

Constitution of the Baptist Union of Scotland

Registered Scottish Charity Number SC004960

1. NAME

“The Baptist Union of Scotland”

2. DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE

The Basis of “The Union” is:

- 1.** That the Lord Jesus Christ our God and Saviour is the sole and absolute Authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws
- 2.** That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and rose again the third day.
- 3.** That it is the duty of every disciple to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Advancement of the Christian Faith by:

- 1. FELLOWSHIP** To strengthen fellowship among Baptists and with all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord by means of local churches, networks, conferences, Assemblies and publications; also by participation in wider Baptist groupings and interdenominational activities.
- 2. MISSION** To support and extend Christ’s mission both at home and overseas through evangelism, church planting and caring ministries, including the relief of poverty and the benefiting and enhancement of the amenities in which churches are situated.
- 3. SUPPORT** To offer support in maintaining and developing the work of the churches through accredited and grant-aided ministries, financial assistance with church buildings and expert help in all areas of church life.
- 4. CO-ORDINATION** To discover God’s will and act together in matters of common concern relating to the life of the Union and the state of the nation.
- 5. BAPTIST WITNESS** To bear witness to Baptist principles and maintain records of the Union’s life and work through study and research, inter-church dialogue, publications and historical archives.

4. GENERAL GOVERNANCE

These aims and objectives are governed and guided by Assembly, actioned through Council and implemented by the Core Leaders and other staff. The Board of Trustees, appointed by Council, is charged with a level of oversight of all the decisions of the Union.

5. MEMBERSHIP

The Baptist Union of Scotland shall consist of churches and member colleges. All applications, acceptances and revisions shall be dealt with by Council with the right of appeal dealt with by Assembly.

6. ASSEMBLY

The Assembly shall be held annually and additionally if required. The Assembly shall consist of:

- 1.** All ministers listed in the Accredited List of the Union and those in pastoral charge of churches in membership of the Union.
- 2.** Delegates from churches and colleges in membership with the Union.
- 3.** All members of Council.

7. COUNCIL

The Council shall consist of church representatives, staff members, related Baptist organisations and co-opted members as outlined in the Bye Laws.

8. CORE LEADERS

The Core Leaders shall consist of:

- 1.** The Convenor
- 2.** The General Director
- 3.** The Finance Director
- 4.** The Mission and Ministry Advisor

9. OFFICE-BEARERS

For legal purposes the Office-Bearers of the Union are the Convenor, the General Director and the Finance Director of the Union.

10. DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution of the Union or if the Union should otherwise cease to exist, an Assembly will be held to endeavour to agree, by a majority, the disbursement of any remaining funds. In the event of a failure to agree, all the net assets of the Union shall be returned to churches then in membership of the Union in proportion to their giving to the Union in the previous seven financial years.

11. ALTERATIONS OF CONSTITUTION

Any proposal for change in the Constitution shall be submitted to Council for support and thereafter to Assembly for consideration and then approval at the next Assembly.

Bye-Laws of the Baptist Union of Scotland

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1. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICE-BEARERS

The General Director, the Convenor and the Finance Director of the Baptist Union of Scotland shall serve as Office-Bearers of the Union by virtue of their appointment. They shall fulfil appropriate legal functions on behalf of the Union.

2. REFERENCES TO FORMER OFFICE-BEARERS

- 1.** References in title deeds, contracts and other documents to “the President” of the Union (which office no longer exists) shall, where the context so requires or permits, be deemed to be references to the General Director of the Union.
- 2.** References in title deeds, contracts and other documents to “the Secretary” or “the General Secretary” of the Union (which office no longer exists) shall, where the context so requires or permits, be deemed to be references to the Convenor of the Union.
- 3.** References in title deeds, contracts and other documents to “the Treasurer” or “the Honorary Treasurer” of the Union (which office no longer exists) shall, where the context so requires or permits, be deemed to be references to the Finance Director of the Union.

3. APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL

- 1.** Up to 16 new Council members will be appointed annually to serve for 3 years by Assembly.
- 2.** The Core Leaders and Development Coordinators shall serve on the Council by virtue of their appointment. The Trustees of the Union shall serve on Council by virtue of their appointment.
- 3.** Two representatives of the Scottish Baptist Women’s Fellowship.
- 4.** A representative of the Scottish Baptist College.

