

# **THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN - CONSTITUTION**

## **PART 1**

### **1 NAME**

The Baptist Union of Great Britain.

### **2 CONSTITUENCY**

The Union shall consist of the Churches, Associations of Churches, Colleges, other Baptist organisations and persons who are for the time being in membership with the Union.

### **3 DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE**

The basis of this Union is:

- 3.1 That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His Laws.
- 3.2 That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day".
- 3.3 That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

### **4 THE OBJECT OF THE UNION**

The object of the Union is the advancement of the Christian faith and its practice, especially by the means of and in accordance with the principles of the Baptist Denomination in particular, but not exclusively, through any or all of the following means:

- 4.1 To cultivate among its own members respect and love for one another, and to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4.2 To spread the Gospel of Christ by ministers and evangelists, by establishing Churches, forming Sunday schools, distributing the Scriptures, issuing religious publications, and by such other methods as the Council shall determine.
- 4.3 To afford opportunities for conference, and for united action on questions affecting the welfare of the Churches, the support of the ministry, and the extension of the Christian faith, both at home and abroad.
- 4.4 To promote good relations between Baptists in this and other countries.
- 4.5 To obtain and disseminate accurate information respecting the organisations, labours and sufferings of Baptists throughout the world.
- 4.6 To confer and co-operate with other Christian communities as occasion may require.

### **5 OPERATIONS**

The Union shall act by the Assembly, through a Council constituted in accordance with Part 2 of the Constitution, and shall be administered and managed by a Trustee Board as Charity Trustees constituted in accordance with Part 2 of the Constitution.

### **6 MEMBERSHIP**

Applications for membership with the Union shall be submitted to the Council, and shall be accepted upon a majority voting in favour thereof. The constituency and list of Members may be revised by the Council, and its decision shall be duly notified to the persons concerned, who shall have the right of appeal to the Assembly.

## 7 THE ASSEMBLY

- 7.1 The Assembly shall consist of Representative, Personal and Associate Members;
- 7.2 Representative members shall consist of:
  - 7.2.1 all Ministers on the Register of Covenanted Persons Accredited for Ministry in categories 1, 2 and 3 and Ministers and Assistant Ministers of Baptist Churches in membership with the Union;
  - 7.2.2 the Council and Officers of the Union;
  - 7.2.3 delegates from Churches, Associations of Churches, and Colleges in membership with the Baptist Union. Churches not exceeding 100 members may appoint one delegate; more than 100, two delegates; and more than 200, three delegates. Associations and Colleges may appoint two delegates each. Delegates shall be appointed for each meeting of the Assembly, and their appointment duly notified to the General Secretary before 31 March in each year; and
  - 7.2.4 two ministerial students of each College, to be elected by the students of the College to which they belong.
- 7.3 Personal Members shall be Baptists or members of Baptist Churches who shall have been duly accredited in writing by at least three members of the Assembly, and accepted by the Council prior to Assembly 2007.
- 7.4 Associate Members, elected annually by the Council, shall comprise retired ministers whose last church was in membership with the Union, retired deaconesses and retired missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society.
- 7.5 The Assembly shall meet annually in the Spring. The Council shall have power to summon a Special Assembly.

## 8 THE OFFICERS

The Officers of the Union shall be the President, the President Elect, the Vice-President, the Ex-President, the Treasurer, the Moderator of the Trustee Board and the General Secretary.

## 9 ALTERATION OF PART 1 OF THE CONSTITUTION

Part 1 of the Constitution may be amended by a Resolution of the Assembly approved by not less than two thirds of the Representative Members present and voting after notice of the proposed Resolution has been given in writing to a previous meeting of the Assembly.

