

DRAFT CONSTITUTION

FELLOWSHIP OF INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

PART 1—PRELIMINARY

1 Interpretation

In these rules:

associate member means an associate member of the Fellowship.

Council means the Council of the Fellowship.

financial year means the year ending on 31 December.

general meeting means a general meeting of the Fellowship.

independent evangelical church means a church determined from time to time by the Council under rule 21 to be an independent evangelical church for the purposes of this Constitution.

member means a member of the Fellowship.

President means the President of the Fellowship.

Secretary means the Secretary of the Fellowship.

special resolution has the meaning given by rule 34 (2).

statement of beliefs means the beliefs set out in rule 3.

the Fellowship means the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches.

Treasurer means the Treasurer of the Fellowship.

2 Statement of purpose

The Fellowship is established:

to encourage and provide support for the continued planting of independent evangelical churches, and

to encourage the member churches to ongoing faithful evangelical ministry, and

to encourage and facilitate regular fellowship, and mutual support, between independent evangelical churches, and

to facilitate access to and enable the sharing of resources employed in planting, managing and operating independent evangelical churches, and

to facilitate the recruiting, training and employment of staff of independent evangelical churches, and

to facilitate movement of staff between independent evangelical churches and other evangelical churches, and

to promote the ministries of independent evangelical churches.

3 Statement of beliefs

The fundamental beliefs of the Fellowship are:

About God

There is one unique and eternal God, who exists in an everlasting loving relationship of Father, Son and Spirit—one God in three persons.

God is sovereign in all things: including creation, revelation, redemption, judgement and the establishing of his kingdom.

As sovereign loving creator and redeemer, he is worthy of all glory, honour and praise.

About humanity

Men and women together are created in the image of God, and therefore enjoy a unique dignity in creation and a unique relationship with God.

Men and women together have dominion over the created order.

Tragically, human nature is universally sinful since the Fall and all are guilty before God. This leaves us under the wrath and condemnation of God.

We are unable, without the prior regenerative work of God's Spirit, to turn ourselves to God.

About the Bible

There is no other way to know God except that he reveals himself to us. The Bible is God's revelation to us. The words of the Bible are divinely inspired and infallible, as originally given, and have supreme authority in all matters of faith, conduct and experience.

The Bible is sufficient for knowing God. It is not only central to the wellbeing of the church but is able to thoroughly equip the Christian community for life and godliness.

About Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

He is both fully God and truly human. He entered fully into human experience. He endured temptation and he suffered and died. He was perfectly obedient to God his Father.

Jesus took on himself the consequences of human sin. He died and was buried. On the third day he rose from the dead bodily and is now exalted as ruler over all.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

About salvation

There is only one name under heaven by which we can be brought into relationship with God: the name 'Jesus Christ'.

It is only through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, that the guilt, penalty and power of sin can be removed. In that death, God demonstrates his love to us most perfectly and establishes his victory over Satan and all his foes. The work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to make the death of Jesus effective in an individual's life. The Spirit enables the sinner to repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ, so that salvation is entirely of God's grace and not of human merit or works.

Although we enjoy now the blessing of union with Christ and secure relationship with God, we await the final consummation of our hope with the return of Christ, the resurrection of our bodies and life with him eternally.

About the Spirit in the believer's life

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son, and indwells all true believers.

His role is to bring glory to Jesus Christ, thus making Jesus Christ central in all things.

The Spirit works to illuminate believers' minds to grasp the truth of the Bible, producing in them his fruit, granting them his gifts and empowering them for service.

He grants his gifts for the purpose of service, not self indulgence. Their use is determined—not by personal desire for fulfilment, or satisfaction—but by the principle of building the church. Not every gift of the Spirit is given to the church at every moment of its life, only those necessary for building Christ's body.

About the church

The visible church is the gathering of believers around Christ in his

word.

It is a community of people intended by God to bear witness to him and actively seek the extension of his rule.

