

# Bristol Chinese Baptist Church Constitution

## ARTICLE 1 - CHURCH NAME

The name of the Church shall be "Bristol Chinese Baptist Church" (hereinafter referred to as "BCBC") or, in Chinese characters, 布里斯托华人浸信会.

## ARTICLE 2 - STATEMENT OF FAITH

### 2.1 Preamble

BCBC accepts the Christian faith as set forth in the Old and New Testaments and as summarized in the Apostles' Creed.

### 2.2 The doctrinal basis of BCBC shall be the fundamental truths of Christianity including:

2.2.1 We believe in the one, holy, sovereign, creating and redeeming God, eternally existing in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2.2.2 We believe in the divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of the Bible, its infallible teaching and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct; and its normative value for all peoples, at all times, in all cultures.

2.2.3 We believe that all people without distinction are made in the image of God, but all are now sinners and have incurred both God's holy wrath and their own shame and guilt. All are therefore in utter need of redemption.

2.2.4 We believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, the incarnate Son of God, uniquely God-man and the only Saviour. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, bodily resurrection and ascension. We believe He has achieved the final defeat of Satan and all evil powers.

2.2.5 We believe in the justification of sinners by God's grace, through faith in Christ alone.

2.2.6 We believe in the Holy Spirit and His convicting, regenerating, sanctifying and reviving work. To those who believe and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, He baptises them into a new and eternal life through being born again, and guides and empowers them, giving them spiritual gift(s) according to His Will, (No spiritual gift is universal for all Christians, and no Christian has all the spiritual gifts.) in their service to God for the extension of His Kingdom through the Christian churches.

2.2.7 We believe in the unity and priesthood of all believers who should live a life being continually filled by the Holy Spirit, and together form the one, holy, universal, apostolic church, the Kingdom of God and His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

2.2.8 We believe in the visible, personal return of Jesus Christ in power and great glory to judge both the living and the dead. We believe that the Scriptures set out only two destinies for humanity: the joyful prospect of eternal life in the presence of God for those who have received Christ and the agonising prospect of eternal separation from God for those who have rejected Him.

### 2.3 BCBC recognises Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion in common with most Protestant Churches.

2.3.1 BCBC recognises the baptism conducted in a Christian church or by a Christian minister whose doctrinal position agrees with our Statement of Faith although BCBC normally conducts baptism by immersion.

2.3.2 Holy Communion is open to all who have experienced the new birth through repentance towards God and commitment of life in faith to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, having declared this in baptism.

## ARTICLE 3 - CHURCH OBJECTIVE

3.1 To advance the Christian religion in accordance with BCBC's beliefs as set out in the Statement of Faith in Article 2.

## **ARTICLE 4 - POWERS**

- 4.1 To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to teach the doctrines of the Christian faith as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, giving attention, though not exclusively, to the Mandarin speaking Chinese in and around Bristol.
- 4.2 To be a spiritual home for Chinese Christians to worship and serve the Triune God, and to have fellowship in the context of their special needs.
- 4.3 To teach children Biblical truths so that they would be trained up in the way of the Lord and would not depart from it when they are older.
- 4.4 To co-operate with other churches and societies whose doctrinal position agrees with our Statement of Faith.
- 4.5 To promote the Worldwide Mission of Jesus Christ in evangelism and the relief of poverty and disasters.

## **ARTICLE 5 - MEMBERSHIP**

- 5.1 Membership shall be open to all who have experienced the new birth through repentance toward God and commitment of life in faith to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, having declared this in baptism, and who fully subscribe to the objectives and powers and the statement of faith basis of BCBC.
- 5.2 Members shall not be required to relinquish their membership in other denominations or churches whose objectives and doctrinal basis do not conflict with those of BCBC.
- 5.3 Applications for membership shall be made in writing to the Church Secretary.
- 5.4 Candidates for membership shall be interviewed by two representatives approved by the Church Council who shall inquire into the reality of their Christian faith and character, as well as their intention to belong to BCBC. The report and recommendation shall be submitted to the Church Voting Members and the applications approved or otherwise.
- 5.5 Applicants who have not been baptised should apply for baptism to the Pastoral Team who will arrange to give them the necessary preparations and approve their application after inquiring into the reality of their Christian faith. After their baptism, they can apply for Church Membership according to 5.3 and 5.4.
- 5.6 Members shall have collective responsibility to support God's ministry through BCBC especially in
  - 5.6.1 Witnessing in words and living according to the teachings of the Scriptures;
  - 5.6.2 Meeting regularly for corporate worship, prayer and Communion;
  - 5.6.3 Promoting one another's well being through mutual care, love and concern;
  - 5.6.4 Offering faithfully, e.g. tithing etc;
  - 5.6.5 Being equipped and grounded in the Holy Scriptures to discern their roles and exercise their spiritual gifts in BCBC as the local Body of Christ.
- 5.7 Classification of Membership

