

Section 2 - Writing a Church Constitution

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2. Writing the Constitution

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1. Introduction

Where a church owns property and has created a Trust Deed this is the real constitution of the church. It binds the church legally as well as morally. What we normally call 'the church-constitution' is simply a set of bylaws which are only valid if they are in harmony with, or NOT in conflict with the Trust Deed.

Church constitutions are subsidiary to the Trust Deed except where the church has no property and no such deed.

Therefore when a church is drawing up its constitution it should consult the Trustee and a copy of its Trust Deed about the proposed action to ensure that it is not at variance with the requirements of that document. This applies to all churches but it is particularly true of the older churches. The Trust Deed in these cases will usually have basic rules governing the composition and government of the church. Any church constitution can develop and interpret the Trust Deed clauses but it cannot be at variance with them.

The constitution once adopted is a set of rules for church life. They should be kept even if they seem restrictive. They should, of course, provide a means by which they themselves can be changed, a procedure which should require a larger vote than normal in favour.

NOTE Decisions of a church meeting duly recorded in minutes which have been approved and signed also form a body of rules relating to church life. These are not, however, available in succinct form for inspection by members and are often lost in oblivion with the passing of time. A good secretary should be familiar with the minutes, going back say 10 years, so that the church can be informed about its previous decisions and be advised on particular matters. Incidentally this allows members the possibility of proposing and debating motions to amend or rescind previous decisions.

2. Writing the Church Constitution

It will be appreciated that, because of its special nature, the Trust Deed needs careful formulation in legal language and may not be very meaningful to many church people. However the Constitution should be in the language of everyday speech and accessible to all. It should interpret the Trust Deed and develop it in terms of basic principles for church life and practice.

A Constitution should:

Use the word "shall" instead of "should" or "will"

Avoid teaching an exposition of the Doctrinal Statement should be given in another place. The Scriptural justification for every rule should also be avoided.

The constitution should comprise the following elements:

1. Introduction to Constitution
2. Doctrinal Statement
3. Membership Matters
4. Business Rules
5. Amendment of the Constitution

Two example constitutions have been appended. They are not intended as models. They are illustrations of different ways of approaching the writing of a constitution. Example 1 is illustrative of the brief approach. Example 2 illustrates the fuller approach.

Each of these five areas is discussed in the sections that follow with guidance given as to how they should be approached. Alternative methods of wording have been given for information.

(1) Introduction to Constitution

This section should state the name of the church and set out something of its purpose. While not essential this should be included for completeness and clarity.

(2) Doctrinal Statement

The statement in this section should be the same as that contained in the Trust Deed of the church. It may be updated in language but not more restrictive or open than the material contained in the Trust Deed.

(3) Membership Matters

This section should set out clearly

- (a) qualifications of members
- (b) responsibilities of membership.
- (c) procedures for receiving new members
- (d) disciplining and removing current members

The guiding principle should be that members are received, disciplined and excluded only by the Church meeting.

(a) Qualifications required for membership

Here the basic requirements for a membership application to be successful should be set out. The qualifications should also allow for growth and development in the Christian life.

Issues to consider:

- (1) Given the increased number professing faith from backgrounds not familiar with the doctrines of God's word, how far do we request an affirmation of the Doctrinal Statement? Is an alternative standard a request for an acceptance that the Doctrinal Statement represents the teaching standard of the church. Later an affirmation of the Doctrinal Statement from all entering leadership position could be required. The latter seems to represent the biblical method of making disciples baptising them and teaching them.
- (2) Agreement to the Constitution.
Should we require everyone to agree to the Constitution or to assent to it and agree to be bound by it? This latter alternative allows for disagreement over individual clauses but acceptance of living under them. This is probably the current position of most constitutions in our churches.
- (3) Being bound by the Discipline of the church
It is wise to address this issue so that perspective members cannot claim later that they did not know that they had to abide by the rules.

Example 1 on pages 10 to 11 sets out the simplest form of requirements.

Example 2 on pages 12 to 16 sets out a fuller statement of qualifications.

(b) Responsibilities of membership.

The balance to be struck here is between a concise list and clear statement of "what am I am letting myself in for?"

On balance it seems that if we are to expect people to accept their responsibilities it is best to be clear from the beginning.