Within its community both men and women are to seek proper expression of their gifts as they work to build the church in love.

The Bible makes clear that in church leadership, as in marriage, the roles of men and women are not interchangeable. We are committed to expressing the differences within relationships of mutual dependence.

4 Not-for-profit association

The Fellowship is not carried on for the object of trading or securing pecuniary gain for its members.

The assets and income of the Fellowship shall be applied solely in furtherance of the purposes stated in rule 2 and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Fellowship except as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the Fellowship.

5 Dissolution of the Fellowship

In the event of the Fellowship being dissolved, the amount that remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be transferred to any association with similar purposes which is not carried on for the profit or gain of its individual members.

PART 2—MEMBERSHIP

Division 1—Member churches

6 Application for membership

- (1) An application may be made to the Secretary on behalf of a church for membership of the Fellowship.
- (2) An application is to be in writing and must include:
 - (a) a description of the origin and previous history of the church, and
 - (b) information that demonstrates that the church is an independent evangelical church, and
 - (c) assent to the statement of purposes and the statement of beliefs of the Fellowship, and
 - (d) the consent of the senior pastor of the church to the application.
- (3) On receipt of an application, the Secretary is to notify the members of the Council and the members of the Fellowship of the application and request their comments concerning it, particularly as to whether the application is or is not supported.
- (4) A member is to provide their comments to the Secretary within 3 weeks after being notified of the application.
- (5) The Council, after considering the application and any comments provided to the Secretary within the 3-week period, is to determine whether to accept or decline the application.
- (6) A church becomes a member of the Fellowship when the Council determines to accept its application for membership.
- (7) The Secretary is to notify the applicant of the Council's determination.

7 Exercise of functions on behalf of member churches

The rights under this Constitution of a church as a member of the Fellowship are to be exercised in all circumstances, including at any meeting of the Fellowship, by its senior pastor or, if the senior pastor is for any reason unwilling or unable to do so, by a person nominated by the senior pastor or, if the senior pastor fails or refuses to make a nomination, by a person nominated by the church.

Division 2—Associate members

8 Associate members

- (1) An application may be made to the Secretary by a person for associate membership of the Fellowship.
- (2) An application is to be in writing and must include:
 - (a) the name and address of the applicant, and
 - (b) the name of the church attended by the applicant, the period of

- attendance and details of any ministries undertaken by the person,
and
- (c) assent to the statement of purposes and the statement of beliefs of the Fellowship, and
 - (d) a reference from the senior pastor of a church which is a member of the Fellowship.
- (3) On receipt of an application, the Secretary is to notify the members of the Council and the members of the Fellowship of the application and request their comments concerning it, particularly as to whether the application is or is not supported.
 - (4) A member is to provide their comments to the Secretary within 3 weeks after being notified of the application.
 - (5) The Council, after considering the application and any comments provided to the Secretary within the 3-week period, is to determine whether to accept or decline the application.
 - (6) A person becomes an associate member of the Fellowship when the Council determines to accept the person's application for associate membership.
 - (7) The Secretary is to notify the applicant of the Council's determination.

9 Rights of associate members

An associate member of the Fellowship is entitled to attend any general meeting of the Fellowship and to participate in any discussion at the meeting but has no right to vote on any question or other matter on which a vote of members of the Fellowship is taken.

Division 3—Membership generally

10 References in this Division to members

In this Division, a reference to a member of the Fellowship includes a reference to an associate member of the Fellowship.

11 Membership entitlements not transferable

A right, privilege or obligation that a member has by reason of being a member:

- (a) is not capable of being transferred or transmitted to another person,
and
- (b) terminates on cessation of the member's membership.

12 Cessation of membership

A member ceases to be a member if the member:

- (a) resigns from membership, or
- (b) is removed from membership by the Council, or
- (c) in the case of an associate member, dies.