## **PART 2**

### 1 THE COUNCIL

The general policy of the Union, subject to any directions of the Assembly, shall be decided by a Council consisting of:

- 1.1 three representatives of each Association in membership with the Union and listed in the Byelaws;
- 1.2 the General Secretary and Treasurer;
- 1.3 the President, ex-President and President-elect;
- 1.4 one member of the full time tutorial staff of each of the Colleges in membership with the Union, such person to be appointed by each of such Colleges;
- 1.5 those appointed by the Trustees to senior responsibility within the Union (known collectively as the Baptist Steering Group) and who are not already members of Council under clause 1.1 to 1.4;

- 1.6 two representatives from each of BMS World Mission, Baptist Union of Scotland and Baptist Union of Wales, and one representative from the Irish Baptist Network, such members to be appointed by each of such bodies;
- 1.7 twelve persons co-opted by the Council in accordance with the provisions of clause 1.13 of Part 2 of the Constitution;
- 1.8 the Moderator of the Council, who shall be elected by such means and for such term as the Council shall determine;
- 1.9 the members of the Trustee Board;
- 1.10 two ecumenical representatives to be appointed in such manner as the Council may from time to time decide.

#### Association Representatives

- 1.11 Associations shall be represented on the Council as follows:
  - 1.11.1 The Association's representative(s) shall be appointed by such method as the Association shall decide, giving consideration to the concerns for balance named in clause 1.13, but with the proviso that no one shall be appointed for a term of service to exceed three years but this proviso shall not exclude the possibility of that person being appointed for a further term or terms.
  - 1.11.2 The Association's representative(s) shall be notified in writing addressed to the General Secretary before the first of June in each year but if during the period of appointment, a representative shall resign or die, or is ineligible to serve, another representative may be appointed by the Association to serve in place of such representative.

#### Alternates

- 1.12 If a Council member appointed under clauses 1.1, 1.4 or 1.6 is unable for good reason to attend a particular meeting of Council, the relevant appointing body may nominate an alternate to sit in his or her place.

#### Co-opted members

- 1.13 Co-options are intended to enable the membership of the Council to honour the diversity of the Union. Any member of a Church in membership with the Union may be considered for co-option by the Council. Co-options shall be made primarily for the purpose of ensuring so far as reasonably possible the following balances within the total membership of the Council, attention to which shall also be taken by those otherwise appointing or electing members:
  - 1.13.1 No fewer than 20% of Council members shall be from Black and Minority Ethnic communities;
  - 1.13.2 No fewer than 40% of Council members shall be women and no fewer than 40% shall be men;
  - 1.13.3 No fewer than 30% of Council members shall be lay;
  - 1.13.4 No fewer than 10% of Council members shall be people with disabilities;
  - 1.13.5 No fewer than 10% of Council members shall be people under 40 years of age at the time of appointment or reappointment.
- 1.14 Co-options shall be made by the Council in such manner and for such period as the Council may from time to time determine with the proviso that no one shall be co-opted for a term of service to exceed three years but this proviso shall not exclude the possibility of that person being co-opted for a further term or terms.

## Quorum

1.15 Twenty five members of the Council shall form a quorum.

## Attendance

1.16 No person shall be entitled to serve as a member of the Council for a period of twelve months after that person has failed to attend at least one meeting of the Council in the previous period of twelve months unless such non attendance was due to sickness or incapacity or has been certified as being for good reason by the General Secretary acting on the advice of the Trustee Board.

## 2 THE CENTRAL FUND OF THE UNION

The Union shall promote and maintain a Central Fund (the "Fund").

- 2.1 The main object of the Fund is, by unity of appeal and action and the encouragement of systematic giving on a denominational basis to promote the constitutional object of the Union and in particular the following objects (but so that these objects are ancillary to the main object and not so as to extend the objects of the Fund beyond such main object) of enabling the Union with its member bodies to discharge more adequately the task of the care of all the churches and of fostering the evangelical witness and evangelistic enterprise in and through the churches and of assuming the responsibility for the better support of the ministry of the Gospel.
- 2.2 The finance of sites and buildings is not, save in exceptional circumstances, an object of the Fund, provided that in this Fund the expression 'finance of sites and buildings' does not mean or include –
- 2.2.1 the acquisition, erection or improvement of premises intended for, or already in, the actual occupation of the Union or its employees;
  - 2.2.2 the making of loans (whether or not carrying interest) for the purpose of assisting any association or church, or other Baptist organisation, to acquire, erect or improve any premises occupied, or intended to be occupied, for any of the constitutional objects of the Union;
  - 2.2.3 the acquisition, erection or improvement of premises by way of investment.
- 2.3 The Fund shall be administered by the Trustee Board, in accordance with Bye Laws made by the Council.