Example 1 sets out a concise statement of responsibility.

Example 2 is a more explicit and full statement.

(c) Procedures for admitting to membership.

It has been the practice in our churches to deal with applications for membership after the Lord's Table on a Sunday morning, rather like an appendage to a service. This can give the wrong impression as to the seriousness of membership. On balance it seems better that a meeting of the church should be called specifically to deal with such matters with due notice.

The procedure developed should be simple and straightforward.

Issues to consider:

- (1) The use of an application form.
Is this over formal or does it provide the basis for the interview? A suggested form is appended to this section.
- (2) Should the pastor be one of those who interview?
- (3) Should the Elders alone interview? If this course of action is chosen be sure to add the word "normally" to the clause, in case a time ever arises where there are no elders in the church.
- (4) Should the interviewers be drawn from the Office Bearers - say one elder and a deacon?
- (5) Is there any role for members in interviewing - say one office bearer and a member. This provides for the maximum openness and involvement in the process.
- (6) What areas should be covered during an interview? A list of suggested questions is appended to this section.
- (7) Should the church be informed of the application before it is called to consider it?

Example 1 and Example 2 are quite similar at this point.

(d) Procedure for excluding or removal from membership.

Membership may be terminated by:

- (1) transfer to another Baptist church.
- (2) by resignation.
- (3) by removal of membership because of persistent non attendance or because of grievous sin.

Issues to consider:

- (1) How do we handle someone leaving our church because they are dissatisfied for whatever reason and joining another Baptist church?
- (2) Should every letter of resignation be read in full to the church?
- (3) Do we use a "13 week or three month" test of membership or "persistent absence"? This latter test overcomes the problem person who turns up once every 13 weeks.
- (4) How do we handle a situation where someone falls into grievous and public sin? It is important not to lose the perspective of the gospel of grace. All disciplinary action should be administered only after grace has been refused. This is the spirit of one who takes heed lest he also falls.

Example 1 on this occasion is brief and only has provision for the review of the church roll.

Example 2 seeks to provide a framework within which to work for each of the four possibilities.

(e) *Missionary membership.*

In many churches some members are also missionaries. This means that while on the field of service they are in membership of another church. Should the church constitution recognise them and this fact?

(4) Business Rules

(a) *Church Officers*

The constitution needs first to identify the offices recognised by the church. The Trust Deed should be consulted on this matter. It is best to add the word "normally" to this clause to provide for offices which cannot be filled at a particular time.

(b) *Appointment of Church Officers*

1 Elders.

A number of methods currently operate in our churches. These can be distilled to the three that are detailed below. However the Trust Deed should also be consulted on this matter as it may determine the procedure to be used.

When we consider this matter one guiding principle should be:

The church meeting decides the issue under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This requires teaching on the nature of the office of elder, the requirement of people and a serious and prayerful approach. Such should always be the preparation for the Church Meeting.

First Method -- *Nomination by two members*

A typical example of this is set out in Example 1. It is probably the oldest method.

Pros

- (1) It is simple and easy to understand.
- (2) It involves the membership.
- (3) It is open and no one feels shut out because opportunity to stand is denied.
- (4) It allows the church to speak and decide the issue.
- (5) It has served our churches well and though criticised has not produced serious mistakes. The church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit has usually decided correctly.

Cons

- (1) It allows people to stand who may have little or no qualification.
- (2) It allows people to stand who may have little or no standing or support in the church.
- (3) It allows "unspiritual" people to nominate candidates.

Second Method -- *Nominations by the current Elders to the church meeting*

Pros.

- (1) It avoids people standing who may have little or no qualification.
- (2) It avoids people standing who may have little or no standing or support in the church.
- (3) It avoids "unspiritual" people nominating candidates.

Cons.

The Procedure:

- (1) is a closed system and opens the door to:
 - (i) the perception gaining ground that only people who agree with the current elders are nominated.
 - (ii) the belief that as an individual "I am being shut out and my qualities not recognised".
- (2) It tends to cause the vote at the church meeting on the nominations to become an "issue of confidence" in the present eldership rather than on the merits of the individual.
- (3) It undervalues the ability given to the church meeting in the New Testament and by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

It is worth noting at this point that, in the Acts of the Apostles on the two occasions when we see the church actually appointing someone to a task (Acts 1 and Acts 6), the apostles take no part in the "nomination" (apart from setting the qualifications and leading the church in prayerful consideration) and leave it to the church.

