 **Qualifications**

6.3.1 Any persons is eligible for membership who professes repentance before God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,¹ who is evidencing the grace of God in a consistent Christian life,² who assents to the Church Covenant, who is in full agreement with the Church's Statement of Faith, and who is willing to be subject to this Constitution.³

¹Act 2:38-41 ²Rom 1:7 Phil 1:5 ³Act 9:26-28 1 Cor 1:10

6.3.2 Believers who have not yet been baptized by immersion on profession of faith are encouraged to be so baptized before entering into membership.¹

¹Matt 28:19,20 Act 2:41 9:18,19

6.4 **Admission**

6.4.1 An applicant for membership should already be regularly worshipping with this church. Application should be made to the Minister (or to one of the Elders), who will request that the Church Covenant, the Church's Statement of Faith and the Constitution be prayerfully studied.¹

¹Act 9:26

6.4.2 At least two Elders will interview the applicant.¹ During the interview, they will seek to determine whether the person has a scriptural experience of conversion,² a belief of the truth summarized in the Church's Statement of Faith,³ a consistent standard of Christian living,⁴ a whole-hearted support of the church's ministry and government,⁵ and a sincere desire to covenant with the church in a bond of fellowship.⁶ These Elders will then report to the Eldership as a whole.

¹Act 20:28,29 ²Ps 66:16 1 Pet 3:15 ³Rom 6:17 15:6 ⁴1Cor 3:16 Eph 2:21
⁵1 Tim 5:17 1 Thess 5:12, 13 ⁶Jer 50:4,5 2 Cor 8:5

6.4.3 If the person desiring membership is, or has been a member of another church, enquiry may be made to determine the person's standing in that church and the reasons for leaving it. At the discretion of the Elders, a letter of commendation from that church may be required.¹

¹Act 18:27 28:21 Rom 16:1,2 2 Cor 3:1-3 Col 4:10 Philemon 12,17

6.4.4 If the Elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for membership, they shall recommend this person to the church members at the next Church Meeting. The Church will then express its desire with regard to receiving the applicant into membership.¹

¹Act 9:26-28 cf 2 Cor 6:14 Gal 2:4 Jude 4

6.4.5 Following the agreement of the church, the applicant will normally be received into membership with the right hand of fellowship at the next observance of the Lord's Supper.¹

¹Rom 15:7 Gal 2:9 1 Cor 10:17

6.5 Responsibilities

6.5.1 Members are expected to attend regularly the Lord's Day services, the mid-week meetings for Prayer and Bible Study, and Church Meetings, unless genuinely prevented by circumstances beyond their control. Families should worship in church together.¹

¹Ps 27:4 34:3 48:1-3 122:1 Song of Sol 1:7,8 Matt 18:20 Act 1:14 2:1,42,46
Heb 10:25 cf Jn 20:24

6.5.2 Use should be made of the various other means of grace, such as the reading of God's Word and prayer in regular private¹ and family worship.² Prayer should be offered for the ministry of God's Word,³ for all church officers,⁴ for the other members,⁵ and for the work of the church generally.⁶

¹Ps 119:9-16 Matt 4:4 6:6 Lk 18:1 ²Gen 18:19 Dt 6:7 Jer 10:25 Zech 12:12,13
³Rom 15:30 Eph 6:18-20 ⁴2 Thess 3:1 Heb 13:17,18 ⁵Jas 5:16 ⁶Ps 51:18 102:13-17 122:6,7

6.5.3 Fellowship needs to be fostered within the church and members should actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another;¹ so that they may be better able to pray for one another;² love, comfort and encourage one another;³ and help one another materially as necessity may require.⁴

¹Mal 3:16,17 Rom 12:13 1 Pet 4:9 ²Phil 2:4 Jude 20 ³Col 3:12-14 1 Thess 5:11
Heb 3:13 ⁴Gal 6:2 James 2:15-17

6.5.4 Every effort must be made to keep the unity of the church and to avoid all causes of division.¹

¹Ps 34:14 133:1,2 Rom 13:13 14:19 16:17 1 Cor 12:25 2 Cor 13:11 Eph 4:1-3
Phil 2:3 1 Thess 5:12-14 Heb 12:14 James 3:16

6.5.5 All should be involved in the work Christ has given to the church.¹ In particular, support should be given to all evangelism organized by the church, and an interest should be taken in the work of the Missionaries and Missionary Societies officially supported by the church.²

¹Matt 5:15,16 Act 8:4 1 Cor 3:9 Phil 1:27 4:3 1 Thess 1:8
²Act 14:27 15:3,4 1 Thess 5:25

6.5.6 It is a duty to support the work of the church financially by regular and systematic giving, proportionate to personal resources.¹ This is necessary for the support of the Minister,² the care of poorer members,³ the relief of needy Christians elsewhere,⁴ and the maintenance of Missionaries.⁵