There are three types of membership :

  - 5.7.1 Voting members: Members over 18 can apply to Church Secretary in writing to become such members.
  - 5.7.2 Ordinary members: Members attending church meetings frequently but opting out for voting.
  - 5.7.3 Special members: Those who keep contact with BCBC but do not fall into the categories of voting or ordinary membership.
- 5.8 Church Voting Members Register
  - 5.8.1 Church Members who are over 18 years old are entitled to vote in Church members meeting, provided they inform the Church Secretary in writing that they wish to be a Voting Member. They will then be included in the Church Voting Members Register.

- 5.8.2 The Church Council can remove members from the Register and inform them accordingly if they
  - 5.8.2.1 fail to vote in three consecutive ballots,
  - 5.8.2.2 have moved away from Bristol and the surrounding areas permanently,
  - 5.8.2.3 have not attended any function of BCBC for more than six months, or
  - 5.8.2.4 volunteer to do so.
- 5.8.3 Removed members can apply in writing to the Church Secretary to be included in the Register again; the Church Council shall approve the application and inform BCBC.
- 5.9 Church Discipline :
  - 5.9.1 Any member found to be living or teaching contrary to the Scriptures and the doctrinal basis of BCBC shall normally be visited initially by the Principal Pastor and lovingly counselled.
  - 5.9.2 If such conduct is continued, further visit shall be made by one or more members of the Pastoral Team for further counselling.
  - 5.9.3 Alternatively matters of disciplinary concern can be referred directly to the Pastoral Team who should take appropriate action to facilitate genuine repentance.
  - 5.9.4 Subsequently and if necessary, the matter will be taken to the Church Council, and ultimately to the Church Voting Members, for consideration of membership suspension.
  - 5.9.5 The Pastoral Team will continue to care for the suspended members and, should any member express and exhibit genuine repentance, they should ask the Church Voting Members to terminate the suspension.
- 5.10 Transference of Membership:
  - 5.10.1 Members who have moved to another church, whose doctrinal position agrees with our Statement of Faith, can ask for transference of membership or recommendation from BCBC to become their members.

## **ARTICLE 6 - THE CHURCH COUNCIL**

- 6.1 The Church Council shall be the main governing body of BCBC, but they shall be responsible and subservient to the Church Members, and important decisions made in Church Council meetings shall be approved by the Church Voting Members.
- 6.2 The Church Council has special duties in ministering the Word of God, teaching and applying the teachings of the Scriptures for the upbuilding of BCBC as the local body of Christ, and in waiting upon the Lord in prayers as leaders for His people to discern His good and acceptable will.
- 6.3 The Church Council consists of the Pastoral Team and the Executive Team.
  - 6.3.1 The Pastoral Team consists of the Principal Pastor, other Pastors, Pastoral workers, the Elders and co-opted members. They shall act as shepherds, elders and overseers of God's flock in BCBC in accordance to Acts 6:4, Acts 20:28-32, 1 Peter 5:1-6, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, etc., guarding, taking care of and feeding them and being examples in the imitation of Christ Jesus.
  - 6.3.2 The Executive Team consists of the Church Secretary, the Church Treasurer and other members with designated duties as proposed by the Church Council and approved by the Voting Members.
- 6.4 The total number in the Church Council shall be no less than three and there must be a majority of the members not receiving any remuneration or other financial support from BCBC.
- 6.5 The Church Council has responsibilities in
  - 6.5.1 the overall management of the BCBC affairs,
  - 6.5.2 the overall direction and planning of Church programmes.
- 6.6 The Pastoral Team of the Church Council has further responsibilities in
  - 6.6.1 the formulation of Church policies,
  - 6.6.2 the maintenance of Church discipline,
  - 6.6.3 the provision of pastoral care to the BCBC members and counsel of their personal matters.