Some churches vary this method by bringing the nomination from the complete Office Bearers. This does have the advantage of being more representative but still suffers from the points against this method.

Third Method -- Nominations by primary election

This is a development of the first method and seeks to address the issue of the support for a nomination within the church. A typical example of this is set out in Example 2.

Pros

It:

- (1) clearly establishes both for the church and the individual the level of support for the nomination.
- (2) cuts out people who have little or no standing in the church.
- (3) removes the influence of small groups of individuals.

Cons

It:

- (1) is administratively burdensome.
- (2) can be difficult to understand.

Re-appointment of Elders.

Some churches appoint a person as an elder and never review the situation again. Some of the thinking behind this is found in the slogan "once an elder always an elder". However this slogan is particularly not true, for some men resign and others have, sadly, had to resign because of moral failure. Men can change for the worse as well as the better. A period in office may bring to light a previously unknown side of a man's character.

There is also the point that a person appointed to office without review tends to become complacent and in some cases "absolute power does corrupt".

Further, a lack of review may give the perception that leadership is stagnating. Many see no prospect of change if the present elders do not resign in their later years. Direction can be lost as a result.

We may note that in this area there is no explicit guidance in Scripture.

On balance it seems best that at regular intervals the church is given opportunity to reaffirm its confidence in the Scriptural qualifications of the serving elders.

2 Deacons.

There is not the same disparity among our churches in regard to the procedure for the election of deacons. The system of nomination by two members tends to predominate. This again is expressed in Example 1. Example 2 sets out a primary system for the election of deacons.

The pros and cons for these systems remain the same as those detailed above under the section on elders.

3 Pastor.

This matter is often the subject of a clause in the Trust Deed so that document should be consulted. As well as a procedure this may also lay down the requirements for the candidates for pastor.

This issue needs to be carefully considered. Many churches do not address it until the pastorate is vacant. Others have simply developed a custom and practice method. Most constitutions lay down only the final step in the procedure, the special meeting required to call a pastor (Example 1). Some may also lay down the required majority for a call to be issued.

Example 2 sets out the basic qualifications and a full procedure from the appointment of a vacancy (nomination) committee to the issue of the call. This has the great advantage of being clear and charting the way ahead.

Vacancy (Nomination) Committee.

The composition of this group needs to be considered. Practice varies widely. However the basic types are:

- (1) Elders.
- (2) Elders and Deacons.
- (3) A specially appointed representative group.

In resolving this issue the following points should be borne in mind:

- (1) the name finally proposed will have to secure substantial support from within the church, therefore it seems best that the Committee should be as representative as possible.
- (2) the involvement of the whole church is desirable.
- (3) this matter is best dealt with by being separate from another committee's work.

In the light of these points it seems best that the membership of the Committee should seek to include representatives from all parts of church life, youth work, women's work, senior citizens, missionaries.

4 Secretary and Treasurer

These two offices can have a substantial influence on the life and working of the church. Most constitutions briefly state the means by which they should be appointed. However it is worth also considering a statement of the main duties of each post. Example 2 gives such a statement.

(c) Church Meetings

In this area church practice differs widely among our churches.

Each church must have an Annual Church meeting.

To this some add other meetings as necessary, while others add half yearly or quarterly meetings plus special meetings as necessary.

Example 1 sets out a procedure for a basic structure of meetings.

Example 2 sets out a full statement of order for the full range of church meetings.

It may be that in a given local situation something between these two positions is required.

Issues to be considered:

- (1) While the time and place of a special meeting should be announced, should the business of such a meeting be declared at a public meeting or sent to members in a letter? Most churches ask for confidentiality from members regarding business!
- (2) Who should chair the church meeting? You may like to consult the discussion in the section on the church meeting.
- (3) At what age shall members of the church be entitled to vote?

(d) Office Bearers' Meetings.

A statement regarding these important meetings should be included in the Constitution.

It should cover:

- (1) frequency and timing.
- (2) the business which is required at each meeting.
- (3) provision for emergency situation.

Such action means that all those elected know the commitment they must make and the procedure to be followed.