5. The Law Agent of the Union (or Alternate).

6. The General Secretaries/Directors of those Unions in membership of the Fellowship of Baptists in Britain and Ireland (FBBI) (or Alternates).

7. Up to six co-opted members may be appointed for specific periods of time and for specific reasons.

4. REMIT OF COUNCIL

1. The Council shall fulfil such responsibilities on behalf of the churches as are delegated to it by the Assembly. The Minutes of its proceedings shall be submitted annually to the Assembly for adoption.

2. The Council shall have powers to affiliate churches and colleges which apply to the Union. It shall also have power to disaffiliate a church or college from the Union, subject to its right of appeal to the Assembly. The application of any Church or College for admission to the Union shall be laid before the Council, and no application shall be complied with unless a majority of those present is in its favour. The list of churches and colleges may be revised by the Council, and its decisions shall be duly notified to those concerned, who have the right of appeal to the Assembly.

3. The Council will receive reports from the Core Leaders and Development Coordinators and all groups covering Ministry, Mission and Administration and their related Task Groups.

4. The Council may receive written reports annually from other representatives appointed by the Union to various bodies.

5. The Council shall endorse the annual reports to be submitted to Assembly and shall agree its agenda.

6. The Council shall determine the contents of the Year Book.

7. The Council have the power to make alterations to the Bye-Laws.

8. The Council may call a special session of the Assembly, should exceptional circumstances be deemed to require this.

5. MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

The Council will normally meet in March and September on dates to be fixed and published by the Union, agendas being issued in advance.

6. CORE LEADERS

The Assembly shall be served by a Core Leadership consisting of the General Director, the Mission and Ministry Advisor, the Finance Director and the Convenor.

7. REMIT OF CORE LEADERS AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATORS

The remit of individual Core Leaders and Development Coordinators shall be agreed by the Council. The Core Leaders shall have executive powers to make operational decisions affecting the operation of the Union between meetings of Council.

8. APPOINTMENTS

The Core Leaders and Development Coordinators shall be appointed by the Council acting on the recommendations of a Search Group appointed by the Council for this purpose.

9. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Assembly will appoint a Board of Trustees consisting of a minimum of five people each belonging to a Baptist church in membership of the Union. Trustees will meet at least three times a year and will provide a level of oversight and accountability for all the decisions of the Union. They will be appointed to serve initially for a period of three years but, if willing, may serve a further period of three years subject to agreement by Assembly. The Board of Trustees is normally chaired by the Convenor and facilitated by the General Director who are not Trustees. A quorum of three Trustees is required at each meeting.

Union Trustees are appointed by Assembly and accountable to Assembly. While Assembly and Council are respectively responsible for its own decisions, it is the duty of the Trustees to oversee the implementation of those decisions or to refer back to Assembly or Council any decision which Trustees consider to be contrary to the charitable purposes of the Union. As ‘Charity Trustees’, the Trustees of the Union are responsible for their own actions to each other, Assembly and where applicable to the Office of the Charity Regulator in Scotland (OSCR).

10. SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY

Assembly voting cards shall only be issued to those who are formally registered, individually or through their church. Churches not exceeding 100 members may appoint three delegates; and above that membership, one more Delegate for every additional 100 members, or part thereof. Colleges may appoint three delegates. Delegates shall be appointed annually and their appointment duly notified to the Convener. Any motion for Assembly must previously have been submitted to Council. An Assembly Convener, and scrutineers when they are required, shall be appointed by the Joint Assembly Planning Task Group.

11. FINANCE

The financial year shall end on 31st March, or on another date as may be determined by the Core Leaders. Auditors shall be appointed by the Council annually.

12. TASK GROUPS

Task Groups will be set up either on an “ad-hoc” or a continuing basis. They will report back to the body to whom they are accountable and through whom a report or recommendations as appropriate will be submitted to the Council.

13. ALTERATIONS TO BYE-LAWS

Any proposal for change in the Bye-Laws shall be submitted to Council for support and consideration and then approval at the subsequent Council. Assembly shall have the power to amend such changes.

Standing Orders of the Council and Assembly of the Baptist Union of Scotland

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1. CHAIR

The Convener of “the Union” shall take the Chair at every business meeting of the Council and Assembly. In the absence of the Convener, the meeting shall appoint a Chair for that meeting.