13 Resignation and removal of membership

A member may resign from membership at any time by giving notice in writing to that effect to the Secretary.

- (2) The notice must include the consent of the senior pastor of the relevant church to the resignation.
- (3) The Council may remove a member from membership if the member, when called upon by the Secretary to do so, refuses or fails to affirm their commitment to the statement of purposes and the statement of beliefs of the Fellowship.
- (4) If a member ceases to be a member, the Secretary is to make an appropriate entry in the register of members recording the date on which the member ceased to be a member, and is to notify or seek to notify them of the action taken.

14 Register of members

- (1) The Secretary must establish and maintain a register of members specifying the name and address of each member together with the date on which the member became a member.
- (2) The register of members is to be kept at the principal place of administration of the Fellowship and must be open for inspection, free of charge, by or on behalf of any member at any reasonable time.

15 Fees

No entrance fee or annual membership fee is payable to the Fellowship unless otherwise determined by the Fellowship at a general meeting.

16 Members' liabilities

A member is not liable to contribute towards the payment of debts and liabilities of the Fellowship or the costs, charges and expenses of the winding up of the Fellowship.

PART 3—THE COUNCIL

17 The Council

The Council is the executive committee of the Fellowship.

18 Constitution and membership

- (1) The Council is to consist of:
the President, and

the Secretary, and
the Treasurer,

(who are the office-bearers of the Fellowship), one ordinary member of the Council, and such other ordinary members (if any) as may be determined by the members of the Fellowship in general meeting.

(2) The first members of the Council are taken to be:

Andrew Heard, as President, and
David Sheath, as Secretary, and
Simon Gillham, as Treasurer, and
David McDonald, as an ordinary member of the Council.

19 Term of office

A member of the Council holds office, subject to these rules, until the conclusion of the third annual general meeting following the date of his or her approval or appointment as a member of the Council and, if otherwise qualified, is eligible to hold office for subsequent terms.

In the event that a member of the Council vacates office otherwise than by the completion of his or her term of office, the Council may appoint a member of the Fellowship to fill the vacancy. The member so appointed holds office, subject to these rules, until the conclusion of the annual general meeting following the date of his or her appointment.

20 Election of members of the Council

At an annual general meeting at which an election to the office of:
the President, Secretary or Treasurer, or
an ordinary member of the Council,

is held, any member of the Fellowship may nominate a person, being the senior pastor of a member church or other nominee of the member church under rule 7 for election to the office.

If there is only one nomination for an office, the person nominated is taken to be elected.

If there is more than one nomination for an office, a vote of members present at the annual general meeting is to be taken and the person who receives the higher or highest number of votes is elected

If a vacancy in the office of any member of the Council is not filled at the annual general meeting, the meeting is adjourned for one month.

21 Determination that a church is, or is not, an independent evangelical church

- (1) The Council may from time to time determine, having regard to such matters as it considers relevant, that a church is, or is not, an independent evangelical church for the purposes of this Constitution.
- (2) A determination of the Council under this rule has effect according to its terms.

22 Other responsibilities of the Council

The Council, subject to these rules:
is authorised and has responsibility to determine and administer the financial affairs of the Fellowship, including the setting of an annual budget, and
is authorised and has responsibility to manage the property of the Fellowship, and
is authorised and has responsibility to perform all such acts and do all such things not elsewhere regulated by these rules as appear to the Council to be necessary or desirable for the proper management of the affairs of the Fellowship.

23 Secretary to keep minutes

The Secretary is to keep minutes of the meetings of the Council and of general meetings of members.

Minutes of a meeting must be approved at the next succeeding meeting and signed by the person presiding at the next succeeding meeting.

24 Treasurer

The Treasurer is:

to collect and receive all money due to the Fellowship and make payments authorised by the Fellowship, and

to keep correct accounts and books showing the financial affairs of the Fellowship with full details of all receipts and expenditure connected with the activities of the Fellowship, and to prepare, for approval by the Council, the annual budget of the Fellowship.

