

CONSTITUTION OF THE BETHEL CHRISTIAN CHURCH

1. NAME

The Church shall be called the Bethel Christian Church.

2. OBJECTS

The objects of the Church are the advancement of Christ's Kingdom by

- a. Spreading the Gospel,
- b. The nurture of the faith of Christian believers in the Scriptures, in prayers, in fellowship, in Christian service and worship;
- c. Cooperation with other churches and organisations of similar faith in evangelism and mission at home and overseas.

3. DOCTRINAL BASIS

- a. We affirm the historic ecumenical statements known as the Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed and Definition of Chalcedon, and acknowledge them as the central confession of the universal Christian Church.

In addition:

- b. We believe in the Old and New Testaments as inspired of God and wholly trustworthy, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life.
- c. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- d. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary, and is true God and true man inseparably joined in one person for ever.
- e. We believe that humanity was created in the image of God, that we sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God; and that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
- f. We believe in the personality of the devil and the universality and heinousness of sin.
- g. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.
- h. We believe that salvation is by grace through faith, and that all who by faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit, and are adopted as children of God.
- i. We believe in the physical resurrection of our Lord, in His ascension into Heaven, and in His present life there for us, as High Priest and Advocate.
- j. We believe in the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to gather His elect, to manifest His Kingdom in power and glory, to judge the world in righteousness, and to renew the whole creation
- k. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the impenitent.
- l. We believe that the Church is the community of all who have been born again through faith in Christ and have been formed by His Spirit into one body, of which He is the head, and that the Church is commissioned to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.
- m. We believe that the gift of marriage, as defined by the Scriptures, is a covenant between one man and one woman for life, and is the only form of marriage that is a true expression of the image of Christ and the church.

4. SACRAMENTS

The Church Sacraments include,

- a. Baptism. The Church believes that those who have the assurance of salvation should be baptised. Authority to accept candidates for baptism shall rest with the Pastor who performs the baptism. The Church recognises both forms of baptism, and candidates for baptism shall themselves choose to be baptised, either by effusion or by immersion.
- b. Holy communion. The Church follows the teachings of the Holy Scriptures in observing the Holy Communion. The emblems of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are to be taken in faith by believers.

5. MEMBERSHIP

- a. The membership of the Church shall be open to those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, who accept the objectives and doctrines of this Church, and who are committed to worship and service within the context of this Church. Authority to approve applicants for, and to accept transfer of or removal or resignation from membership, shall rest with the Church Council.
- b. All communicant members of the Church will be eligible to vote at the General Meeting of the Church.
- c. Associate membership shall be open to those who attend meetings of the Church regularly, and are in sympathy with its objectives and doctrines.
- d. Associate members will be eligible to speak in the General meeting of the Church, and vote on any matter concerning finance or property, but not in the election of a pastor, elders and deacons, nor in changes relating to the Constitution.
- e. Any member shall have their membership cancelled or changed to Associate if they cease participation in Church activities for an extended period of time.
- f. The chairman of the Church Council (see 9b.) or his nominee shall be responsible for maintaining a formal register of full and associate members

6. PASTOR

- a. The call to a Pastor and the terms and conditions of office shall be firstly considered by the Church Council and if deemed fit, recommended to the members for approval at a General Meeting in accordance with Section 9 (a).
- b. The Pastor shall be the spiritual leader of the Church and shepherd of the flock in accordance with Scriptural teaching and the objects and doctrines of the Church.
- c. The Pastor shall be engaged in the preaching and teaching of the Church. He may delegate this aspect of his duties to members of the congregation as he sees fit.
- d. The Pastor shall implement spiritual development programs for the Church in conjunction with the elders and deacons.
- e. The Pastor shall initiate evangelistic and missionary work, locally and abroad.
- f. The Pastor shall celebrate the Sacraments as stated in the Constitution. He will be assisted by the elders of the Church.
- g. The Pastor will function as part of the eldership and deemed as its leading member.
- h. The Pastor will be encouraged and expected to seek accountability and support through a mentor, a collegiate or an association that exists for such a purpose. This should normally be outside of the existing structures within this church.

7. ELDERS

- a. A member, with suitable spiritual maturity, and recommended by the Church Council, may be elected elder. The election shall be subject to the provisions set out in section 10.
- b. He will assist the Pastor in the carrying out of his duties as set out in section 6.
- c. In addition to the above, the elders will have the following duties and responsibilities.
 - i. to share with the pastor in building up the congregation in faith and love;
 - ii. to nurture the members in their growth in grace;
 - iii. to visit regularly the members, members in association and adherents;
 - iv. to share with the pastor in the conduct of worship, the administration of the sacraments, the spiritual oversight of the congregation, and in Christian education and evangelistic outreach;
 - v. to exercise pastoral discipline;
 - vi. deleted.
- d. In the absence of a pastor, the eldership shall elect a member to assume the functions of the pastor and he shall be deemed as its leader member.
- e. The eldership shall meet monthly or more regularly for prayers, reflection and reports.