(5) Amendments to the Constitution

Every constitution should provide a means by which it can be amended. This procedure should:

- (1) clearly highlight to all an amendment is being processed.
- (2) provide adequate time for consideration of the proposed amendment.
- (3) stipulate the majority required to effect a change.

The Constitution used as Example 1 surprisingly provided no means to amend it.

Example 2 sets out a procedure for formally informing the church of the amendment and providing a written copy of the proposed change. By stipulating a Special Meeting it requires a 2/3rds majority for the amendment to be passed. You may wish to consider a higher majority.

Specimen Constitution -- Example 1

1. Introduction

The Church shall be known as _____. Acknowledging the Headship of Christ over His Church the members unite in worship, instruction, fellowship and such service as the Gospel requires.

2. Doctrinal Statement

The statement of faith of the church is the Doctrinal Statement of those things commonly believed of the Northern Baptist Corporation Limited. It is regarded as a summary of basic doctrines and as subordinate to Scripture.

3. Membership

3.1 Composition

The membership shall be composed of those who:
are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,
have been baptised by immersion in the likeness of His death, burial and resurrection and
who are seeking to live in harmony with that confession.

3.2 Responsibilities of Membership

Members are expected to accept the Statement of Faith and to covenant, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to fulfil the obligations of Church Membership viz.

- i) To be present as frequently as possible at the Sunday services, at the Lord's Table, at prayer and other meetings and at business meetings.
- ii) To pray for the pastor and officebearers and the work of the church and to take part in that work as they are able.
- iii) To support the church by regular financial contributions as the Lord has prospered them.
- iv) To avoid unkindly criticism of fellow members; to promote a spirit of Christian love and unity in the church and treat as strictly confidential all matters relating to the business of the church.
- v) To endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

3.3 Acceptance into Membership

1 Applicants for membership shall be given a copy of the Constitution for consideration and shall be interviewed by two officebearers (of whom the pastor may be one).

2 Applicants considered satisfactory by the officebearers shall be recommended by them for acceptance on the vote of the church.

3 Applicants previously attached to a church of another denomination shall be asked to send a letter of resignation to that church.

4 A baptised believer from another Baptist Church may be accepted into membership on the vote of the church on the basis of a satisfactory letter of transfer.

3.4 Termination of Membership

The roll shall be revised periodically. Any member who wilfully keeps away from the Lord's Table for 3 months shall be interviewed by representatives of the officebearers and if a satisfactory reason cannot be given the name may be taken from the roll by vote of the church.

4. Business Rules

4.1 Church Officers

- 1 The officebearers of the church normally shall consist of Elders (whose number shall include anyone called to the Pastorate) and Deacons in such numbers as the church shall from time to time decide.
- 2 Candidates for the eldership and the diaconate shall be nominated in writing at least two weeks prior to a business meeting at which the election of officebearers is to take place. Persons nominating candidates must first obtain their consent.
- 3 Candidates for office shall have been in membership of a Baptist Church for a reasonable time.
- 4 The election of an officebearer shall require a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.
- 5 The officebearers shall recommend two of their number for appointment by the church as its secretary and treasurer. In the event of no duly elected officebearer being suitable for, or able to accept, one or both of these responsibilities the officebearers shall nominate a person or persons for appointment by the church.
- 6 Election to office shall be by ballot vote.
- 7 A call to the Pastorate shall only be made at a special business meeting convened for the purpose.

4.2 Church Meetings

- 1 The church shall meet at least once a year to receive reports and to transact any business other than that requiring a "special business meeting".
- 2 Notice convening business meetings shall be given at the services on the two preceding Sundays. In the case of special meetings the precise business must be included in the notice and only that business may be discussed.
- 3 Business shall be conducted according to the accepted rules of debate and under the control of a chairman who normally will be the Pastor.
- 4 The secretary shall keep a record of all proceedings and the first business at each ordinary meeting shall be the receiving and confirming of the minutes of the previous ordinary meeting, and of any special meeting held in the interim period.
- 5 The officebearers shall be responsible for the presentation of an Annual Statement of Accounts duly certified by Auditors appointed by the church and distributed to the members at least one week prior to the annual business meeting.
- 6 When a matter relating to a member arises for discussion the person concerned, together with those closely related to him, shall be required to leave the meeting while the church discusses the matter.
- 7 Voting rights shall be restricted to members who have reached the age of majority.
- 8 Special business meetings shall be required for
 - (i) the issue of a call to the pastorate,
 - (ii) amendments to the Constitution and matters of extraordinary importance; and
 - (iii) the transaction of urgent business between regular business meetings.