¹1 Chron 29:6-19 Prov 3:9,10 11:24,25 Mal 3:10 Lk 6:38 21:1-4 Acts 20:35 1 Cor 16:1,2 2 Cor 8:3,4 9:6-11 ²1 Cor 9:14 Gal 6:6 1 Tim 5:17,18 ³Rom 12:13 Gal 6:10 1 Tim 5:3-7 ⁴Act 11:27-30 Gal 2:10 ⁵Phil 4:10-18 3 Jn 5-8

6.5.7 There must be a recognition of the spiritual authority belonging to the overseers in the church and a voluntary acceptance of their leadership.¹

¹Ps 105:15 Lk 10:16 Rom 13:7 1 Cor 4:1 16:12 1 Thess 5:12,13 1 Tim 5:17 Heb 13:7,17

6.5.8 Matters of private concern to the church must be kept in strict confidence, and business discussed in Church Meetings should not be divulged to those outside the membership.¹

¹Lev 19:16 Prov 11:13 18:8 20:19 1 Tim 5:13 1 Pet 4:15

6.5.9 In daily life, obedience should be rendered to the moral precepts established in the Word of God, so that a consistent witness and testimony are made to the world.¹

¹Ps 93:5 Matt 5:17-19 Rom 7:12,22 Heb 8:10 James 2:8 1 Cor 10:32 Phil 2:15
1 Pet 2:12 3:16

6.6 Privileges

6.6.1 Members may regard themselves as under the pastoral care of the Minister and Elders, to whom they direct access for consultation and prayer whenever mutually convenient.¹

¹Act 20:28 Eph 4:11-16 1 Pet 5:1-3

6.6.2 Members may expect to enjoy the love of their fellow-members¹ and prayer will regularly be offered on their behalf.²

¹Jn13:34,35 Act 4:32 ²Rom 12:15,16 Eph 6:18

6.6.3 Members can count on receiving practical assistance whenever necessary and possible.¹

¹Deut 15:7,8 Ps 37:26 41:1-3 Gal 6:9,10 Heb 13:16

6.6.4 Members have the opportunity of using gifts and talents in a variety of spheres in the church.¹

¹Rom 12:6-8 1 Pet 4:8-10

6.6.5 Members are able to attend Church Meetings,¹ but they must be at least eighteen years old to participate in the discussion and to be involved in the making of decisions. Members under eighteen years of age shall be non-voting members. At the discretion of the Elders, members living away from this area temporarily, but for a substantial period (e.g. students, service personnel, those on special work assignments), shall also be regarded as non-voting members.

¹Act 6:2,3 15:4,12,22-31 1 Cor 5:1-5

6.7 Termination by Voluntary Withdrawal

6.7.1 Members moving away permanently from the area will be encouraged to seek fellowship and membership in a church nearer their home.¹ They may retain non-voting membership in this church until they become members elsewhere. This

should not normally be for more than one year, but in special circumstances this time may be extended.

¹Acts 18:27 Rom 16:1,2 Col 4:10

- 6.7.2 Members who desire to transfer attendance to another church for some reason other than described, should write to the Elders informing them of the reason.¹

¹Acts 20:28-31

- 6.7.3 If the reason is considered spiritual and adequate, release from membership will be granted and normally a letter of commendation will be written.¹

¹Acts 18:27 2 Cor 3:1

- 6.7.4 If on the other hand, the reason is considered unspiritual and inadequate, the Elders will bring the matter, together with their recommendations, before the gathered church.¹ In such a case the Elders will refuse to grant a letter of commendation to another church.

¹Eph 4:3 Heb 10:25 Rom 16:17

- 6.7.5 Application for release from membership will not be granted to members subject to or under the corrective discipline of the church, and no letters of commendation will be written for them. In their case the normal disciplinary procedures will be followed.¹

¹Matt 18:15-17 2 Thess 3:6 Titus 3:10

6.8 Termination by Disciplinary Dismissal

- 6.8.1 Members are subject to Christ's discipline (i.e. his instruction and correction) and this is administered through the church.¹

¹Matt 16:19 18:15-20 1 Cor 5:12 Heb 12:5-11

- 6.8.2 The purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by rendering obedience to his Word;¹ to preserve the purity and health of the church by taking the steps necessary to prevent the spread of evil;² and to restore those who err in doctrine or behaviour by convincing them of the offence.³

¹Rom 2:23,24 Eph 3:21 1 Tim 3:15 ²1 Cor 5:6-8 Heb 12:15 Rev 2:14,15,20
³2 Cor 2:6-8 Gal 6:1 2 Thess 3:14

- 6.8.3 Any disciplinary action should be carried out in the spirit of Christian love and humility, and in accordance with the teaching and example of God's Word.¹

¹Gal 6:1 2 Tim 2:24-26

- 6.8.4 Any member who is habitually absent from church services, except for unavoidable reasons,¹ or who ceases to assent to the Church Covenant, or who disagrees with the Church's Statement of Faith, or who is no longer willing to be subject to this Constitution,² or who disturbs the unity and peace of the church,³ or who brings dishonour upon the name of Christ by conduct unworthy of a Christian,⁴ shall be

visited by the Elders and urged to resume fellowship, acknowledge any doctrinal error, or repent of any fault.⁵