- 6.7 The Executive Team has further responsibilities in
- 6.7.1 the administration of Church finance,
  - 6.7.2 the convening of Church meetings and the preparation of meeting agendas and the presentation of reports, including annual reports, at such meetings.
  - 6.7.3 overseeing the day-to-day functions of all the ministries and departments of BCBC.
- 6.8 The Church Council shall, in the discharge of their responsibilities, be assisted in the implementation of policies and decisions by departments, standing committees and ad hoc committees, all of which shall be appointed by the Church Council and reported to the Church Voting Members. The Principal Pastor shall be deemed an ex-officio member of all these committees unless decided otherwise by the Church Council.
- 6.9 Members of the Pastoral Team can be invited to attend Executive Team meetings, but do not have voting right.
- 6.10 Appointment of Church Council members
- 6.10.1 Consideration to appoint, engage, suspend or terminate the Principal Pastor, other Pastors, Pastoral Workers and Elders shall be initiated by the Pastoral Team and referred to the whole Church Council for recommendation to the Church Voting Members for approval. Any such appointments must be approved by votes of not less than two-thirds of the total Church Voting Members supporting the motion and be subject to the terms of service agreed between the appointee and the Executive Team. The extension of an appointment must be approved by over half of the Church Voting Members.
  - 6.10.2 Co-opted members of the Pastoral Team shall be nominated by the Pastoral Team and referred to the whole Church Council for recommendation to the Church Voting Members for approval by over half of the Church Voting Members voting in the ballots. They shall serve for a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-appointments.
  - 6.10.3 Members of the Executive Team shall be nominated by at least two Church Voting Members and approved by the Church Council. Members of the Pastoral Team who are not receiving remuneration or financial support from BCBC can be nominated to be in the Executive Team, unless decided otherwise by the Church Council. Subsequently, the candidates shall be approved by at least half of the Church Voting Members voting in the ballot, with those receiving the higher number of votes taking on the appointments and the rest listed as reserves if the number of qualified candidates exceeds the required number of the Executive Team members as decided by the Church Council before the election. They shall serve for a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-appointments. However, they should, generally speaking, not serve for more than 6 consecutive years. Before the beginning of a new year, the incoming Church Council shall decide on the posts for each member of the Executive Committee and report to the Church Voting Members.
  - 6.10.4 The Church Council can appoint Church Advisers as requested by the Pastoral Team and approved by over half of the BCBC Voting Members voting by ballot to help in the development of BCBC as a whole, or in the development of a ministry or ministries of BCBC. Any Church Advisers who are not members of BCBC must indicate in writing that they accept Articles 2, 3 and 4 (the Statement of Faith, Church Objectives and Powers) of this Constitution, and that they are willing to be bound by the rest of this Constitution in the execution of their duties for BCBC. Church Advisers may attend Church Council and Pastoral Team meetings but do not have a vote.
  - 6.10.5 The Church Council can accept theological students, trainees and others to serve in BCBC. They will be deemed members of BCBC during their time of service in BCBC. They can be invited by the Church Council to attend Church Council, Pastoral Team and/or Executive Team meetings but do not have a vote.
- 6.11 The quorum of all meetings of the Church Council, Pastoral Team, Executive Team or any committee appointed by the Church Council shall be two thirds of their membership.

