

## SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

### **Article 1**

#### Authority.

The Trust Deed shall be abided by at all times and takes precedence over the Constitution. A full copy of the Trust Deed must be held in the church office for members to inspect at any reasonable time. Standing Orders give the rulings as to how the Constitution shall be implemented.

### **Article 2**

#### Name & Governance.

The name of this fellowship shall be The Congregational Church, xxxxx. Governance of this fellowship shall be through the Church Meeting, being the Church Members gathered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to seek the mind of Christ.

### **Article 3**

#### Mission Statement.

The purposes for which this fellowship was formed and is continuing are as follows:

1. To maintain a centre of Christian life and influence in the community and to support the fellowship of the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world.
2. To develop a depth of spiritual knowledge and commitment within the fellowship and proclaim clearly to those outside of the fellowship the love of God offered towards them and in particular the need, truth and assurance of salvation.
3. To do such things and to have and exercise such rights, privileges and powers conferred by law upon a religious corporation or church as may from time to time seem good to the Church Meeting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
4. While recognising the expedience and privilege of seeking the advice of other Christian Churches and associating with them for mutual advantage and service to others, to remain a free and autonomous body in matters of church governance and not to accept any form of ecclesiastical constitution or authority other than that formed and accepted by the Church Meeting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **Article 4**

#### Role and Responsibility of Members.

Members shall:

1. Set aside time for prayers and private devotions, seeking to grow in Christian stature and faith.
2. Gather together for worship and partaking of the Lord's Supper regularly
3. Support the ministry of the Church prayerfully and practically in every way possible.
4. Work under the leadership of the Spirit through the church body and structure, attempting to strengthen and increase the Kingdom of God on earth.
5. Attend Church Meetings regularly.

### **Article 5**

Membership. New members: Acceptance into membership shall be following a recommendation to the Church Meeting by Deacons and Minister, after interview. All new members shall be required to undergo instruction in Congregational polity and history. Members shall be accepted into Church Membership during worship at the first available communion service after approval at a Church Meeting.

Removal from Membership: The Roll of Members will be updated annually, by the Diaconate. Any recommendations for amendment will be submitted to the Church Meeting for approval.

### **Article 6**

The Minister. The Minister shall have in charge the spiritual welfare and growth of the Congregation. The Minister shall be chosen and called by the Church Meeting when, after appropriate interview by both Diaconate and Church Meeting, a 90% majority at a Meeting called specially for that purpose are in favour of calling that person. A quorum for such a special Meeting shall be at least 51% of the Church Membership.

While the term of the Minister may be indefinite, the Church may, at any time, by a 90% majority vote of Church members at a Meeting called specially for that purpose, request

his/her resignation with the understanding that it will be presented within a mutually agreed time. A quorum for such a special Meeting shall be at least 51% of the Church Membership. In the event of the above meetings, all members shall be informed at least three weeks beforehand.

#### **Article 7**

The Diaconate. The Diaconate shall be appointed by the Church Meeting and shall be responsible for the general day to day organising and running of the Church and are empowered to act on the Church Meeting's behalf. The Secretary, the Treasurer and all other Deacons shall, when able, assist the Minister in worship and all pastoral duties and bring to the attention of the Minister any matters with which they feel he/she should be acquainted.

#### **Article 8**

Alteration of Constitution. This constitution may only be amended at an Annual General Church Meeting. All members shall be notified of the proposed amendments in writing at least three weeks before the Meeting. Changes will take effect from the date of the next Annual General Church Meeting.

### **COVENANT**

"We, this Church of Christ, having given ourselves to the Lord and to one another, according to the will of God, do promise and covenant and dedicate ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in love and in all the laws and ordinances of Christ, according to the commands of His blessed Gospel, through the same Jesus Christ so strengthening us. Amen".

