

# **LIBANUS EVANGELICAL CHURCH** **CONSTITUTION**

**The provisions in this Constitution were originally agreed by members at a meeting on 20 January 1994 and subsequently amended at meetings of the members in March 1998, October 2000, 9th July 2003 and 21<sup>st</sup> October 2008. This version is as amended following a meeting of the members on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

## **FOREWORD TO THE CONSTITUTION**

Libanus was opened for public worship in 1782 as a Welsh-speaking Independent Calvinistic Chapel accepting the Savoy Declaration (1658) as its basis of doctrine. Y Tabernacl in Woodfield Street was opened in November 1872, with Libanus being re-opened in May 1873 as an English-speaking Chapel, and has since continued as such.

As a member church of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, Libanus decided not to enter the United Reformed Church in 1967, but to continue as an Independent Chapel, affiliating to the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. More locally, affiliation was made to the Evangelical Movement of Wales, and then to the Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales in 1988.

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**CONSTITUTION**

**1 NAME OF THE CHURCH**

The name of the church is Libanus Evangelical Church.

**2 OBJECT OF THE CHURCH**

The task of a local church is to glorify God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church which is His body.

The object of the church is to advance the Christian faith for the benefit of the public in accordance with the statements of belief appearing in Appendix A in particular but not exclusively:

- a In worship, prayer and praise to adore Him, ever seeking to grow in the knowledge of Him, and in all matters to obey Him.
- b To proclaim the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.
- c To build up its members in holiness and conformity to the will of God according to the Word of God.
- d To give clear instruction to new converts, so that they will understand as soon as possible the meaning, importance and implications of the whole counsel of God.
- e To instruct the children of the church in the Word of God.
- f To administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as instituted by our Lord.
- g To show, by deed as well as by word, the compassion of Christ, thus furthering the will of God in the world and to do so in particular in the local community in which the church meets
- h To promote interest and support for the spreading of the Gospel to all nations.
- i To preserve itself from error by bringing all its teaching and practice under the judgement of Scripture, and thus be enabled to pass on to mankind the faith once delivered to the saints.
- j To promote the fullest possible co-operation in fellowship and witness with all Churches and Fellowships who embrace the evangelical faith, as defined by reference to the Doctrinal basis of the church as set out in Appendix A.

### 3 MEMBERSHIP

Since the Church belongs to the One, True God, it is to consist of those and only those who have repented of their sins and who profess faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, as Saviour, Lord and God, whose death in their place constitutes the only ground of their salvation, and who now seek to live a life of holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit.

At least two of the officers of the church, plus the Pastor (subject to availability), shall examine with charity all candidates for membership, so as to ensure as far as humanly possible, that such persons have in fact experienced the new birth, which alone will enable them to make the above profession sincerely.

All potential new members shall be introduced to the doctrinal statements (see Appendix A) of the church and be required to give an assurance that in no way while in membership will they actively deny or resist the propagation of these truths. Those who have been approved, following their interview for membership, shall be accepted into membership before the church at the Lord's Supper, answering audibly the questions for membership (see Appendix B). Their names shall be entered upon a register of members maintained for that purpose under the control of the Pastor and church officers.

### 4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP

- a Members will be expected to accept the constitution of the church, and to adhere to the questions for membership.
- b Members who absent themselves from the church for three successive months, without reasonable grounds for absence shall be visited by one of the officers of the church, plus the Pastor (subject to availability; if not, another officer). If it should appear that their non-attendance is unjustifiable, and if they are absent for a further three months, it will be understood that they have withdrawn from membership, and the next church meeting informed of the same.
- c If any member bring dishonour upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ by conduct unworthy of his/her profession he/she shall be visited by one of the officers of the church, plus the Pastor (subject to availability; if not, another officer), and may be asked to withdraw from the Lord's Supper for such a period as may be necessary, or otherwise admonished, until repentance is evident.
- d In cases of disputes between members, the church recognises and encourages the procedure laid down in Matthew 18 vv 15-17.

### 5 ORDINANCES

#### a Baptism

The normal practice of the church is to baptise believers by immersion on confession of faith in Jesus Christ as their own Saviour, Lord and God, having satisfied at least one of the officers, plus the Pastor (subject to availability; if not, another officer), of the genuineness of such faith.