The Treasurer is to present the budget, as approved by the Council, to the members at a general meeting for the purpose of enabling the budget to be received by them.

25 Vacancies

- (1) For the purposes of these rules, a vacancy in the Council occurs (apart from death) if a member of the Council:
 - (a) ceases to be the senior pastor of a church which is a member of the Fellowship, or
 - (b) resigns from office, or
 - (c) is removed from office under rule 26, or
 - (d) becomes an insolvent under administration within the meaning of the *Corporations Law*.
- (2) On attaining the age of 65 years, a member of the Council must retire, but may remain in office from year to year, after that age, by annual vote of the Fellowship.

26 Removal of members of the Council

The Fellowship in general meeting may remove a member of the Council from office before the expiration of the member's term of office on a majority of the votes of the members of the Fellowship present and voting at the general meeting.

27 Council meetings and quorum

- (1) The Council is to meet at such times and in such manner as the Council may determine.
- (2) A majority of the members for the time being of the Council constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of a meeting of the Council.

28 Voting and decisions

- (1) Questions arising at the meeting of the Council are to be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Council present and voting at the meeting.
- (2) Each member present at a meeting of the Council (including the person presiding at the meeting) is entitled to one vote.
- (3) The Council may act despite any vacancy on the Council.
- (4) Any act or thing done or suffered, or purported to have been done or suffered, by the Council is valid and effectual despite any defect that may afterwards be discovered in the appointment or qualification of any member of the Council.

PART 4—GENERAL MEETINGS

29 Holding of annual general meetings

The Fellowship must, at least once in each calendar year, convene an annual general meeting of its members.

30 Calling of, and business at, annual general meetings

- (1) The annual general meeting of the Fellowship is, subject to rule 29, to be convened on such date and at such place and time as the Council thinks fit.
- (2) In addition to any other business that may be transacted at an annual general meeting, the business of an annual general meeting is:
 - (a) to confirm the minutes of the last preceding annual general meeting and of the last general meeting held since that meeting, and
 - (b) to receive reports from the Council on the activities of the Fellowship during the last preceding financial year, and
 - (c) to elect members to vacancies on the Council, and
 - (d) to receive and consider the financial statements of the Fellowship, and
 - (e) to receive and approve the budget of the Fellowship for the current financial year, unless the budget has been received and approved at a previous general meeting.

- (3) An annual general meeting must be specified as such in the notice convening it in accordance with rule 32.
- (4) An annual general meeting is to be conducted in accordance with the provisions of this Part.

31 Calling of general meetings

- (1) The Council may, whenever it thinks fit, convene a general meeting of the Fellowship.
- (2) The Council must, on the requisition in writing of not less than 20% of the total number of members, convene a general meeting of the Fellowship within 1 month.
- (3) A requisition of members for a general meeting:
 - (a) must state the purpose or purposes of the meeting, and
 - (b) must be signed by the members making the requisition, and
 - (c) must be lodged with the Secretary, and
 - (d) may consist of several documents in a similar form, each signed by one or more of the members making the requisition.

32 Notice

- (1) Except where the nature of the business proposed to be dealt with at a general meeting requires a special resolution of the Fellowship, the Secretary must, at least 14 days before the date fixed for the holding of the general meeting notify the members, and the associate members, of the place, date and time of the meeting and the nature of the business proposed to be transacted at the meeting.
- (2) If the nature of the business proposed to be dealt with at a general meeting requires a special resolution, the Secretary must, at least 21 days before the date fixed for the holding of the general meeting, notify the members, and the associate members, of the matters required in subrule (1) specifying, in addition, the intention to propose the resolution as a special resolution.
- (3) No business other than that specified in the notice convening a general meeting is to be transacted at the meeting except, in the case of an annual general meeting, business that may be transacted pursuant to rule 30 (2).
- (4) A member who wishes to bring any business before a general meeting must give details in writing of that business to the Council which may include that business in the next notice calling a general meeting given after receipt of the notice from the member.