Decisions taken in special meetings shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting except in the case of meetings in category (iii) when a simple majority shall suffice.

Specimen Constitution -- Example 2

1. Introduction

The church shall be known as _____ Church and is hereinafter referred to as “the Church”. Acknowledging the headship of Christ over his church the members of the Church unite to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, to encourage the fellowship of believers, to edify His saints, and to evangelize sinners.

2. Doctrinal Statement

As the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland Statement

3. Membership

3.1. Composition

The Church shall be composed of those who:

- (i) profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,
- (ii) manifest a life transformed by the power of Christ,
- (iii) are baptized by immersion upon the profession of their faith,
- (iv) assent to the basis of doctrine as set out in Section 2
- (v) assent to all other matters contained in the Constitution and agree to be bound by them.

3.2. Responsibilities of Membership

Those admitted to membership shall solemnly promise by the help of the Holy Spirit to:

- a. attend as frequently as possible both Sunday services, the Lord’s Table, the Mid-week meeting and all business meetings of the Church.
- b. use the various other means of grace which are available to them, such as the regular daily reading of the Bible, regular private and family prayer, etc.
- c. support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the church.
- d. endeavour to order their family life in accordance with the principles laid down in the Scriptures.
- e. actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another so that they may better be able to pray for one another; love, comfort, and encourage one another; and help one another materially as necessity may require. Members shall seek to develop a spirit of unity in the church and must refrain from speaking ill of one another.
- f. keep in strict confidence all matters of private concern to the church and not discuss them with persons outside of this fellowship.
- g. seek to use every opportunity to bear witness to their faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and testimony, and by involvement in the work of the church as they are able.
- h. grant to one another liberty of conscience in those practices which God has not expressly forbidden in His Word.
- i. recognize and submit to the Scriptural authority deposited in the Office Bearers of the Church.

3.3. Procedure

- a. Any person who desires to become a member of this church should apply in writing on the form supplied. They shall be interviewed by two office-bearers (normally elders) who will be appointed by the office-bearers. A report of the interview shall be made to a special meeting of the church as set out in Section 4. 2. The church

will be informed by letter of all such applications and also the names of the office-bearers who will carry out the interview.

- b. If the applicant is or has been a member of another church of like faith and order, a letter of inquiry concerning the person's standing will be sent to that church before their name is placed before the church.
- c. The person concerned will be informed of the decision of the meeting at the earliest opportunity. If the application is approved by a two-thirds majority vote of those present at the meeting, the person will be publicly received into membership at a public meeting of the Church.

3.4. Removal of Membership

Membership of the church may be terminated as follows:

- a. When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, their name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.
- b. A member in good standing who wishes to join another Baptist church (or a church of like faith and order) shall, if requested, be given a letter of commendation following the approval of the Church.
- c. A member may resign their membership by letter to the Secretary. This letter should state the reason for the resignation. Such a letter will be read to the Church except where it contains unsubstantiated allegations.
- d. Any member who is persistently absent from the services of the Church and who fails to honour the responsibilities of membership shall be interviewed by representatives of the Office-bearers (normally the elders). If a satisfactory reason cannot be given, the facts shall be communicated to the Church with a view to the termination of membership.
- e. Any member who falls into grievous sin shall on the recommendation of the Office-bearers and after appropriate pastoral care, be subject to the disciplinary removal of their name from the membership roll by vote of the Church.

4. Business Rules

4.1. Church Officers

1. Offices.

- a. The Office-bearers of the Church shall normally consist of Elders and Deacons in such numbers as the Church shall from time to time decide.

Elders are responsible for the oversight of the affairs of the church. Deacons are to assist the Elders in carrying out of their responsibilities.

- b. The Church recognizes the gift of Pastor to prepare God's people for service and that the Church might be built up. The man appointed by the Church as Pastor shall also serve as an Elder.
- c. Elders other than the duly appointed Pastor shall serve a term of five years and then be eligible for re-appointment.
- d. Deacons shall serve a term of three years and then be eligible for re-appointment.