¹Ex 20:8 Acts 20:30,31 Heb 10:23-31 ²1 Tim 1:19,20 Titus 1:10-14 3:10

³Matt 18:16-18 Rom 16:17,18 2 Thess 3:6 ⁴1 Cor 5:11 1 Tim 6:3-5 2 Tim 3:1-5

⁵Gal 6:1 Heb 13:17

- 6.8.5 If there is not a satisfactory response, the members will be visited by the Elders and warned that, unless there is evidence of repentance, suspension will result. This censure consists in the withdrawal of membership privileges, including partaking of the Lord's Supper, exercising gifts and responsibilities in the church, and attending Church Meetings. There being no sign of repentance, these exclusions will be put into effect.¹

¹2 Thess 3:14,15

- 6.8.6 If after still further visits by Elders, the person refuse to respond, that member's name shall be brought before a Church Meeting by the Elders, with the recommendation that his or her membership be terminated. Following agreement by the church, that person shall be removed from the membership of the church.¹

¹Matt 18:17 1 Cor 5:1-5 11:13 Gal 5:12 Titus 3:10

- 6.8.7 If the offender subsequently gives satisfactory evidence of repentance, he or she should be forgiven¹ and received back into membership at the discretion of the church.²

¹Matt 18:21,22 ²2 Cor 2:6-8

7 CHURCH MEETINGS

- 7.1 The church shall meet to transact its business at least four times a year.
- 7.2 Special Church Meetings may be called by the Elders or when 15% of the total voting church membership make a written request for such a meeting.
- 7.3 The Annual General Meeting shall normally be held in March.
- 7.4 At the Annual General Meeting the Minister shall read to the gathered church the Church's Statement of Faith and the members shall declare their purpose to continue in adherence to all its doctrines. The Minister shall also read to the church the Church Covenant and the members shall solemnly renew this covenant with the Lord and with each other. Prayer shall then be offered for divine assistance and blessing.
- 7.5 The Church Treasurer shall present an audited financial statement at the Annual General Meeting, the accounts of all organizations of the church having been made up to the end of the church year (December 31st) and having been audited by at least two members appointed at the previous Church Meeting.
- 7.6 An agenda shall be issued to members at least ten days before any Church Meeting and announcement of such a meeting shall be made at the regular worship services on two successive Lord's Days immediately prior to the meeting. In an emergency, however, a meeting may be called at shorter notice, providing each member is personally notified.

- 7.7 No motion, other than a motion on the part of the Elders or Deacons, shall be brought forward without prior notice. Any member desiring to submit such notice of motion shall send an intimation in writing to the Church Secretary at least one month before the Church Meeting. The Chairman may admit, at his discretion, amendments proposed from the meeting to motions already tabled. If a motion is passed only after amendment, it will not be given effect until ratified at a meeting of the church officers.
- 7.8 All members who have reached the age of eighteen years may participate in the discussion and exercise voting power at Church Meetings.
- 7.9 A quorum shall consist of one half of those church members eligible to vote.
- 7.10 In all matters except those specified (the election of officers, and the alteration of the Constitution), a majority vote of the voting members present shall be required to make a resolution valid. However, the church should seek and pray for unanimity of heart and mind under God at all times.
- 7.11 When a vote of the total voting church membership is required, those unable to attend shall vote by means of an absentee ballot. Such votes must be received by the Church Secretary prior to the commencement of the Church Meeting. Members should regard attendance, however, as of the utmost importance, and they should do everything in their power to be present, for it is when the church is gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus that he is in the midst both to guide and to bless. Only if unavoidably prevented from attending should members vote by means of the absentee ballot.
- 7.12 When an equality of votes occurs, the Chairman shall have the casting vote.
- 7.13 Minutes shall be kept of the proceedings and resolutions of all Church Meetings, and such minutes shall be confirmed at the next appropriate meeting and signed by the Chairman. All minutes so confirmed and signed shall be accepted as the correct record of the meeting to which they relate.

8 GENERAL MATTERS

- 8.1 Apart from the church's own services and meetings, the premises shall not be used for other meetings and activities, except by permission of the church officers.
- 8.2 No literature shall be displayed, distributed, or sold on church premises without the permission of the church officers.
- 8.3 New meetings or organizations within the church must be approved by the church officers and the members.
- 8.4 The church's financial needs shall be met by regular systematic giving, and by occasional special giving. No appeal or collection will be made without the agreement of the church officers.
- 8.5 Any matter not covered by this Constitution shall be considered by the Elders and, if necessary, by the Deacons, the final authority in such matters being vested in the church.

8.6 No alteration of, or addition to, this Constitution shall be made without the agreement of the Elders and 75% of the total voting church membership at a Church Meeting convened for that purpose.