- 6.12 The Principal Pastor shall normally chair the Church Council and Pastoral Team meetings, or nominates someone approved by the Pastoral Team to do so on his behalf. The Executive Team meetings shall be chaired by a member of the Executive Team as appointed by the Church Council.
- 6.13 Decisions at meetings of the Church Council, Pastoral Team, Executive Team and committees appointed by the Church Council can be made with the support of the majority of their members, unless decided otherwise by the Church Council. However, the general aim shall be a unanimous agreement. Motions at these meetings where there are genuine differences with more than one member voting against a motion should be reviewed at a subsequent meeting, and the decision confirmed afterwards.
- 6.14 The Church Council may invite, as appropriate, others not in the Church Council to be present for questions and advice for part or the whole of one or more Church Council meetings, but such persons do not have a vote.
- 6.15 Pastors, Pastoral workers and others may receive any reasonable remunerations paid to them in respect of their employment by BCBC even though they are members of the Pastoral Team or Church Council, provided that they withdraw from any meeting whilst their appointment, remuneration or other terms of employment, or the employment, remuneration or other terms of employment of any other employee or employees which might affect them are being discussed. Decisions on such matters are valid only where there are a majority of Council Members who do not receive such benefits.

## **ARTICLE 7 - CHURCH OFFICERS**

### **7.1 The Principal Pastor**

- 7.1.1 The Principal Pastor has the special responsibilities of overseeing the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures and the spiritual care of Church members, arranging the Sunday and other Worship Services and administering the Sacraments, as well as guiding the Church Council and the committees appointed by the Church Council.
- 7.1.2 The Principal Pastor shall be deemed a Church Member during his appointment.
- 7.1.3 Should the post of the Principal Pastor be vacant,
- 7.1.3.1 his responsibilities shall be deputized as decided by the Church Council;
- 7.1.3.2 a deputy Pastor or church executive can be appointed by the Church Council and approved by the Church Voting Members to co-ordinate the execution of these responsibilities;
- 7.1.3.3 unless otherwise decided, at least one ordained minister nominated by the Church Council and approved by the Church Voting Members should be invited to be Pastoral Church Advisers to help in guiding the Church Council and the Pastoral Team and in the appointment of the Principal Pastor. Their office shall be terminated within three months of the inauguration of the new Principal Pastor.

### **7.2 Other Pastors and Pastoral Workers**

- 7.2.1 The responsibilities of the other Pastors and Pastoral workers shall be decided by the Principal Pastor and approved by the Pastoral Team, with reference to requests from the Executive Team.
- 7.2.2 The other Pastors and Pastoral workers shall be deemed Church Members during their appointment.

### **7.3 The Elders**

- 7.3.1 They shall have a clear calling to serve in BCBC as their priority.
- 7.3.2 Their responsibilities are similar to those of a pastoral worker.
- 7.3.3 They shall serve in the Pastoral Team (during their terms of office), although they can ask the Church Council to grant them a leave.

### **7.4 The Church Secretary**

- 7.4.1 He shall promote harmonious relationship and effective communication in BCBC through encouraging Church members to speak the truth in love to the Principal Pastor and other members of the Pastoral Team and the Church Council, as well as with one another, and through the collection and circulation of minutes of the Church Council, Pastoral Team, committee and

Church Meetings;

7.4.2 He shall also represent BCBC in dealings with outside organizations.

7.5 The Church Treasurer

7.5.1 The Church Treasurer shall encourage the BCBC members to be faithful in tithing and zealous in offering, prepare the annual budget, oversee church expenditures, ensure that proper books of accounts are maintained and issue regular financial statements to the Church Council and the church members.

7.5.2 He shall appoint a Financial Team of members approved by the Church Council to assist him in the execution of his duties. No one employed by BCBC can be in this team.

7.6 Other Officers

Other posts (e.g. Administrator, caretaker) can be created by the Church council according to the situations and needs. Their appointment and terms of office have to be approved by Church Voting members whilst their remuneration and duties are decided by the Church Council.

## ARTICLE 8 - CHURCH MEETINGS

8.1 Church meetings shall be held for Christian fellowship, consideration of important issues and transactions of business of BCBC, preferably at least once a quarter.

8.2 An Annual General Meeting shall normally be held in March to receive annual reports and to resolve other duly submitted motions.

8.3 Extraordinary Church Meetings may be called at the discretion of the Principal Pastor, the Church Council, the Pastoral Team and the Executive Team or at the written request of at least ten Church Voting Members for a stated purpose.

8.4 Procedures of Church Meetings:

8.4.1 Normally, at least fourteen days' notice should be given for a Church Meeting.

8.4.2 The agenda of a Church Meeting shall be prepared by the Principal Pastor and the Church Secretary and due notice of such be given normally at a Sunday Service one week before the meeting.