### **STANDING ORDERS**

#### **ORDER 1. CHURCH MEETINGS.**

- 1.1 Attendance at Church Meetings shall be limited to members only, except by the specific invitation of the Church or Deacons' Meeting. Only Members are permitted to vote.
- 1.2 The Chair at Church Meetings shall normally be taken by the Minister but, if the Meeting agrees, any other person may Chair the Meeting.
- 1.3 Church Meetings shall normally take place on the third Tuesday of January, March, May, July and November.
- 1.4 The Annual General Church Meeting shall normally be held on the third Tuesday of September, each year.
- 1.5 Special Meetings may be called as required, and in accordance with the Trust Deed.
- 1.6 Minutes shall be taken at all meetings. Agendas and copies of the previous minutes shall normally be available to all members ten days before each Meeting.
- 1.7 A quorum shall comprise at least one quarter of the Membership Roll being present at the Church Meeting.
- 1.8 Only those attending a Meeting will be eligible to vote. No proxy votes are accepted at any Meeting.
- 1.9 Except when a written ballot is carried out, the method of voting at all meetings shall be by a show of hands. *The Chairman, upon request from the floor, may deem it desirable to use ballot papers when decisions may be of a personal nature (May 2001).*
- 1.10 All decisions at Church Meetings require a 75% majority of those present (except where otherwise stated).
- 1.11 The July Church Meeting shall review the maximum number of Deacons serving on the Diaconate.
- 1.12 At the Annual General Church Meeting, all elections to the Diaconate shall take place.
- 1.13 At the Annual General Church Meeting, office holders and representatives shall be appointed.
- 1.14 At the Annual General Church Meeting, the financial statement (for year ending 30/6) shall be presented.
- 1.15 At the Annual General Church Meeting, the annual Church tithe shall be decided.
- 1.16 Any Church Member wishing to raise any matter at the Church Meeting, should make every effort to notify the Church Secretary at least TWO weeks in advance, so that the

agenda can reflect this. The inclusion of matters under '*any other business*' (AOB) should be decided as the first item on the agenda, and at the discretion of the Chair.

1.17 When a special meeting is called to fulfill the requirements of article 6 of the Constitution and a vote is taken, a ballot paper shall be used. (May 2000).

## ORDER 2.        DIACONATE.

2.1 A quorum of two thirds of the Diaconate is required to conduct a Deacons' Meeting which shall normally be chaired by the Minister.

2.2 The Diaconate, which shall be appointed by the Church Meeting, shall comprise the Minister, the Church Secretary, the Church Treasurer, and a maximum of nine other elected Deacons. This number shall be reviewed annually. The Diaconate shall be elected from the Membership Roll and elected members of the Diaconate must have been members of the Church for not less than one year prior to their election.

2.3 The Church Secretary shall be elected annually at the Annual General Church Meeting.

2.4 The Church Treasurer shall be elected annually at the Annual General Church Meeting.

2.5 All *other* Deacons shall be elected at the Annual General Church Meeting for a term of office of three years. These Deacons may serve for two consecutive terms of office but must then stand down for at least one year before being eligible for re-election.

2.6 Nominations for the Diaconate must be submitted in writing to the Church Secretary one month before the date of the Annual General Church Meeting.

2.7 Method of election. Votes may only be cast by Church Members attending the Annual General Church Meeting. Ballot papers shall be used. If there are more candidates than vacancies then Order 2.8 shall apply. In the event of there being only the same number of candidates as vacancies or if there are less candidates than vacancies a ballot shall still take place and to be elected the candidate(s) must secure at least 75% of votes cast. Each Church Member may, if so prompted, vote for as many candidates as there are vacancies on the Diaconate.

2.8 If, at any election, there are more candidates than vacancies it may be necessary to hold more than one ballot to achieve the necessary 75% of votes cast. At the conclusion of the first ballot any candidate(s) achieving 75% or more shall be elected. Of the remaining candidates, those with the least votes will be required to stand down so that the number of candidates remaining equals the number of remaining vacancies. A second ballot will then be held with the intention that any candidate gaining 75% of votes cast shall be elected.

2.9 Two church members shall be appointed at the Annual General Church Meeting to oversee the ballot. The two members shall not be among those standing for election. The names of those elected shall be passed to the Chair of the Meeting for announcement.

## ORDER 3.        Co-options to the Diaconate

3.1 In the event of any vacancy, the Diaconate may co-opt an eligible Church Member to fill that vacancy. Any such co-option must be considered and voted upon by the next Church Meeting. Ballot papers shall be used. The term of any co-option shall run as if elected at the *previous* Annual General Church Meeting.

## ORDER 4.        Position of Standing Orders.

4.1 The Trust Deed, the Constitution and then Standing Orders shall be applied, **in that order.**

## ORDER 5.        Alteration of Standing Orders.

5.1 Standing Orders may be amended, or added to, upon the agreement of any Church Meeting providing that all members have been notified in writing at least two weeks in advance. Notice of intention **MUST** be included on the agenda. Changes will take effect from the next Church Meeting