## 3 PRESIDENCY OF THE UNION

- 3.1 The President of the Baptist Union shall be the President Elect of the previous year and shall take office at the annual Assembly. The President Elect shall be the Vice-President of the previous year and shall take office at the annual Assembly.
- 3.2 The Vice-President shall be elected, by ballot, annually.
- 3.3 Nominations, which must receive the consent of the nominees before being sent in, may be received from the Council voting by ballot, from any Association in membership with the Union, or from any twenty-five Members of the Assembly acting jointly.
- 3.4 All nominations must be forwarded in writing addressed to the General Secretary not later than 31st December in each year. If no nomination is received then the Vice-President will be nominated by the Council.
- 3.5 No withdrawal shall take place after nominations have been received, save under exceptional circumstances with the consent of the Trustee Board.

- 3.6 The election shall be according to the principle of the Alternative Vote, unless there is only one nomination.
- 3.7 In the ballot for the Vice-President every member of the Assembly (other than delegates from Churches) and all Churches in membership with the Union shall be entitled to vote and each Church shall have the same number of votes as the number of delegates it is entitled to appoint to the Assembly.
- 3.8 All voting papers in the ballot for the Vice-President shall be sent to persons and Churches entitled to receive them by 31st January and shall be returned addressed to the General Secretary on or before 31st March. In case of equal votes being cast the Assembly shall decide.
- 3.9 Should the President, the President Elect, or the Vice-President die, resign, or become incapacitated, the vacancy so caused shall be filled by the Council.

#### 4 THE TRUSTEES

The administration and governance of the Union shall be the responsibility of a Trustee Board.

- 4.1 The Trustee Board shall comprise a Moderator appointed by the Council, the General Secretary (notwithstanding the person is a paid employee), the Treasurer, and nine other persons elected by the Council by such method as the Council shall from time to time decide.
- 4.2 Any member of a Baptist church in membership with the Union may be nominated to serve as a Trustee.
- 4.3 Trustees will normally be appointed by the Council for a three year period, with the proviso that no-one except ex-officio Trustees should serve for more than three consecutive terms or part terms of service, except that on appointment as Moderator previous service is disregarded. Three Trustees will normally be appointed or reappointed each year.
- 4.4 Trustees may be removed by the Council following a vote carried by a two thirds majority of those present and voting on a proposal for removal, with reasons, signed by twelve members of the Council.
- 4.5 Any Trustee failing to attend at least 50% of the Trustee Board meetings and one Council meeting in any calendar year, unless such non attendance was due to sickness or incapacity, or has been excused by a resolution of the Council, shall be disqualified from office.
- 4.6 Any casual vacancy on the Trustee Board, caused by disqualification or any other reason, shall be filled by the Council by such method as the Council shall from time to time decide.
- 4.7 Six members of the Trustee Board shall form a quorum.
- 4.8 The Treasurer shall be elected at the Annual Assembly.
- 4.9 The Trustees shall appoint a Baptist Steering Group to exercise leadership and manage the implementation of agreed strategies and policies.

#### 5 GENERAL SECRETARY

The General Secretary shall be elected by the Assembly upon the nomination of the Council.

#### 6 SESSIONS OF THE ASSEMBLY

- 6.1 The agenda of the sessions of the Assembly shall be approved by the Council. The President, in consultation with the Officers, shall determine which items of business require to be handled under procedure A and which under procedure B. Assembly shall have the power to move from procedure A to procedure B or vice versa for a specific item, irrespective of the President's ruling, if a 75% majority agree to do so.