33 Procedure and quorum at general meetings

- (1) No item of business is to be transacted at a general meeting unless a quorum of members is present during the time the meeting is considering that item.
- (2) Except where the nature of the business proposed to be dealt with at a general meeting requires a special resolution of the Fellowship, 20% of the

current members on the register, present as provided for in rule 7, constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of a general meeting.

- (3) If the nature of the business proposed to be dealt with at a general meeting requires a special resolution, 50% of the current members on the register, present in person, constitute a quorum.
- (4) If within half an hour after the appointed time for the commencement of a general meeting a quorum is not present, the meeting stands adjourned to the same day in the following week at the same time and (unless another place is specified at the time of the adjournment by the person presiding at the meeting or communicated by written notice to members given before the day to which the meeting is adjourned) at the same place.
- (5) If at the adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within half an hour after the time appointed for the commencement of the meeting, the business to be dealt with at the meeting, except business requiring a special resolution, will be dealt with by the next Council meeting.
- (6) An associate member is not to be counted in determining whether a quorum is present.

34 Resolutions at general meetings

- (1) The following business requires a special resolution of the Fellowship at a general meeting:
 - (a) a change in the name of the Fellowship,
 - (b) an alteration of these rules.
- (2) A resolution of the Fellowship is a special resolution if it is passed by a majority of at least 75% of the votes cast by the members at a general meeting.
- (3) Any other business at a general meeting does not require a special resolution.
- (4) The Council, or the person presiding at a general meeting, may determine other business requiring resolution by members at a general meeting if the business has been specified in the notice convening the general meeting.

35 Presiding member

- (1) If the President or his representative is absent from the general meeting, the Secretary is to preside at the meeting.
- (2) If the conditions in subrule (1) cannot be met, the meeting is adjourned as described in rule 33 (4).

36 Adjournment

The person presiding at a general meeting at which a quorum is present may, with the consent of the majority of members present at the meeting, adjourn the meeting from time to time and place to place, but no business is to be transacted at an adjourned meeting other than the business left

unfinished at the meeting at which the adjournment took place.

37 Voting and making of decisions

- (1) A member has one vote only on any question arising at a general meeting of the Fellowship, subject to subrule (2).
- (2) In the case of an equality of votes on a question at a general meeting, the person presiding is entitled to exercise a second or casting vote.
- (3) A question requiring resolution, according to rule 34, at a general meeting of the Fellowship is, except as provided by subrule (4), to be determined on a show of hands and unless a poll is demanded, a declaration by the person presiding that a resolution has, on a show of hands, been carried or carried unanimously or carried by a particular majority or lost, or an entry to that effect in the minute book of the Fellowship, is evidence of the fact without proof of the number or proportion of the votes recorded in favour of or against that resolution.
- (4) At a general meeting of the Fellowship, a poll may be demanded by the person presiding or by not less than 3 members present at the meeting.
- (5) If a poll is demanded at a general meeting, the poll is to be taken in such manner and at such time before the close of the meeting as the person presiding directs, and the resolution of the poll on the matter is taken to be the resolution of the meeting on that matter.

38 Proxies

- (1) No proxy voting is permitted, unless otherwise determined by the Council.
- (2) If proxy voting is permitted by the Council, each member is entitled to appoint a person who may exercise the rights under this Constitution of a church as a member of the Fellowship as provided for in rule 7 as proxy by notice given to the Secretary no later than 24 hours before the time of the meeting in respect of which the proxy is appointed.
- (2) The notice appointing the proxy is to be in the form set out in Appendix 1.

