

SWINDON CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

(史雲頓華人基督教會)

BYE-LAWS

ARTICLE 1 - DOCTRINAL BASIS

The doctrinal basis of Swindon Chinese Christian Church (hereafter referred to as The Church) is:

1.1 There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in His holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the Almighty Creator, Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to His sovereign will for His own glory.

1.2 God has revealed Himself in the Bible which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors so that the Bible, as originally given, is in its entirety the Word of God. It is without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

1.3 The Human Race - all men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please Him.

1.4 The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all His words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by His blood. He rose from the dead and in His resurrection body ascended into heaven where He is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for His people in the presence of the Father.

1.5 Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in His love forgives sinners whom He calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

1.6 The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply His work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

1.7 The Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for pastoral care and discipline and for evangelism. The unity of the Body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

1.8 Baptism and The Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with and entry into His Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once and for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

1.9 The Future will see the return of Christ in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

ARTICLE 2 - ORDINANCES

2.1 Baptism: The mode of baptism is by full immersion on personal confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In exceptional circumstances, other modes of baptism are acceptable.

2.2 Holy Communion: The remembrance of the Lord's death through the Holy Communion is observed regularly. All baptised believers whose conduct is consistent with their confession of their faith are received at the Lord's Table.

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Application for Membership

3.1.1 Membership is open to all Christians, who:

3.1.1.1 Have experienced new birth through repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3.1.1.2 Have been baptised.

3.1.1.3 Are at least 16 years old

3.1.1.3 Have attended The Church meetings regularly for at least three months immediately prior to the application for membership.

3.1.2 Applicants shall sign and agree to the doctrinal basis and objectives of The Church.

3.1.3 Applicants already holding membership in a church elsewhere are not required to relinquish it in order to join The Church.

3.1.4 An application form shall be completed by all applicants for membership.

3.1.5 Membership is granted following approval by the Trustees in accordance with the recommendation of the Church Committee.

3.2 Responsibilities of Members

3.2.1 To seek personal growth through prayer and the study of God's Word.

3.2.2 To meet together regularly for worship, prayer and the Holy Communion.

3.2.3 To promote one another's well-being through prayer, care, love and concern.

3.2.4 To participate in the life and work of The Church.

3.2.5 To support The Church by regular and systematic giving.

3.2.6 To make careful study of the constitution.

3.2.7 To attend General Meetings and vote responsibly on all issues.

3.3 Suspension or Termination of Membership

3.3.1 A member may withdraw his membership by giving written notice to the Church Committee.

3.3.2 When a member does not fulfil his responsibilities (as stated in Article 5.2) for more than one year, his voting rights may be suspended by the Trustees in accordance with the recommendation of the Church Committee until such time as he resumes active participation in the life of The Church.

3.3.3 If a member is found living or teaching contrary to the doctrinal basis of The Church, or is guilty of serious misconduct, and shows no repentance after being lovingly admonished by the Church Committee, his membership may be terminated by the Trustees in accordance with the recommendation of the Church Committee, provided that the affected member has the right of appeal to the Trustees against such decision.

3.3.4 When a member is absent from The Church for more than twelve months continuously or when he leaves the county of Wiltshire permanently, his membership may be deemed to have been terminated by the Trustees in accordance with the recommendation of the Church Committee.

ARTICLE 4 – THE CHURCH COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The Church Committee consists of Trustees, Elders, Pastors and/or Pastoral Workers and Elected Committee Members. The maximum number of Elected Committee Members is determined by the Church Committee prior to a General Meeting.
- 4.2 The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees shall be the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer of the Church Committee respectively. Other officers shall be appointed as deemed necessary by the Church Committee.
- 4.3 The area of responsibility of each Church Committee Member is agreed upon by the Church Committee.
- 4.4 Elected Committee Members shall be elected at a General Meeting to hold office for a term of no more than 27 months and may be re-nominated for election.
- 4.5 Committee Meetings shall have a quorum of at least two-thirds of the number of Church Committee Members.
- 4.6 Decisions are made with a simple majority among those present at the Church Committee Meeting and a simple majority among the Trustees who present at the Meeting.
- 4.7 Qualification of Elected Committee Member Candidacy
- 4.7.1 Candidates shall have attained 18 years of age at the time of nomination.
- 4.7.2 Candidates shall satisfy the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- 4.7.3 Candidates shall be members of The Church for at least twelve months by the time of the election and have demonstrated over a sufficient length of time that they are faithful and mature members of the body of Christ and faithfully devote themselves to personal prayer and study of the Word.
- 4.7.4 Candidates shall be willing to participate wholeheartedly in the ministry of The Church.
- 4.8 Election of Elected Committee Members
- 4.8.1 Election shall be held biannually at a General Meeting.
- 4.8.2 A candidate for election shall be nominated and seconded by two different members.
- 4.8.3 The opening date for nomination is four weeks before the General Meeting.
- 4.8.4 All such nominations are submitted to the Secretary not later than two weeks before the General Meeting.

4.8.5 Candidates shall be approved by the Trustees which shall then approach the nominees and confirm their acceptance of the nomination one week before the General Meeting.

4.8.6 Elected Committee Members are elected with the highest number of votes among members attending the General Meeting.

4.8.7 In a tie situation, a decision is made by the Chairman of the General Meeting and further ballots may be held.

4.8.8 If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the maximum number of Elected Committee Members required, members present at the General Meetings shall be asked to vote on the entire list of candidates.