However, recognising that believers sincerely hold differing views on the ordinance of baptism, and not wishing to make baptism (a symbol of unity) into a divisive issue, the church also permits believers' baptism by effusion or sprinkling, and the infant baptism of the children of members by sprinkling, where these views are sincerely held, based on a careful study of the Scriptures. The church does not believe that baptism conveys regenerative grace. It is not a pre-requisite for membership, and members are not expected to recognise all these views.

b The Lord's Supper

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly, normally twice a month and at such other times as may be deemed desirable by the Pastor and church officers. The Table shall be open to all those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

**6 PASTOR**

- a We recognise the office of a Pastor called of God and by the church to be its spiritual leader to minister the Word of God, to exercise pastoral care for the members and to administer the ordinances. By his life and teaching he is to be faithful to his high calling, and he must be in full agreement with the constitution and doctrinal basis of the church.
- b The calling of a Pastor is a vital and important decision, so the church must be called to serious prayer that the Holy Spirit will lead and direct the members in their choice. The calling of a Pastor shall first require the unanimous recommendation of the church officers before this sole nomination is put to an extraordinary church meeting, called for that purpose. The Pastor shall be elected by secret ballot, and the nominee shall be deemed elected if at least two-thirds of those present vote in favour. On acceptance of the call, he shall be set apart and supported by the church.

**7 OTHER CHURCH WORKERS**

- a Other church workers must be in full agreement with the constitution and doctrinal basis of the church.
- b The appointment of other church workers (e.g. assistants, evangelists, apprentices) whose role is of a teaching or leadership nature shall first require the unanimous recommendation of the Pastor and church officers before this nomination is put to a church meeting. The vote shall be by secret ballot and the nomination shall be accepted by the church if at least two-thirds of those present vote in favour.
- c The Officers shall be at liberty to appoint such other workers as may be considered necessary for certain tasks from time to time

**8 ELDERS**

- a The church recognises the function of elders as assisting the Pastor in the spiritual life of the church.
- b All male members of the church who are over 21 years of age, and have been members of the church for at least one year shall be eligible to be considered as elders, provided they are regular in their attendance at the services of the church, are in full agreement with the constitution and doctrinal basis of the church, and meet the requirements for an elder found in I Tim 3 vv 1-7 and Titus 1 vv 5-9.
- c Those to be considered for eldership may be recommended to the church by the officers at least three weeks prior to an Annual General Meeting. After prayerful consideration by the church, the recommendation may be confirmed at the Annual General Meeting by at least two-thirds of the members present voting in its favour and such vote shall be by secret ballot. Elders shall hold the office for a period of

4 years.

## 9 DEACONS

- a All male members of the church who are over 21 years of age, and have been members of the church for at least one year shall be eligible for the office of deacon, provided they are regular in their attendance at the services of the church, and are in full agreement with the constitution and doctrinal basis of the church, and meet the requirements for a deacon found in I Tim 3 vv8-13.
- b Elections for deacons shall normally take place every 4 years or sooner if deemed necessary by the officers of the church. Nomination for the office of deacon requires the nominee's agreement and must be signed by two members. Nominations shall be given to the Church Secretary who shall post a list of nominations on the church notice board for two Sundays prior to the election. To be elected the nominee must receive at least two thirds of the votes of those present, by secret ballot. Prior to the election of deacons, the outgoing officers shall determine the maximum number of new deacons to be elected, which shall correspond to the maximum number of votes available to each member.

## 10 OFFICERS

- a The officers are the elders and deacons elected to work alongside the Pastor and shall appoint a Secretary and Treasurer from among their number.
- b The officers together with the Pastor (and such other church workers as may be deemed appropriate) shall meet monthly (except during August) and at such other times as they may decide.
- c The officers together with the Pastor shall appoint or approve those in positions of responsibility in the various activities of the church.

## 11 GENERAL MEETINGS

### 11.1 ANNUAL & HALF-YEARLY GENERAL MEETINGS

There shall be an Annual General Meeting of the members of the church which shall be held in the Spring of each year, and a half-yearly General Meeting which shall be held in the Autumn of each year. The principal business to be conducted will be to receive reports from the officers and a Financial Statement (to include the Accounts for the last financial year in the Annual General Meeting).

### 11.2 EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETINGS

An Extraordinary General Meeting may be called at any time by the Secretary at the request of the officers or at the written request of at least twelve members. The notice calling such a meeting shall specify the matters to be discussed.