8. DEACONS

- a. A member with suitable spiritual maturity, and recommended by the Church Council, may be elected deacon. The election shall be subject to the provisions set out in section 10.
- b. The deacons shall be responsible for,
 - i. The general administration of the Church.
 - ii. The management of all properties owned by the Church.
 - iii. Assisting the Pastor in the administration of the Sacraments, and in the advancement of the spiritual welfare of the members of the Church.
- c. The diaconate shall elect from within its members, a chairman, secretary, treasurer and other office bearers as it becomes necessary.
- d. The diaconate shall meet at least four times a year. Church Council meetings (see 9.b) may count as a diaconate meeting.

- e. A member or members of the eldership shall attend all diaconate meetings.

9. ORGANISATION

- a. The General Meeting
 - i. The authority of this Church is vested in the General Meeting.
 - ii. The Annual General Meeting shall be held on a date determined by the Church Council.
 - iii. If necessary, an Extraordinary General Meeting may be called by the Church Council.
 - iv. A quorum at these General Meetings shall consist of 60% of the membership. Notice of these meetings shall be given at least 2 weeks before the General Meetings.
 - v. Changes to the Constitution, appointment of a Pastor, election of elders and deacons, or other matters of importance as determined by the Church Council, shall be included in the Notice of Meeting for consideration by members at a General Meeting and approved by an affirmative vote of at least 80% of the eligible members as defined in Section 5 (b) electing to vote. Proposed changes to the Constitution, appointment of a Pastor, election of elders and deacons, or other matters of importance as determined by the Church Council, must be submitted in writing to the Church Council, for its consideration and approval at least 2 weeks prior to the issue of the Notice of General Meeting.
 - vi. Any other matters listed in the Notice of Meeting other than matters covered in Section 9 (a) (v), submitted to members for consideration at a General Meeting, shall be approved by a simple majority of eligible members electing to vote.
 - vii. For the purposes of determining members eligible to attend and vote at General Meetings, the membership register as defined in Clause 5 shall close 1 day before the issue of the Notice of General Meeting.
 - viii. Voting on all matters at a General Meeting, may be by proxy or in person by a member eligible to vote. Only formal votes returned will be counted for the purposes of sections 9 (a) (v) and 9 (a) (vi).
- b. The Church Council
 - i. The Church Council shall consist of the Pastor, the elders and the deacons.
 - ii. The Church Council shall meet to consider nominations to the pastorate, church council, changes to the constitution and matters of significant proportion to the church. A quorum shall consist of at least 60% of its members.
 - iii. The Church Council shall elect from its members a chairman.
 - iv. The Church Council may appoint any Church member to be responsible for areas of service other than the areas mentioned in Sections 6, 7 and 8.

10. ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL

- a. The person may be nominated as an Elder or a Deacon by any member of the Church.
- b. The nomination shall be considered by the Church Council, and their approval required.
- c. The nomination shall be put to the Church members for their prayers, consideration and approval in accordance with Section 9.

11. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CHURCH'S MONEY

- a. The financial year shall run from 1 July to 30 June of the following year.
- b. There shall be four signatories to the bank account, of which two signatures are needed for the withdrawal of Church money.
- c. The treasurer is elected from the diaconate and shall be responsible for the planning of the Church finances. This includes the budget proposal for each year which shall be put forward to the congregation for approval.
- d. At each annual general meeting, the members shall appoint a person to be auditor of the church. The auditor shall hold office until the next annual general meeting and is eligible for re-appointment. If an appointment is not made at an annual general meeting, the Church Council shall appoint an auditor for the current financial year.
- e. Money given for specified purposes will be forwarded as from the Church in accordance with the wishes of the contributor. Such money shall be in addition to any commitment in the church budget.
- f. The assets and income of the organisation shall be applied solely in furtherance of its above-mentioned objects and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the organisation except as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation.

- g. In the event of the organisation being dissolved, the amount that remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be transferred to another organisation with similar purposes which is not carried on for profit or gain of members.

12. DISCIPLINE

Those members who should act against the teaching of the Bible, or against the objects and doctrines of the Church, shall, as deemed fit by the Pastor and the elders and deacons, be exhorted, admonished, or disciplined; or if deemed necessary by a unanimous vote of the Church Council, be removed from membership. This action does not preclude attendance at public meetings of the Church, unless their presence poses a risk to the safety or wellbeing of Church members.

13. THE CHURCH'S STAND ON 'SPIRITUAL GIFTS'

- a. The Bethel Christian Church believes that God the Holy Spirit gives to whomsoever He chooses, whensoever He chooses, either temporarily or permanently whichever gifts from the list of gifts of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament that He chooses to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
- b. In the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, as in all other activity the admonition of 1 Corinthians 13 is emphasised. 'If I speak in the tongues of man and angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I am nothing.'

14. AFFILIATIONS

- a. The Church may become a member of an association for the purposes of working together to further the work of the Gospel, and for accountability and fellowship.
- b. Any association the Church joins must have objects and a doctrinal basis that is compatible with those of the Church (See section 3)
- c. Membership in such an association must have the approval of the Church Council and Members, and may only be approved after a minimum period of three months of investigation and prayerful consideration. Likewise, withdrawal from the association should follow the same process.
- d. Payment of any fees required for membership in the association should not hinder use of church funds in furthering its objects.
- e. Membership in such an association should not limit the independence of the Church, nor require changes to the Church's governance, practice or doctrinal basis, and should allow withdrawal at any time without penalty.

15. AGREEMENT WITH CONSTITUTION

As this constitution is integral to the unity of the Church, members are expected to read it regularly and abide by it.

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