4.9 Responsibilities of Church Committee Members

4.9.1 To meet regularly and to take action on all matters concerning the administration of The Church.

4.9.2 To prepare and keep the agendas and minutes of all Church Committee Meetings.

4.9.3 To administer the finance of The Church and to inform members on a regular basis of its financial situation.

4.9.4 To form and dissolve subcommittees, when necessary, and to supervise their work.

4.9.5 To prepare the annual report and financial statement for the Annual General Meetings.

4.9.6 To maintain all property and equipment belonging to The Church.

4.9.7 To engage, retain or terminate the service of all employees of The Church.

ARTICLE 5 - ELDERS

5.1 Qualification of Elders

5.1.1 An Elder shall satisfy the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5. Additionally, he shall fulfil the conditions as stated in Articles 6.7.3 and 6.7.4.

5.2 Election of Elders

5.2.1 An Elder is nominated by the Pastors or Pastoral Workers. He shall then be approved by the Church Committee and the Trustees, and appointed by a simple majority vote of the members present at a General Meeting.

5.2.2 An Elder shall hold office for life.

5.2.3 The number of Elders is determined by the Pastors or Pastoral Workers. As a guideline, the ratio of Elders to members is about 1 to 50.

5.3 Responsibilities of Elders

5.3.1 The spiritual oversight of The Church on matters of doctrine, governing principles, and pastoral care.

5.3.2 To preach and teach God's Word according to gifts.

5.4 Elders are *ex officio* members of the Church Committee and are eligible to attend all meetings of the Trustees.

ARTICLE 6 – PASTORS OR PASTORAL WORKERS

6.1 The Appointment, Retention or Termination of the Service of the Pastor or Pastoral Worker

6.1.1 The recommendation to engage, retain or terminate the service of a Pastor or Pastoral Worker is made by the Church Committee and the Trustees.

6.1.2 The recommendation for the appointment shall be put to the members before a General Meeting. The Pastor or Pastoral Worker is appointed by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at the General Meeting.

6.1.3 The Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall sign and agree to the doctrinal basis and objectives of The Church.

6.1.4 The Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be a person equipped by theological training and experience of pastoral work, who is deemed by The Church to be suitably gifted and capable of spiritual leadership and ministry in The Church.

6.1.5 The Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall go through a reasonable probationary period; thereafter the length of each term of service and the terms and conditions of service shall be agreed by the Church Committee and the Trustees.

6.1.6 In the case of a Pastoral Worker, the Church Committee and the Trustees shall, at the recommendation of the Pastors and Elders, make plans for his ordination after he has demonstrated commendable service over a period of time.

6.1.7 The contractual retirement age of the Pastor or Pastoral Worker is 65. Appointment on fixed-term contract beyond contractual retirement age may be granted after negotiation between the Pastor or Pastoral Worker, the Church Committee and the Trustees.

6.1.8 The termination of the service of a Pastor or Pastoral Worker shall be unanimously agreed by all the elected members of the Church Committee, the Trustees, the Elders and the Advisors. Otherwise, this recommendation shall be put to the members before a General Meeting and approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at the General Meeting.

6.2 The Responsibilities and Rights of the Pastor or Pastoral Worker

6.2.1 The responsibilities of the Pastor or Pastoral Worker are stated in Article 5.3 and, in addition, the following:

6.2.1.1 To preach and teach God's Word, to look for and train potential leaders, to administer baptism, and to give pastoral care to all members of The Church.

6.2.1.2 The right to ask the Church Committee to reconsider any decision which is felt to be inconsistent with the doctrinal basis, objectives, and constitutional issues of The Church.

6.3 The Pastor or Pastoral Worker is deemed to be a member of The Church and is an *ex officio* member of the Church Committee and is eligible to attend all meetings of the Trustees.

ARTICLE 7 - ADVISORS

7.1 The invitation to serve as an Advisor is made by the Church Committee and the Trustees, and supported by a simple majority vote of the members present at a General Meeting. An Advisor shall hold office for life.

7.2 Qualification of Advisors

7.2.1 They shall be spiritually mature, of good character and reputation, and having a close walk with God.

7.2.2 They shall have a concern for the knowledge of the Chinese people.

7.2.3 They shall give evidence of ability to make mature and balanced judgements and be able to encourage initiative and exercise leadership without domination or paternalism.

7.2.4 They shall have a clear understanding of the general objectives and doctrinal basis of The Church.

7.3 Responsibilities of Advisors

7.3.1 To provide advises to the Church Committee and the Trustees on all matters concerning the spiritual life and administration of The Church.

ARTICLE 8 - AMENDMENTS

8.1 Proposals for amendments to the bye-laws may be initiated by the Church Committee, or by at least ten members or one tenth of the membership who submit in writing to the Church Committee, their reasons for such proposals and affirm their acceptance of the objectives and doctrinal basis of The Church.

8.2 Proposals for amendments shall be considered by the Trustees in accordance with the recommendation of the Church Committee.

ARTICLE 9 - FINANCE AND AUDIT

9.1 The Church financial year ends on 31st July in each year.

9.2 The financial statements are presented at the AGM. They are audited in accordance with the regulations laid down by the Charity Commission.

9.3 There shall be 2 signatories, at least one shall be a Trustee, to all cheques issued by The Church. Those authorised to sign shall include three Trustees and two Church Committee Members.