8.4.3 All motions shall normally be resolved by ballot. If necessary, there should be Sharing Meetings for discussion and deliberation of the issues involved, and the Church Meeting shall be mainly for the counting of the votes.

8.4.4 One half of the total Church Voting Members will constitute a quorum.

8.4.5 The Chairperson of the Church Meeting and the Returning Officer who supervises the counting of votes shall be appointed by the Executive Team.

8.4.6 Resolutions by the Church Members' ballots shall be by a simple majority of those voting, except where stated otherwise in this Constitution or as requested by the Church Council.

## ARTICLE 9 - PROPERTIES

9.1 Subject to the provisions of article 9.2 of this clause, the Executive Team with approval by the Church Voting Members shall cause the title to:

9.1.1 all land held by or in trust for BCBC which is not vested in the Official Custodian for Charities; and

9.1.2 all investments held by or on behalf of BCBC

to be vested either in a corporation entitled to act as custodian trustee or in not less than three individuals appointed by them as holding trustees. Holding trustees may be removed by the Executive Team at their pleasure and shall act in accordance with the lawful directions of the Executive Team. The holding trustees shall not be liable for the acts and defaults of its members.

9.2 If a corporation entitled to act as custodian trustee has not been appointed to hold the property of BCBC, the Executive Team may permit any investments held in the name of a clearing bank, building

society, or trust corporation as nominee for the Church Council, and may pay such a nominee reasonable and proper remuneration for acting as such.

## **ARTICLE 10 - FINANCE AND AUDIT**

- 10.1 BCBC's financial year shall be the Calendar year (January to December), which is also the Church's year.
- 10.2 The annual budget shall be presented to the Church Voting Members for approval.
- 10.3 Annual audited financial statements shall be presented at a Church Meeting and to the Church Voting Members for approval.
- 10.4 An independent examiner shall be appointed by the BCBC Voting Members to carry out an examination of the church's accounts and to audit the financial statements mentioned in 10.3.
- 10.5 Cheques and authorizations shall be signed by at least two members of the Executive Team who are appointed by the Church Voting Members for this task.
- 10.6 Any employee of BCBC shall not be entitled to vote on anything which affects his financial benefit or position.

## **ARTICLE 11 - DISSOLUTION**

- 11.1 If the Church Council decides that it is unavoidable to dissolve the BCBC, they shall call a Church Meeting, of which not less than twenty-one days' notice shall be given, stating the terms of the resolution to be proposed.
- 11.2 If the proposal is confirmed in a ballot of Church Voting Members by a two-thirds majority of those voting, the Church Council shall remain in office and be responsible for winding down the affairs of BCBC in accordance with this article.
- 11.3 The Executive Team shall have power to realize any assets held by or on behalf of BCBC and make provision for all the liabilities of BCBC.
- 11.4 Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institution/s having objectives similar to those of BCBC as the Church Voting Members may determine or, failing that, shall be applied for some other charitable purpose, subject to the approval of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales ("the Commission").
- 11.5 Under no circumstances shall the assets of BCBC be paid to or distributed among the members (except to a member that is himself a charity).
- 11.6 The Church Council must notify the Commission promptly upon the dissolution of BCBC and send the final accounts to the Commission.

## **ARTICLE 12 - AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION**

- 12.1 Motions to amend this Constitution shall only be considered if either
  - 12.1.1 decided with the unanimous support of all the members of the Church Council, or
  - 12.1.2 requested in writing by ten Church Voting Members or by at least one-third of the Church Voting Members, whichever is greater.
- 12.2 Any amendment to this Constitution must be approved by votes of not less than two-thirds of the total Church Voting Members supporting the motion.
- 12.3 No part of Articles 2, 3, 4 and 12 shall be amended in any respect unless the amendment is supported by all the Church Council members without exception.
- 12.4 No part of Articles 2, 6.15, 11 and 12 shall be amended without the prior written consent of the Commission.

- 12.5 This Constitution may be translated into Chinese, but the original English version is the only official document.
- 12.6 BCBC shall at all times remain constituted for the advancement of the Christian religion and no alteration shall be made to this Constitution which causes this to change, or cause BCBC to cease to be constituted for charitable purposes.