2. Appointment of Elders and Deacons.

- a. Elders and Deacons shall be appointed by the Church on the basis of the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- b. Members who are to be considered for appointment as Elder or Deacon shall have been in membership of the Church for a period of at least two years and be in good standing with the Church. Members may request that their own name be removed from the list.
- c. The appointment of Elders and Deacons shall normally take place at the Annual Meeting of the Church. In exceptional circumstances such election may take place at a Special Meeting called for that purpose.
- d. When required the Office Bearers of the church shall request nominations for the office of elder or deacon from the church by circulating a list of all those eligible for consideration for appointment six weeks before the Annual Meeting or Special Meeting at which Office Bearers are to be appointed.

- e. Those person receiving one third of the nominations returned shall be deemed nominated and their names placed before the church.
- f. The appointment of Elders and Deacons shall be by ballot vote and require a two thirds majority of the members present and eligible to vote.

3. Appointment of Pastor.

- a. A Pastor shall be chosen from the membership of a Church of like faith and order.
- b. A Pastor shall display the gift required and also the qualifications of Elder set out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and affirm the doctrinal statement of the Church.
- c. Persons suitable for nomination to the Church as Pastor shall be considered by a Nomination Committee.
- d. This Committee shall consist of the Office-bearers of the Church and up to three other members considered suitable.
- e. The Office-bearers shall serve by virtue of office. The other members shall be appointed on a two thirds majority ballot vote at a Special Meeting of the Church.
- f. This Committee shall only meet for this purpose and shall be responsible for nomination to the Church. The Church shall give any necessary guidelines to the Committee. The Committee shall report on its progress regularly at meetings of the Church.
- g. A Pastor shall be appointed on the acceptance of a call issued by a Special Meeting called specifically for that purpose. A call will not be issued by such a Meeting unless a seventy five per cent vote is obtained in favour of the person being considered.
- h. The terms of the Pastor's appointment shall be negotiated by the Office-bearers according to guidelines laid down by the Church. The Church shall approve the terms finally negotiated by the Office-bearers.
- i. A change in the pastorate shall require three months' notice by either side.

4. Secretary and Treasurer

- a. The Office-bearers shall commend two of their number for appointment by the Church as its Secretary and Treasurer.
- b. The Secretary shall be responsible for
 - i. maintaining the Church Roll;
 - ii. recording of Minutes of Church Meetings and the custody of the Minute Books;
 - iii. all correspondence relating to the Church; and
 - iv. the administrative procedures relating to the convening of Church Meetings, the election of Office-bearers, the Annual Report, the Church Calendar and the weekly announcements.
- c. The Treasurer shall be responsible for
 - i. the receipt and custody of all monies received by the Church;
 - ii. the preparation of books of account;
 - iii. the payment of all accounts;
 - iv. the operation of the Church bank accounts and cheque books;
 - v. the preparation of reports for Office Bearers meetings;
 - vi. the preparation and presentation of the Annual accounts; and

- vii. the PAYE records relating to any person employed by the Church.
- d. Election shall normally take place at the Annual Meeting of the Church. In exceptional circumstances a Special Meeting may be called for the purpose.
- e. Election shall be by ballot vote. The election of Secretary and Treasurer shall not normally take place in the same year.
- f. In the event of no duly elected Office-bearers being able to accept either of these responsibilities, the Office-bearers shall nominate a person or persons from the membership for such appointment. In these circumstances election to such a post shall also confer the office of Deacon.

4.2. Church Meetings

Business of the Church may be transacted at the following meetings:

1. Annual Meeting.

- a. This Meeting shall be convened in the Month of March.
- b. It shall:
 - i. receive and scrutinize written reports of the work of the Church carried out in the previous year;
 - ii. appoint the Office-bearers of the Church as necessary;
 - iii. appoint Leaders of the Church organizations as necessary;
 - iv. consider any necessary revision of the Church Roll;
 - v. approve the salary to be paid to the Pastor; and
 - vi. set the financial limit for expenditure delegated to the Office-bearers.
- c. Notice convening the Annual Meeting shall be given by announcement at the Services on the two Sundays preceding the Meeting.
- d. The Church Reports and Agenda shall be circulated to members on the Sunday of first announcement;
- e. All votes at the Annual Meeting shall be by ballot vote and require a two thirds majority of those present and eligible to vote.