39 Postal ballots

- (1) Despite any other provision of these rules, the Council may determine that any of the following matters may be decided by a postal ballot of the members of the Fellowship instead of by a vote of the members at a general meeting of the Fellowship:
 - (a) election of a member of the Council,
 - (b) removal of a member of the Council,
 - (c) a change to these rules.
- (2) If a postal ballot is held in respect of a resolution that, under these rules, is required to be passed by a majority of at least 70% of the members who are present as provided for in rule 7 and voting at a general meeting, the resolution is taken to be passed:

- (a) if at least 30% of the members of the Fellowship cast a vote (formally or informally) in the postal ballot, and
 - (b) if it receives at least 70% of the votes cast (formally or informally) in the postal ballot.
- (3) Voting by postal ballot is to be conducted in accordance with Appendix 2.

PART 5—MISCELLANEOUS

40 Funds

- (1) The funds of the Fellowship are to be derived from donations and, subject to any resolution passed by the Fellowship in general meeting, such other sources as the Council determines.
- (2) All money received by the Fellowship must be deposited as soon as practicable and without deduction to the Fellowship's bank account.
- (3) All cheques, drafts, bills of exchange, promissory notes and other negotiable instruments must be signed by any 2 members of the Fellowship who have been authorised to do so by the Council.
- (4) The funds of the Fellowship must be used for the purposes of the Fellowship in such a manner as the Council determines.

41 Alteration of rules

These rules may be altered, rescinded or added to only by a special resolution of the Fellowship.

42 Custody of books

Except as otherwise provided by these rules, the Secretary must keep in his or her custody or under his or her control all records, books and other documents relating to the Fellowship.

43 Inspection of books

The financial records, register of members, and minutes of general meetings of the Fellowship must be open to inspection by or on behalf of a member, or an associate member, of the Fellowship without cost at any reasonable hour.

44 Service of notices

For the purpose of these rules, a notice may be served by or on behalf of the Fellowship on a member or an associate member by sending it by post to the member at the member's address shown in the register of members or, alternatively, in the case of an associate member, by serving it personally.

- (2) If a document is sent to a person by properly addressing, prepaying and posting to the person a letter containing the document, the document is, unless the contrary is proved, taken for the purposes of these rules to have been served on the person at the time at which the letter would have been delivered in the ordinary course of post.

APPENDIX 1

**FELLOWSHIP OF INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL CHURCHES
FORM OF APPOINTMENT OF PROXY
(Rule 38)**

(Name of church)
being a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, hereby appoints

_____ of _____

_____ being a person who may exercise the rights under the Constitution of a church as a member of the Fellowship as provided for in rule 7, as its proxy to vote for it on its behalf at the general meeting of the Fellowship (annual general meeting or special general meeting, as the case may be) to be held on the _____ day of _____, 20____, and at any adjournment of that meeting.

(Add, if desired)
The proxy is authorised to vote in favour of/against *(delete as appropriate)* the motion *(insert details)*

Signature of senior pastor or other person who may exercise the rights under the Constitution of the church as a member of the Fellowship as provided for in rule 7 of the Constitution

Date _____

APPENDIX 2
POSTAL BALLOT
(Rule 39)

1. The Council is to determine:
 - (a) the form of a ballot paper, and
 - (b) the form of any question to be determined by a postal ballot, and
 - (c) whether any information (in addition to the instructions necessary to enable a member to cast a valid postal vote) is to accompany a ballot paper and, if so, the nature and content of the information.

2. The Secretary is to send to each member of the Fellowship, not less than 14 days before the close of the ballot:
 - (a) a ballot paper, initialled by the Secretary, and
 - (b) the instructions necessary to enable a member to cast a valid postal vote, and
 - (c) the address to which, and the date and time by which, the ballot paper is to be returned to the Secretary.

3. A vote is informal if it is not made in accordance with the instructions necessary to enable a member to cast a valid postal vote.

4. At a contested election, each candidate is entitled to appoint a scrutineer.

5. The Secretary is to send notice of the result of a postal ballot to each member, and associate member, of the Fellowship as soon as practicable after the close of the ballot.