### 11.3 GENERAL PROVISIONS

- a The quorum at a General Meeting shall be one-third of the number of members of the church.
- b At least 21 days notice shall be given of any General Meeting and such notice will be deemed to have been given to all members if posted on the church notice board or published in "Focus"

- c Any member wishing to raise a matter at a church meeting shall inform the Church Secretary at least 14 days before the meeting.
- d The agenda for the meeting shall be placed on the church noticeboard on the Sunday prior to the meeting.
- e Except as otherwise provided, all questions shall be decided by a simple majority of the votes duly cast by members present in person but in the case of equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

## 12 USE OF PREMISES

- a Services and meetings on church premises shall be held only with the permission of the officers, and upon such conditions as they may decide.
- b The church building shall not be lent or rented to outside organisations for meetings or functions of a purely secular or political character.
- c The flat known as 30 Market Street is to be let for residential purposes at an appropriate market value rent
- d The premises known as “the Schoolroom” “Centrepont” & “Coffee Bar” may be lent or rented by the officers to outside organisations for meetings or functions provided that the officers are satisfied that in so doing the objectives of the church as set out in paragraph 2 of the Constitution are met.

## 13 TRUSTEES

- a The Trustees shall be appointed by the church at a duly convened General Meeting and shall usually be the officers for the time being of the church. The Trustees shall be appointed by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present.
- b The church shall appoint not less than five, and not more than the total number of officers, to be Trustees.
- c The Trustees shall act on the lawful directions of the officers and shall be entitled to be indemnified in respect of all expenses properly incurred by them as such Trustees.
- d A Trustee may be removed from office by the church in a General Meeting and may resign his trusteeship by notice in writing to the Secretary of the church provided that there are at least two continuing Trustees. Any Trustee who is adjudged bankrupt or who makes a composition or arrangement with his creditors or who is incapacitated from acting shall cease thereupon to be a Trustee.

## 14 REMOVAL OF PASTOR/CHURCH WORKER/CHURCH OFFICER

If any Pastor/church worker/church officer substantially cease to hold such doctrines as are commensurate with the doctrinal basis of the church or is charged with or suspected of dishonesty or immoral conduct or otherwise be deemed unsuitable to officiate, the church officers shall investigate such matters and, if substantiated, submit such matters

to an extraordinary Church Meeting. If more than two-thirds of the members present are of the opinion that such charges have been established, such Pastor/church worker/church officer shall be called upon to resign forthwith, and in default of his so doing within fourteen days of the said meeting his appointment shall be deemed, at the end of the said period of fourteen days, to have been lawfully terminated.

## 15 FINANCE

- a The Treasurer shall keep accounts of all income and expenditure and shall present the annual statement of accounts, duly audited, to the Annual General Meeting. All cash received by or on behalf of the church shall be handed to the Treasurer, who shall pay the same into the church's Bank Account. Cheques shall be signed by not less than two persons authorised by the officers to do so, who shall be either officers or Trustees.
- b Auditors shall be appointed annually at a church meeting.
- c Any method of raising funds for the church, or any of its organisations, other than that of prayer and direct giving must receive the sanction of the church officers.
- d All investments belonging to the church shall be held by the Trustees. Money requiring investment shall be invested in the names of the Trustees in any of the investments for the time being authorised for the investment of the Trust. The officers shall be responsible for the selection and transposition of investments and for obtaining advice.
- e No officer or Trustee may receive any payment or other benefit from the church other than repayment of his reasonable out-of-pocket expenses and no employee of the church may also be an officer or Trustee save as set out below
  - 1. The officers or trustees may benefit from certain payments designed to meet the objectives of the church (in particular the church subsidy towards Christian Camps for children (2e) provided that any such payments from which the officers derive benefit are clearly identified in the accounts
  - 2. Any officer or trustee who possesses specialist skills or knowledge required by the church for its proper administration may charge and be paid reasonable charges for work of that nature done by him or his firm when instructed by the other trustees to act on behalf of the charity. Provided that:
    - a. At no time shall a majority of the officers or trustees benefit under this provision; and
    - b. An officer or trustee shall withdraw from any meeting of the officers or trustees whilst his remuneration or that of his firm is being discussed
- f All land and buildings belonging to the church shall be vested in the Trustees.
- g In furtherance of the objects but not otherwise the officers (and at their direction the trustees) may exercise the following powers:
  - (i) To buy, take on lease or exchange any property necessary for the achievement of the objects and to maintain and equip it for use
  - (ii) Subject to any consents required by law to sell, lease or dispose of all or any part of the property of the church