2. Special Meetings.

- a. Special meetings of the Church shall be convened for:
 - i. the transaction of business for all matters concerning membership of the Church;
 - ii. the appointment or removal of a Pastor;
 - iii. the appointment of Office-bearers in exceptional circumstances between Annual Meetings of the Church;
 - iv. the appointment of leaders of Church Organization between Annual Meetings of the church.
 - v. the erection, purchase, lease, sale or the repair or alteration of property (beyond the financial limit set by the Church);
 - vi. the amendment of the Church Constitution;
 - vii. the transaction of urgent business, other than that laid out in items i)-vi),
- b. Special Meetings may be called by:
 - i. the Office-bearers;
 - ii. any twelve members of the Church provided a signed requisition is given to the Secretary

stating the precise matter to be discussed.

- c. Notice convening a Special Meeting shall be given at the services on the two preceding Sundays. The matter to be discussed at this meeting shall be notified in writing to each member on the Sunday prior to such Meeting.
- d. All votes at Special Meetings shall normally be by ballot vote.
- e. Decisions to be taken at Special Meetings shall require a two thirds majority vote of those present and voting.
- f. Any issue considered and not approved by a Special Meeting will not be discussed again for a period of a year unless approved by the Office Bearers.

3. Office-bearers' Meetings.

- a. Office-bearers' Meetings shall be convened once a month, with the exception of July and August. If necessary, Meetings in these months shall take place following announcement on the Sunday previous. The date of each meeting shall be set at the previous meeting.
- b. Meetings of Office-bearers may be convened to consider matters of urgency arising between the monthly Meetings by announcement on the Sunday previous.
- c. All Office-bearers Meetings shall be conducted in confidence.
- d. The Secretary shall service the monthly Meeting of the Office-bearers.
- e. The Treasurer shall report to the Meeting each month on the current financial position of the Church.

4. General requirements.

- a. Voting at Church meetings shall be restricted to members who have reached the age of eighteen years.
- b. While a matter relating to a member is under discussion, the person concerned together with those closely related to him or her, shall be required to leave the Meeting. This provision shall not affect the right of each member to be heard by the Church on a matter relating to them.
- c. No member shall vote on any matter affecting him or her directly. Where a vote requires a two thirds majority, they shall be excluded from such calculation.
- d. Business at all meetings of the Church shall be conducted according to the accepted rules of debate. A copy of these shall be given to each member.
- e. Business shall be under the control of a chairman who shall normally be the Pastor. In the absence of the Pastor, the chair shall be taken by one of the Office-bearers. In cases of difficulty the church may invite an independent chairman from a church of like faith and order.

5. Amendment of the Constitution

Amendments to the Constitution shall require notice of motion at a Special Business Meeting of the Church at least eight weeks before the Special Meeting at which the proposed amendment will be discussed. The full text of the proposed change shall be circulated in writing to all Church members at least four weeks before the proposed Special Meeting.

Suggested Questions for Interviewing Candidates for Church Membership

We would like you to tell us more about yourself first of all:

1. How did you become a Christian?
 - 1.1 What moved you to commit your Life to/decide for Christ?
2. What difference has your faith made in your life?
 - 2.1 How does it affect your life-style?
 - 2.2 How does it affect your relationships at home and at work?
3. How do you maintain your spiritual life?
 - 3.1 Private devotional routine?
 - 3.2 Corporate exercises of worship and of fellowship?
4. Have you been active in the Lord's service?
 - 4.1 In what ways would you like to serve Him here?
5. How do you feel about the distinctive stance of this church?
 - 5.1 Are there any doctrines or practices that make you unhappy?
 - 5.2 Have you any distinctive beliefs/practices that would be different from ours?
6. How did you find life in your previous church?
 - 6.1 Did you integrate well with the folks there?
 - 6.2 Have you/will you terminate your membership there?
 - 6.3 Will that church be able to give you a 'transfer'?
7. Do you feel sure that you will be able to unite in heart with us?
 - 7.1 Are there any problems you will have in doing so - family pressures? Distance from home?
8. Since you have not been baptised are you convinced and ready to submit to believer's baptism and to attend an instruction class?