2. AGENDA

The agenda for every meeting shall be prepared by the Convener and, if possible, circulated to reach the members not later than the third day before the day of the meeting.

3. BUSINESS

Emergency business will be allowed; that is to say, any not included in the agenda which, in the opinion of the Chair, is of great importance and urgency and either could not have been included in the agenda or was inadvertently omitted there from.

4. SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS - COUNCIL ONLY

Motions of which written notice has been given to the Convener by any member of the Council not later than the seventh day before the meeting shall be admissible.

5. MOTIONS

Every motion shall be moved and seconded. A member shall not speak more than once on any motion. The mover of a motion may reply, but in reply shall be confined to answering points made by previous speakers. No motion to rescind any resolution passed at the preceding meeting of Council or Assembly, nor any notice to the same or like effect as any motion which was negated at the preceding meeting of the Council or Assembly, shall be in order.

6. OBLIGATIONS TO COMMITTEES

Members are bound by Committee (“Committee” for this purpose being deemed to include all groups which report directly or indirectly to Council) and Council decisions unless they have reserved the right at the time of their consideration to oppose them. A Committee member unavoidably absent from Committee may on discovering (in the Council papers) a recommendation from

the Committee from which they dissent, reserve the right to oppose it, provided the member informs the Convenor in writing prior to the relevant meeting.

Moreover, if the Council approves a Committee recommendation, the only members of that particular Committee who may reserve the right to oppose it at Assembly will be those who have done so before it came to Council. Council members may not oppose or amend at Assembly any decision of Council unless they have reserved the right to do so at the appropriate Council meeting, or, if absent from it, in writing to the Convenor before the commencement of the Assembly.

7. AMENDMENTS

Any member may move an amendment to any motion under discussion. Every proposed amendment shall be seconded. A member shall not speak more than once on any proposed amendment. The mover of any amendment may reply, but in their reply shall be confined to answering points made by previous speakers. Whenever an amendment has been moved and seconded, no other amendment shall be proposed until the first amendment has been disposed of, but a member may give notice of a further amendment which they propose to move if the first amendment be rejected. If an amendment be rejected, other amendments may be moved on the original motion. If an amendment be carried, the original motion, as amended, shall thereupon become and be treated as a new original motion. As a general rule, the amendment will be voted for and against before the final substantive motion is taken.

8. PROCEDURAL RESOLUTIONS

A motion that the question be now put, that the Council or Assembly do now proceed to the next business, or any other procedural resolution shall, if seconded, be voted on without debate. If a motion that the question be now put is carried, the mover of the original (substantive) motion will have the right of reply, at the discretion of the Chair. No motion to the same or similar effect shall be moved within a period of thirty minutes except by the Chair. This ruling does not relate to a motion to suspend all or any of these Standing Orders. No motion to abandon any item on the agenda shall be allowed once the agenda has been adopted. The Chair may adjust the order in which items are taken with the majority consent of the meeting.

9. LENGTH OF SPEECHES

No speech relating to any procedural motion shall exceed three minutes in length. Normally the Chair will require that no other speech shall exceed four minutes in length, save that in proposing an original motion a member may speak for five minutes.

10. GENERAL CONDUCT OF DEBATE

Every member shall stand when speaking and shall address the Chair. Every member shall be seated except the member speaking. If, and when, the Chair rises, no one else shall continue standing, nor shall anyone rise till the Chair is resumed. Every speaker shall direct their speech strictly to the motion under discussion or to a question of order. The Chair shall call the attention of the Council or Assembly to irrelevances, tedious repetition, or any breach of order on the part of a member, and may direct such a member, if speaking, to discontinue the speech.

11. VOTING

The method of voting will be determined by the Chair. The Assembly, by a simple majority, shall have the right to demand a two-thirds majority on matters it feels to be of sufficient importance.

12. SUSPENSION OR AMENDMENT OF STANDING ORDERS

Standing Orders may be suspended in the interests of considering the subject before the meeting. The members moving and seconding any motion to suspend a Standing Order or Orders may speak in favour of the motion, and any two members may speak in opposition to the motion which will then be put by the Chair without further debate. No such speech shall exceed three minutes in length. No such motion shall be deemed to be carried unless at least three-fourths of the members then present voted in favour thereof.

Standing Orders may be amended either by the Assembly or by the Council.