- 6.2. Procedure A shall be a form of consensus decision-making, operating under rules proposed from time to time by the Council and agreed by the Assembly. The aim of these rules shall be to enable a common mind to emerge from a process of sharing, listening, drafting and redrafting. Decisions arising from this process may include: (i) directions to the Council to consider an issue; (ii) advice, encouragement or exhortation to member bodies of the Union; (iii) communications of Baptist self-understanding to other parts of Christ's church; or (iv) communication to the wider world of views discerned as commonly held among Baptists.
- 6.3 Procedure B shall be a form of majority decision-making, appropriate for formal business and public statements, operating on the following rules:
- 6.3.1 Notices of motions by members of the Assembly must be notified in writing addressed to the General Secretary, signed by the proposer, not later than the fiftieth day before the first day of the Assembly. The Council shall determine what resolutions shall be included in the agenda and in what order they shall be considered save that the Council shall include in the agenda any resolution affecting the Constitution if the notice of such motion is supported by an Association in membership with the Union or by at least twenty Churches in membership with the Union.
- 6.3.2 The terms of any resolutions to be proposed at the Assembly either by a member of the Assembly or on behalf of the Council, shall not later than the thirtieth day before the first day of the Assembly be communicated to members of the Assembly in such manner as the Council may determine.
- 6.3.3 Notice of any proposed amendment of any such resolution shall be notified in writing to the General Secretary, signed by five members of the Assembly, not later than the fifteenth day before the first day of the Assembly but this proviso shall not apply to any such amendment as may be proposed by the person presiding at the Assembly or by the General Secretary
- 6.4 When any business is before the Assembly, any member may request that a decision shall be taken by the votes of Representative Members only, and if this request be supported by at least one hundred members of the Assembly the person presiding, in putting the resolution, shall accept only the votes of Representative Members.

## 7 FINANCE

- 7.1 An Annual Subscription shall be paid by each Church, Association, College or other Baptist organisation in membership with the Union not less than such amount or amounts as the Council shall from time to time determine.
- 7.2 Subscriptions for each year shall fall due on 1st of January.
- 7.3 The name of any Church, Association, College, or other Baptist organisation, whose subscription is more than one year in arrears shall be reported to the Council, which may determine its membership.
- 7.4 Auditors for the year shall be appointed by the Trustee Board.

## 8 TRANSFER OF ASSETS

In fulfilment of the object of the Union the Trustee Board or Assembly may resolve to sell, lease, gift or otherwise dispose of all or any part of the assets of the Union.

## 9 MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

- 9.1 The Council shall meet not less than twice a year.

- 9.2 Meetings of the Council shall be summoned by the General Secretary, or other person designated by the Trustee Board to hold such authority, who shall summon a special meeting on the written request of not fewer than twelve members of the Council, stating the objects.
- 9.3 The business to be transacted by the Council shall, as far as possible, be indicated on the notice summoning the meeting.
- 9.4 The attendance of members at meetings of the Council and Advisory Groups shall be registered.

## 10 ADVISORY GROUPS

The Trustees, the Baptist Steering Group or the Council may appoint such Advisory Groups as they shall from time to time decide.

## 11 THE DIRECTORY

The matters to be published in the directory shall be determined by the Council.

## 12 DATES

Wherever in the Constitution dates are specified for the submission of nominations or the sending and return of voting papers and wherever periods of time are specified for the giving of notice of a motion, notice of resolutions or notice of amendments of resolutions the Council may substitute such other dates and periods of time in respect of any Assembly as it may deem to be necessary having regard to the date of that Assembly.

## 13 CHANGE OF PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

Part 2 of the Constitution may be amended by a resolution of the Assembly approved by not less than two thirds of the Representative Members present and voting.

**MAY 2018**