- (iii) Subject to any consents required by law to borrow money and to charge all or any part of the property of the charity with repayment of the money so borrowed

## 16 **DISSOLUTION**

- a If the members resolve to dissolve the Charity the Trustees will remain in office as Charity Trustees and be responsible for winding up the affairs of the Charity in accordance with this clause
- b The Trustees must collect in all the assets of the Charity and must pay or make provision for all the liabilities of the Charity
- c The Trustees must apply any remaining property or money:
  - (i) Directly for the Objects;
  - (ii) By transfer to any Charity or charities for purposes the same as or similar to the Charity;
  - (iii) In such other manner as the Charity Commission for England and Wales ("The Commission") may approve in writing in advance
- d The members may pass a resolution before or at the same time as the resolution to dissolve the Charity specifying the manner in which the Trustees are to apply the remaining property or assets of the Charity and the Trustees must comply with the resolution if it is consistent with paragraphs (i) - (iii) in sub-clause c above
- e In no circumstances shall the net assets of the Charity be paid to or distributed among the members of the Charity (except to a member that is itself a charity)
- f The Trustees must notify the Commission promptly that the Charity has been dissolved. If the Trustees are obliged to send the Charity's accounts to the Commission for the accounting period which ended before its dissolution, they must send the Commission the Charity's final accounts.

## 17 **AMENDMENTS**

The provisions of this Constitution may be altered by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a General Meeting of which at least three weeks' notice has been given specifying the matter to be discussed, provided that:-

- a no alteration shall be made if it would enable the funds of the church to be applied for any purpose other than the advancement of the Christian faith
- b no alteration shall be made if its effect would be that the church ceased in law to be a charity.

## DOCTRINAL BASIS OF THE CHURCH

We accept the Holy Scriptures, as originally given, as the infallible and inerrant Word of God, of divine inspiration. Recognising them as our sole authority in all matters of faith and practice, we believe the doctrines taught therein, including in particular the following:

- i We believe in the only true and living God, the Holy Trinity of Divine Persons, in perfect unity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each of which is co-equal and co-eternal, and sovereign in creation, providence and redemption.
- ii We believe in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is holy, righteous, full of grace, mercy, compassion and love. In His infinite love He sent forth the Son, that the world through Him might be saved.
- iii We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, whose true humanity and full deity were mysteriously and really joined in the unity of His divine Person. We believe in His virgin birth, in His perfect life and teaching, in His substitutionary, atoning death on the cross, where He triumphed over Satan, sin and death, in His bodily resurrection and His ascension into heaven, where He now sits in glory at the right hand of God.
- iv We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, whose work is indispensable to regenerate the sinner, to lead him to repentance, to give him faith in Christ, to sanctify the believer to this present life and fit him to enjoy fellowship with God. For spiritual power and effectiveness His ministry is essential to the individual Christian and to the Church.
- v We believe that as a result of the Fall all men are sinful by nature. Sin pollutes and controls them, infects every part of their being, renders them guilty in the sight of an Holy God, and subject to the penalty which, in His wrath and condemnation, He has decreed against it.
- vi We believe that through faith (and only faith) in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death was a perfect oblation and satisfaction for our sins, the sinner is freely justified by God, who instead of reckoning to us our sins, reckons Christ's righteousness to our account. Salvation is therefore by grace and not by human merit.
- vii We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will return personally, visibly and gloriously to this earth, to receive His saints to Himself, and to be seen of all men. As the righteous Judge, He will divide all men into two, and only two, categories - the saved and the lost. Those whose faith is in Christ will be saved eternally, and will enter into the joy of their Lord, sharing with Him His inheritance in heaven. The unbelieving will be condemned by Him to hell, where eternally they will be punished for their sin under the righteous judgement of God.

## CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### Re: FAITH

- 1 Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and do you confess that you have sinned and fallen short in His sight?
- 2 Do you believe and accept that the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross is the ONLY means of your forgiveness and rightness before such a holy God?
- 3 Can you testify to the saving grace of Christ in your life?
- 4 Do you believe and accept that the Bible is God's Word, and is the final authority in all points of doctrine, behaviour and life?

### Re: VOWS

- 1 Do you promise to continue to read the Bible and to pray daily to nurture your own life, and to live the Christian life of holiness to God?
- 2 Do you promise, as far as you are able, to be faithful to the duties and privileges of membership in this Church, viz attending regularly the Church services, the Lord's Supper, the Church meetings, and giving of your talent, time and tithe to the Lord's work in this place?